Handbook of

EU Participatory Budgeting:

the next steps towards engagement

Steven Blok
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demotec
Engaging citizens in decision-making

Colophon

Handbook of EU Participatory Budgeting: the next steps towards engagement

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1 Introduction

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In the late 1980s, the currents of democratic change converged in Porto Alegre on the eastern bank of Brazil's Lake Gaiba, where five rivers also converge. As the remnants of the military dictatorship were washed away and cleansed from Brazilian society, both citizens and politicians sought innovative ways to strengthen democracy, reforge the bonds within their communities, and redefine the relationship between the rulers and the ruled.

Within the city, there was a desire for social, political and economic change. Participatory budgeting (PB) was introduced after the victory of the Workers' Party in the local elections. It was, at that time, a novel initiative that granted ordinary citizens the power to directly decide on local budgets and make economic decisions.

This participatory and inclusive approach allowed disadvantaged communities to propose and vote on crucial projects, from building public libraries to fixing sewer systems. Whilst it was chaotic at times, PB proved immensely popular. Its credibility and adoption first spread across Brazil, then throughout South America and eventually the world. Thirty-five years later, PB continues to inspire and empower local citizens, transform countless communities, and reshape democratic engagement.

This handbook is about PB and the lessons that we have learned from our research into PB and other democratic innovations. It is intended as a guide and a tool that can be used by civil servants and local policy makers to design or improve PB. This handbook can help people who aim to inspire and change their local community by involving and partnering with the electorate and local stakeholders through PB.

Throughout this handbook, we delve into multiple aspects of PB and take into account various elements that must be considered when designing and implementing democratic innovations.

What is PB?

PB is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. By involving citizens in budgetary decisions, PB aims to enhance transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in the management of public resources.

As referenced on the opening page, PB has been around for nearly 35 years and has been replicated in different arenas, cities and countries. However, there does not seem to be a single set definition of PB. For example, Sintomer et al. (2012)[1] identified five criteria that an initiative must fulfil to be considered a PB process:

1. It must involve some form of **discussion about financial decisions** that specifically focuses on how a limited budget should be allocated.
2. The **deliberation and spending focus should be on an a city or decentralised district**. The influence should go beyond a too hyper Localised level, for example a neighbourhood.
3. The process must be **repeated over a sustained period**. If it is a one-off event, then it cannot be properly considered PB.
4. There must be some form of deliberation from citizens who decide on prospective projects to fund. This cannot merely be a survey involving citizens or inviting citizens to speak in local councils, but a more substantial process that provides the **opportunity for citizens to evaluate and deliberate on proposals**.

1 Sintomer, Y., Herzberg, C., Röcke, A., & Allegretti, G. (2012). Transnational models of citizen participation: The case of participatory budgeting. *Journal of Public Deliberation, 8*(2), Article-9.

5. The results of the process should be widely communicated to citizens and participants in the PB project. Too often, participants are left without clarification as to which projects have been decided upon and implemented. Since PB is a joint endeavour between the city, municipalities and citizens, **there should be coherent communication between relevant stakeholders**.

In short, the purpose of PB is to democratise and legitimise spending decisions in local areas and communities, which allows local citizens to propose, deliberate and vote on specific funding proposals. By involving members of the public in shaping and making budgetary decisions, PB has the potential to improve accountability, transparency and inclusiveness between municipalities and citizens. It has the ability to provide these benefits whilst engaging the public in new forms of participation and empowering local communities to have a greater say in the way that their streets, parks and local institutions are funded and shaped.

Throughout this handbook, readers will find key conclusions and lessons to promote learning about how to improve citizen engagement at the local, regional, national and European Union (EU) levels.

Handbook background

This PB handbook is part of a greater body of work called the Horizon 2020 DEMOTEC project, whose purpose was to investigate territorial cohesion within the EU. (DEMOTEC stands for *Democratising Territorial Cohesion: Experimenting with deliberative citizen engagement and participatory budgeting in European regional and urban policies*). DEMOTEC investigated the role of PB in fostering greater and more informed citizen participation in policymaking and engaging citizens who feel disconnected from political and policy processes. It focused on citizen engagement in European regional and urban policies and combines in-depth research on PB and mediated deliberation in the public sphere with real-world experiments.

DEMOTEC applied 'innovative methods in seven urban authorities from across Europe, including experiments, deliberative polling, computational text analysis of big data, representative surveys, framing and discourse analysis and case studies'. By utilizing the results of the extensive research of DEMOTEC, this handbook provides a comprehensive guide to understanding and implementing PB, covers its various stages, showcases global case studies, and offers best practices and solutions to common challenges. **This handbook goes beyond already existing knowledge and generic guidelines, we present the next steps in developing PB and engaging citizens in deliberative, participatory democracy!**

We encourage all policy makers and civil servants to use this handbook when designing policy process where citizen involvement is important.

The DEMOTEC countries and cities

In total, seven countries and cities were part of the DEMOTEC project. Below, we provide a short introduction to each location. Throughout this handbook, they are referred to multiple times.

1. Fife, Scotland

The case study from Scotland took place in Fife, which is located in the region of eastern Scotland. Fife lies on the eastern coast of the North Sea and has a population of around 370,000, which is around 7% of Scotland's population. Fife is very close to the capital city, Edinburgh. Traditionally, the economy of Fife was focused on coal mining. However, the mines have now closed,

and the economy has diversified. Fife Council has extensive experience in implementing PB initiatives and is eager to pilot new approaches in small towns (e.g. Glenrothes, Dumfermline and Kirkcaldy) and scale them up through town-based PB initiatives as part of the Horizon 2020 project.

2. Wałbrzych, Poland

Wałbrzych is located in the region of Dolnośląskie in southwest Poland. The city is located 30 km from the Czech border and has a population of 110,000, which makes it the second largest city in Lower Silesia and the 33rd largest city in Poland. Walbrzych was once a major coal mining and industrial centre. It has extensive experience with local development projects and citizen engagement and is actively involved in the EU Cohesion Policy through an urban development strategy implemented through an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) mechanism. DG REGIO[2] regards it as a leading ITI in Europe and the only one in Poland with full delegation of responsibilities.

3. Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Cluj-Napoca is located in the Romanian region of Nord-Vest. With a population of approximately 325,000, it is only marginally smaller than the second largest city in Romania, Timisoara. The city is home to a large Hungarian population (approximately 50,000). Cluj-Napoca is also a popular university town and home to Babeș-Bolyai University (UBB), the largest university in Romania based on number of students. Cluj-Napoca has significant experience with local development policies and PB. A more integrated approach for PB was planned with support from DEMOTEC.

4. Rotterdam, Netherlands

Rotterdam is located in the region of South Holland, which is the most populous region in the Netherlands and one of the most densely populated regions in Europe. With a population of around 650,000, Rotterdam is the second most populous city in the Netherlands. The city has developed as an important sea transportation hub and is home to the busiest port in Europe. Rotterdam has already demonstrated its ability to implement PB through Citylab01 (a support programme for all societal plans that make a social contribution to the city) and is now poised to extend this initiative to peripheral areas. It is also the managing authority of an EU Cohesion Policy Operational Programme.

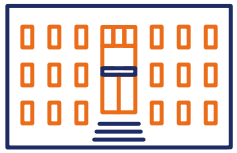
5. Sligo, Ireland

Sligo is a coastal seaport and the urban centre of County Sligo. It is the second largest urban centre in western Ireland after Galway. Located in the region of Northern and Western Ireland, the town has a population of approximately 20,000. Sligo is a historic, cultural and economic centre of regional importance. It has a high level of civil society activity and an established public participation network (PPN) of community and voluntary organisations, which empower and assist groups to participate in local decision making. The Northern and Western Regional Assembly has recently published its first regional development strategy, which includes city-led metropolitan plans with a strong focus on smart growth and community engagement. Sligo will undoubtedly benefit from this strategy. Furthermore, DEMOTEC will contribute to the development of a smart city strategy by trialling a novel PB initiative.

2 The European Commission's department that is responsible for EU policy on regions and cities.

6. Ypsonas, Cyprus

The case study city of Cyprus was the town of Ypsonas in the larger municipal area of Limassol. Ypsonas has a population of roughly 15,000, whilst Limassol is the second largest city on the south coast of Cyprus, with a population of approximately 200,000. Tourism is a major industry in Ypsonas thanks to the excellent weather and world-class beaches. The city also plays an important role as a trade centre, with overseas British military bases located nearby. It has extensive experience in local development projects. From 2014 to 2020, the EU Cohesion Fund and European Regional Development Fund co-funded a sustainable urban development strategy. It was recognised as an URBACT III Good City Practice for implementing a sustainable, integrated and participatory approach.



7. Neapoli-Sykies, Greece

The target Greek city was Neapoli-Sykies, a municipality that is part of the large Thessaloniki urban area in Northern Greece. It is inhabited by roughly 81,000 people and Neapoli-Sykies' economic is strongly tied to the larger Thessaloniki area making Neapoli-Sykies is a moderately affluent retail and services hub. Thessaloniki is the second largest city in Greece, with a population of 800,000; it is second only to Athens. It is located on the northwest corner of the Aegean Sea. Shipping and cruise ships are now major contributors to the local economy. Thessaloniki is responsible for implementing an European Regional Development Fund Sustainable Urban Development strategy but has less experience with PB than many other European cities. However, it has conducted small-scale PB experiments that target youngsters and digital consultations related to local development and resilience policies, which have been mainly driven by local authorities and civil society organisations.

Purpose and objectives of the handbook

This handbook aims to serve as a practical guide for policymakers, community organisers, activists and anyone who is interested in PB. It provides the tools, resources and knowledge needed to design and implement successful PB processes. Because this handbook is based on research, readers will find both the basics of PB to help them to design and implement a PB strategy and state-of-the art findings and recommendations based on research to help them take the next steps.

By learning from global examples and adapting strategies to local contexts, readers can foster more inclusive and democratic budgetary practices in their communities.

Structure of the handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a comprehensive guide to understanding, designing and implementing PB. Throughout the following chapters, we cover the theoretical aspects of PB, citizens' perceptions and feelings, specific case studies, and best practices and solutions to challenges that are often encountered throughout the PB process.

Chapter 2

Theoretical background: Delving into the theoretical underpinnings of democratic innovations and specifically PB.

In this chapter, we explore the theoretical foundations and central ideas underlying democratic innovations, deliberative democracy and PB. Before embarking on a PB journey, we believe that it is insightful and helpful to begin by familiarising oneself with the theoretical underpinnings that shape and influence democratic innovations and consider the complexities of such an endeavour. Whilst PB can provide many benefits, it should not be seen as a panacea or a simple tool that can be implemented to cure apathy, alienation and anger amongst citizens.

Chapter 3

Experiments and case studies: How to design an effective and coherent PB initiative with a PB roadmap.

Chapter 3 is based on experiments and case studies. Within each DEMOTEC country, experiments were conducted with members of the public to explore the nuances and differences that can occur when designing and implementing PB. The experiments aimed to measure how people experienced the process of deliberation and voting on specific proposals. In Chapter 3, we consider the merits (and drawbacks) of the design of PB. We consider the format of PB, how votes are conducted and how citizens experience the process in offline versus online participation. The case studies provide a list of recommendations for designing, implementing and evaluating your PB project. Finally, in this chapter, we provide a clear and actionable roadmap and finally a full comprehensive list of recommendations when designing, implementing and evaluating your new PB project.

Chapter 4

Media analyses: Recognising the challenges and benefits of working with the media to better publicise PB initiatives.

Whilst the majority of this handbook is dedicated to the nuances and complexities of PB, we also consider another vital aspect of implementing democratic innovations: the relationship between the media, local authorities and citizens. Based on dozens of interviews with journalists,

we explore how PB is perceived by external institutions and actors. In addition, we consider the numerous challenges and difficulties that can be experienced when implementing PB and propose ideas and recommendations for how civil servants, policymakers and journalists can work together to engage the public.

Chapter 5

Survey data: What are the important factors are that influence peoples' willingness to participate?

In this chapter, we delve into the survey responses and examine how participants perceived democracy in their country and how they felt about different types of democratic innovations. Since this handbook is aimed at policy makers and civil servants in Europe, we believe that it pertinent to consider the current views and feelings of Europeans. Acknowledging feelings and emotions first can help influence and inform how democratic innovations (specifically PB) can be utilised and implemented across the continent.

Chapter 6

The DEMOTEC project: Policy agenda and recommendations for PB.

One of the central objectives of this handbook was to develop a policy agenda for PB in the EU through a Handbook of EU Participatory Budgeting. In the final chapter, we present a combination of (1) recommendations from previous chapters and (2) a policy agenda for PB in the EU.

2 Theoretical Background

Deliberative democracy:
discuss the issues and
then decide

Participatory budgeting:
talking and deciding about
budgets

Participatory democracy:
direct involvement
of citizens

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Background

Introduction

'It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it', said French moralist Joseph Hubert. This quote covers the deeper motives of the remainder of this chapter rather well.

In the previous chapter, we briefly introduced participatory budgeting – what it is, where it came from, and how it has been used in several European countries. Before we present the key findings of DEMOTEC and its implications for practice, we overview some of the theoretical foundations that are important to participatory budgeting.

The Goal of This Chapter

This chapter theoretically

- assesses the potential of democratic innovations to revive legitimacy and help to reconnect citizens more closely with political elites, policy elites, and institutions; and
- examines whether and how deliberative and participatory approaches can fulfil the promise of greater and more enlightened participation.

Although this handbook is aimed at policymakers and practitioners at multiple levels of government, it is important to fully understand the central theoretical foundations of (1) **democratic innovations**, (2) **deliberative democracy**, and (3) **participatory budgeting**. We believe this understanding is important in order to implement democratic innovations such as PB successfully, to be realistic about them instead of seeing them as magic bullets,[1] to acknowledge the drawbacks and the risks of failure, and to embrace the complexity of such all-encompassing topics as deliberative democracy.

1 Edwards, M. (2009). *Civil Society*. Polity.

Democratic Innovations

What are democratic innovations? They are usually positioned as a reaction to all kinds of challenges that democratic governments face.[2,3] These challenges range from governments not being *democratic enough* and *critiques on elected representatives* to a general *growing distrust towards the political class*.[4]

While the number of democracies in the world has increased until recently,[5] satisfaction with the performance of democracy is decreasing.[6,7,8] Nevertheless, in most 'old' democracies, people still hold the view that democracy is preferred over any other regime, although there is some tension in how various properties of democracy are experienced.

When people are asked about what the necessary characteristics of a democracy are, they usually cite those referring to the *ideals* of democracy. But at the same time, 'surveys provide overwhelming evidence that citizens do not put much value on actually participating [in a democracy] themselves'.[9] That is, they don't make full use of the real rights and opportunities provided by their current democratic systems.

Political scientist Robert Dahl called this the *democratic paradox*. This paradox stems from the tension that democracy is, on the one hand, an ideal. Most of the literature concerned with democracy – and most recent critics – refer to the ideals of democracy. On the other hand, democracy is also a reality in the sense that we can say that Scotland and the Netherlands are democracies. In *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori describes this tension:[10]

> *We must keep in mind that (a) the democratic ideal does not define the democratic reality and, vice versa, a real democracy is not, and cannot be, the same as an ideal one; and that (b) democracy results from, and is shaped by, the interactions between its ideals and its reality the pull of an ought and the resistance of an is.*

This tension does not mean that there aren't any serious threats to democracy – there are. However, the tension between the ideal and the real hints at why *democratic innovations* specifically have raised much attention. Most of these innovations try to invoke some ideal characteristic of democracy that improves the current *real-life* situation.

2 Karlsson, M., Åström, J., & Adenskog, M. (2021). Democratic innovation in times of crisis: Exploring changes in social and political trust. *Policy & Internet*, 13(1), 113-133.

3 Fung, A., & Wright, E. O. (2001). Deepening Democracy: Innovations in empowered participatory governance. *Politics & society,* 29(1), 5-41.

4 Graça, M. S. (2023). Lockdown Democracy: Participatory Budgeting in Pandemic Times and the Portuguese Experience. In *The 'New Normal'in Planning, Governance and Participation: Transforming Urban Governance in a Post-pandemic World* (pp. 111-124). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

5 https://ourworldindata.org/democracy.

6 Fung & Wright (2001).

7 Dahl, R. A. (2000). A democratic paradox?. *Political Science Quarterly*, 115(1), 35-40.

8 Della Porta, D. (2013). *Can Democracy Be Saved?: Participation, Deliberation and Social Movements*. John Wiley & Sons.

9 Dahl, 2000, p. 38.

10 Sartori, G. (1987). *The theory of democracy revisited* (Vol. 1). Chatham House Pub. Quote from p. 8.

The prevalence of democratic innovations is largely a recent development, primarily since the 2010s.[11] In many instances, the definitions of these innovations are unclear, but the authors of Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance provide a clear one:

> *"Democratic innovations are processes or institutions that are new to a policy issue, policy role, or level of governance, and developed to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for participation, deliberation and influence.[12]"*

Generally, four categories of democratic innovations are identified:

- **Mini publics:** A carefully selected group (based on sortition) makes decisions based on deliberation.
- **Participatory budgeting:** A self-selected or purposefully selected group deliberates and makes decisions based on some form of aggregation.
- **Referenda and citizen initiatives:** A self-selected group votes on issues and decisions based on some form of aggregation.
- **Collaborative governance:** A self-selected or purposefully selected group engages in some form of observation, listening, expressing, or voting and can make decisions based on deliberation, bargaining, negation, or aggregation.

In the remainder of this handbook, the first three of these categories are used frequently. In the research that follows, we'll refer to four specific forms of democratic innovations: participatory budgeting, citizens' assemblies (mini publics), referenda, and citizens' juries (also mini publics).

Summary

Democratic innovations exist for a multitude of reasons: repairing, reviving, and upgrading democracy. In addition, issues of distrust also spawn democratic innovations. In a more general sense, democratic innovations usually embody some ideal of democracy that is better than the current status quo.

Under the umbrella of democratic innovations, there are many forms, which can be divided into roughly four categories: mini public, referenda and citizen initiatives, collaborative governance and participatory budgeting. Next, we explore two ideals of democracy that are strived for through democratic innovations.

11 Elstub, S., & Escobar, O. (2019). Defining and typologising democratic innovations. In Elstub, S., & Escobar, O. (Eds), *Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance* (pp. 11-31).

12 Elstub, S., & Escobar, O. (2019).

Deliberative and Participatory Democracy

Like democratic innovation, deliberative democracy and participatory democracy are prominent and popular topics. However, this prominence and popularity makes them prone to many misunderstandings and false expectations.

This section is not intended to present a full-fledged history of deliberative democracy and participatory democracy. Other handbooks already do so, for example *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*[13] and the *Handbook on Participatory Governance*.[14] Instead, the next sections aim to provide the main reasons why deliberative democracy and participatory democracy are helpful for democratic renewal and citizen engagement.

The Promise of Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy can best be understood as a reaction to majority rule. According to this form of democracy, arguments and justification should underpin the legitimacy of a political system rather than just votes and numbers.[15]

13 Bächtiger, A., Dryzek, J. S., Mansbridge, J., & Warren, M. E. (2018). *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford University Press.

14 Heinelt, H. (Ed.). (2018). *Handbook on Participatory Governance*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

15 Chambers, S. (2018). The Philosophic Origins of Deliberative Ideals. In Bächtiger, A., Dryzek, J. S., Mansbridge, J., & Warren, M. E. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy* (pp. 75-89). Oxford University Press.

Deliberative democracy represents the ideal that individuals discuss the issues they face and decide upon the policies that address those issues.[16] American philosopher John Dewey articulated the core view of deliberative democracy in a famous passage:

> *"Majority rule, just as majority rule, is as foolish as its critics charge it with being. But it never is merely majority rule (…) The means by which a majority comes to be a majority is the more important thing: antecedent debates, modification of views to meet the opinions of minorities, the relative satisfaction given the latter by the fact that it has had a chance and that next time it may be successful in becoming a majority. (…)"*

> *"No government by experts in which the masses do not have the chance to inform the experts as to their needs can be anything but an oligarchy managed in the interests of the few. And the enlightenment must proceed in ways which force the administrative specialists to take account of the needs. (…)"*

> *"The essential need, in other words, is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is the problem of the public. (Dewey & Rogers, 2012 [1927], p. 154)*[17]"

Deliberative democracy focuses on how decisions arise – that is, what the process of decision-making looks like. It therefore focuses on the quality of a democratic process. When done right, the processes of deliberation should

- produce a public that reflectively recognizes shared needs and interests;
- produce the best solutions to the problems involved in meeting those needs and interests; and
- bring the individual into a close and fulfilling relationship with a community.

Notably, deliberative democracy does not necessarily prescribe *where the deliberation* should take place. More elite, representative bodies – such as parliaments and legislatures – could embody and apply the principles of deliberative democracy. However, it can also occur in more direct or participatory democratic bodies, as we will discuss later.

Considering the above, an important question remains: What is deliberation? In *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, the four editors offer a minimal (to avoid framing it too positively) definition: Deliberation is 'mutual communication that involves weighing and reflecting on preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concern'.[18] Moreover, there are multiple standards for what makes good deliberation actually good (see Table 2.1).

16 Bächtiger et al., 2018, p. 20.
17 Dewey, J., & Rogers, M. L. (2012 [1927]). *The Public and its Problems: An essay in political inquiry*. Penn State Press.
18 Bächtiger et al., 2018, p. 20.

Table 2.1: Standards for Good Deliberation (Bächtiger et al., 2018, p. 22)

No.	Standard
1	Respect
2	Absence of power
3	Inclusion, mutual respect, equal communicative freedom, and equal opportunity for influence
4	Relevant consideration
5	Aims at both consensus and clarifying conflict
6	Orientation towards both common good and self-interest constrained by fairness
7	Publicity in many conditions, but not all (e.g., negotiations when representatives can be trusted)
8	Accountability to constituents when elected, to other participants and citizens when not elected
9	Sincerity in matters of importance; allowable insincerity in greetings, compliments, and other communications intended to increase sociality

These standards are a second-generation set, meaning that they are preceded by a first set that has been developed over years. Given these developments, it is also likely that the set in *Table 2.1* can develop further as well. In other words, the standards are not definitive.

For all the solutions that deliberative democracy attempts to offer for addressing democratic challenges, some fundamental criticisms of the ideal remain.

The first is a cultural criticism. This criticism centres around the argument that deliberative democracy does not consider its manifestation across various (past, present, and future) cultures and societies.[19] Jensen Sass provides multiple examples of deliberative, democratic practices from Botswana, Japan, Malawi, China, and Yemen. These culturally different manifestations do not imply that deliberative democracy is a purely Western phenomenon. Rather, they imply that what is seen as deliberation or as *good* deliberation is often viewed through Western lenses. This is one of the reasons to strive for a minimal definition of deliberation (see the definition we used above).

The call stemming from the cultural criticism is to fully understand how and why people get involved in deliberation and to remain open to a range of different deliberative practices. Given the increasing interdependencies in global public spaces and diverging substantive values and opinions, deliberation that engages multiple societies and cultures requires broader perspectives, theories, and standards than those that have previously existed, especially because many democratic innovations have emerged from unlikely places – at the peripheries of democracy, rather than at the core.[20]

The second criticism concerns **disruptors to the ideals**. One example is the use of facilitators. Facilitators guide a deliberative process as a 'neutral' party; they can be consultants, independents, or specialized civil servants. Facilitators are used in many democratic innovations, ranging from citizens' assemblies and working groups to participatory budgeting.

> *Talk in contemporary deliberation is almost always facilitated talk.*[21]

Facilitators are often trained and often have a hint of neutrality. This makes them – and the process they facilitate – more interesting to policymakers. However, facilitators who have some knowledge on the topic at hand may unintentionally influence the deliberative process with their own views.[22] Furthermore, there is the risk that facilitators may want to move quicker than the participants or that they don't approve of the ways in which participants deliberate. Polletta and Gardner explain that participants' deliberation processes often do not align with what deliberative theorists describe. Participants are likely to offer opinions and stories with little relation to what has been said before; they tend to use simple or informal

19 Sass, J. (2018). Deliberative Ideals Across Diverse Cultures. In Bächtiger, A., Dryzek, J. S., Mansbridge, J., & Warren, M. E. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy* (pp. 108-122).

20 Sass, 2018, p. 117.

21 Polletta, F., & Gardner, B. G. (2018). The Forms of Deliberative Communication. In Bächtiger, A., Dryzek, J. S., Mansbridge, J., & Warren, M. E. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy* (pp. 90-107).

22 Poletta & Gardner, 2018, p. 100.

forms of arguments; and they tell more stories than they give reasons, especially when the topic is unknown to them. Finally, facilitators are in a strange position: On the one hand, they facilitate deliberation – often seen as a panacea to an overly present market ethos that has turned citizens into self-interested and passive consumers – while working at private sector consultancy firms or providing their services to a management elite and corporate executives.[23] On the other hand, they can truly increase the deliberative quality of the processes they are involved in. Moreover, because policymakers are often receptive to these facilitators, the latter can increase the impact of deliberation in government agencies.

We end this section on deliberative democracy with one of the most important, unanswered questions: **the question of motivation**. Deliberation – especially when it concerns nonrepresentatives – requires serious time and effort.[24] However, when one actually spends time and effort, the outcomes are unclear. Given that participating in deliberative arenas is personally taxing, *why and how* do people still partake? Answering this question is the prerequisite for addressing many more questions and criticisms, including those covered in this section. Within the context of this handbook, it is important to highlight that the DEMOTEC research aimed to explore some of the *hows and whys* of participating in deliberative forms of democracy.

23 Lee, C. W. (2015). *Do-It-Yourself Democracy: The Rise of the Public Engagement Industry*. New York: Oxford University Press.

24 Sass, 2018, pp. 108-111.

Final remarks

The field of deliberative democracy leans heavily on the work of Rawls[25] and Habermas[26] and has been developed strongly by many scholars, including Jane Mansbridge,[27] James Fishkin,[28] John Dryzek,[29] Joshua Cohen,[30] David Estlund,[31] and Mark Warren.[32] The above summary provides some insight and is a brief outline of a large body of literature.

25 Rawls, J. (2005). *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

26 Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. T. Burger and F. Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

27 Mansbridge, J. (2012). Conflict and Commonality in Habermas's Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. *Political Theory*, 40: 789–801.

28 Fishkin, J. S. (2009). *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

29 Dryzek, J. S. (2000). *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

30 Cohen, J. (1986). An Epistemic Conception of Democracy. *Ethics*, 97: 26–38.

31 Estlund, D. (2008). *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

32 Warren, M. E. (2020). Participatory deliberative democracy in complex mass societies. *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 16(2).

Summary

Deliberative democracy is an ideal that is founded on valuing forms of collective sensemaking, the quality of arguments, debates, and justifications that predate a decision (on policy). It is an ideal that is not easy to reach, has changed over the years, and is still developing. When the ideal is reached, deliberative democracy delivers the following:

- a public that reflectively recognizes shared needs and interests;
- the best solutions to the problems involved in meeting those needs and interests; and
- individuals who are brought into close and fulfilling relationships with a community.

The following are important takeaways from the theory of deliberative democracy:

- the minimal definition that allows for 'some' inclusion of cultural differences;
- the standards for good deliberation; and
- the major criticisms, namely the cultural blindfold of deliberative democracy and organizational 'necessities' that disrupt the ideals (such as facilitators), and important questions relating to motivation

The Promises of Participatory Democracy

Participatory democracy is an ideal that calls for

- more direct involvement of citizens
- who are then able to exert influence and decision-making power about matters that affect them.

While forms of participation have existed for decades and across various cultures, a renewed interest in participatory democracy is – as with deliberative democracy – a reaction to another dominant viewpoint. Empirical democratic theory – known from the political economist Schumpeter[33] – proposes that citizens have neither the tendency nor the ability to participate in democratic affairs. Citizens are unable to see the consequences of their preferences and their political behaviour and are unable to determine final decisions. There is no reason for them to inform themselves and be participants.[34]

Participatory democracy takes many forms and shapes, for example the 381 different methods registered at https://participedia.net/. The following are important distinctions relating to participatory democracy:

- It is different from political participation, where citizens vote. According to participatory democrats, 'just voting' is a very narrow perception of the general conception of 'participation'.
- There is a difference between *full* participation – wherein decision-making power is shared and equal – and *partial* participation – wherein participants exert some form of influence on a decision.[35]
- Finally, there are specific (and more nuanced) difference in the amount of influence citizens have on decisions. These distinctions are often captured in the *ladder of participation* by Sherry Arnstein (although there are many adaptions of this ladder).[36]

Proponents of participatory democracy use countless arguments when advocating for it. We discuss three sets of arguments that cover many more specific arguments.

First, Fiorino[37] provided three arguments that are still highly important today. The **substantive** argument states that nonexperts see problems, issues, and solutions that (technocratic) experts miss. The **normative** argument states that technocratic orientation misses the 'value dimension' that is important to democracy. Lastly, Fiorino provided an **instrumental** argument: Participation makes (risky) decisions more legitimate and

33 Schumpeter, J. (1942). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harper.

34 Elstub, S. (2018). Deliberative and Participatory Democracy. In Bächtiger, A., Dryzek, J. S., Mansbridge, J., & Warren, M. E. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy* (pp. 216-233).

35 Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

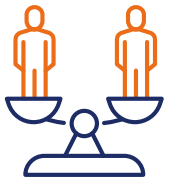
36 Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of planners*, 35(4), 216-224.

37 Fiorino, D. J. (1990). Citizen Participation and Environmental Risk: A Survey of Institutional Mechanisms. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 15(2), 226-243.

leads to better outcomes, such as increased legitimacy and improved satisfaction. These kinds of arguments are strongly present in the broader developments of public participation.[38]

Second, Elstub[39] sets out three arguments:

Participation is more authentic and follows a sharper interpretation of democracy than representative democracy: 'If citizens themselves make collective decisions on issues that affect them, whether in the political, social, or economic sphere, political equality and personal autonomy are enhanced. It delivers the true meaning of democracy as rule by the people.'[40]



Participation can reduce socioeconomic inequalities and subsequently contribute to a more substantive democracy. This argument is based on a vicious cycle of socioeconomic inequality and political participation: Because disadvantaged groups participate less in politics, they are less able to have an impact on political processes. Other, advantaged groups then naturally have more impact on these processes and, ultimately, political decision-making. The latter groups thus have no reason to (fully) protect the interests of the socioeconomic, disadvantaged groups who do not participate. Creating more outlets for participation – with inclusion of these disadvantaged groups – could break this cycle.[41]

Participation has an educative effect on those who participate. By participating in collective decision-making, 'people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills and values of co-operation and civic virtue'.[42] This effect is also called a 'democratic experience'[43] and is aligned with other 'school of democracy' arguments, including the one made by Alexis de Tocqueville.[44]

Third, in a systematic literature review of 29 studies,[45] four types of motives for participation were found. These motives were divided into (1) democratic vs. instrumental motives and (2) motives for governments vs. motives for participants. Taken together, they led to the following quadrant of motives (Table 2.2):

38 Van Dalfsen, F., Wesseling, H. & Blok. S. (2021). *Leren in Participatieland: slimme participatielessen uit de praktijk*. Utrecht Berenschot.

39 Elstub, 2018.

40 Elstub, 2018, p. 219.

41 Macpherson, C. B. (1977). *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

42 Evans, S. M. and Boyte, H. C. (1992). *Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Quote from p. 17.

43 Warren, M. (1992). Democratic Theory and Self-Transformation. *American Political Science Review,* 86(1), 8-23.

44 De Tocqueville, A. (1998 [1835]). Democracy in America. *Wordsworth, London*.

45 Visser, V., van Popering-Verkerk, J. & van Buuren, A. (2019). *Onderbouwd ontwerpen aan participatieprocessen: Kennisbasis participatie in de fysieke leefomgeving* [Substantiated design of participation processes: Knowledge base participation in the physical living environment]. GovernEUR, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.

Table 2.2: Typology of Motives for Participation (Visser et al., 2019, p. 7)

		Type	
		Democratic	**Instrumental**
Actor	**Participants**	Control Democratic rights Active citizenship	Beter decisions Financial benefits (Practical) skills
	Government	Legitimacy Democratic ideal Bridging the political divide	Quality Effectiveness Support

The goal of this division of types is not to pick one or all of them. All the motives are relevant and legitimate to pursue. However, they give purpose to a specific participation process and have implications for the practical organization of the process or the choice of instrument.[46]

What distinguishes participatory democracy from its deliberative counterpart is that the focus is on ensuring that citizens can participate and, as such, exert influence. Emphasis is thus on providing opportunities for participation and the creation of political, social, and economic rights for participation.[47] This focus on the inclusion of participants is arguably a prerequisite for fruitful, equal, and free deliberation.[48]

46 Blok, S. & Piers, S. (2023). *Aan de slag met participatie: handreiking 2.0 voor de participatieverordening* [Getting started with participation: guide 2.0 for the participation ordinance]. Berenschot & VNG.

47 Elstub, 2018.

48 Vitale, D. (2006). Between deliberative and participatory democracy: A contribution on Habermas. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 32(6), 739-766.

In Europe, this distinct focus of participatory democracy is visible in, for example, the 'Guidelines for Civil Participation in Political Decision Making' by the Council of Europe.[49]

Naturally, there are important criticisms of participatory democracy. To elaborate on a few of them, first, **the romantic dogma of participation** raises high expectations: Individuals become empowered and then become more public spirited (concerned with the public interest rather than their own) and attentive to others.[50] However, when regular citizens become involved, the actual experience dealing with the cogs and wheels of institutional decision-making can be highly discouraging.[51] The stamina that participation requires is only for the few: perhaps activists or well-off citizens with time and resources. This raises an important subcriticism that revolves around the question, who participates? Some research has shown that *exhausted majorities exist*.[52] These are groups that don't really share a political direction: They are ideologically more flexible, are open to compromise, and most important, feel overlooked by fierce politics. These *exhausted majorities* are important allies for both participation and deliberation. They represent a substantial part of society, and they are likely willing to respect others in deliberative processes, listen, and find common ground for solutions. (Other terms for these groups include 'the silent majority' and 'the unusual suspects'.) Some argue that by opening up for participation, institutions have only put politics in the hands of unrepresentative participators: extreme voices in the larger debate. These groups are true believers in their points of view, highly motivated, and able to hijack democratic processes.[53]

Second, in most complex and developed societies, **participation on a meaningful scale becomes increasingly difficult**. With many levels of government, many demarcated domains within governments, and at the same time strong interdependencies between levels of government and domains, it is challenging for citizens to get along. Actually participating requires strong expertise – often both on the topic and on the way in which governments work.

A final example (in this nonexhaustive series) is the **inverse relationship between deliberation and participation**. Participation – in a purist sense – asks for 'more' citizens who actually participate. More citizens could mean a more inclusive character of participation. But when the number of citizens grows too large, the deliberative quality will decrease:

49 European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) - Guidelines for civil participation in political decision-making. Available via. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509dd.

50 Warren, M. E. (1996). What should we expect from more democracy? Radically democratic responses to politics. *Political Theory*, 24(2), 241-270.

51 See Elstub, 2018, p. 224.

52 Hawkins, S., Yudkin, D., Juan-Torres, M. & Dixon, T. (2018). Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape. More in common, NY. Via: https://hiddentribes.us/media/qfpekz4g/hidden_tribes_report.pdf.

53 Fiorina, M. P. (1999). Extreme voices: A dark side of civic engagement. In Skocpol, T., & Fiorina, M. P. (Eds.). Civic engagement in American democracy (pp. 395 - 425). Brookings Institution Press.

> *Deliberation on a given issue will be effective only if participants are, or are willing to become, informed about it: but the more participants there are, the more likely it is that some (and perhaps most) will lack the necessary interest and incentive.*[54]

Furthermore, there are **many practical requirements for a 'good' design of participation processes**. When a good design is absent, one should account for many risks; for example,

> *Frustration, cynicism, or apathy can be the results of a poorly designed public engagement process in which participants' hopes for learning, working, or accomplishing some goal are disappointed by a process that is futile, in which the relevant decisions have been made elsewhere by someone else, or in which the choices and stakes are trivial.*[55]

There is no quick and easy answer to the question of what constitutes a good design. Mario Ianniello and colleagues made an extensive inventory of six types of obstacles and 14 types of solutions to them.[56] The CLEAR model by Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker is another well-known framework that establishes criteria to fix the notorious failings of participation schemes.[57] Finally, Archon Fung outlined his democracy cube to prescribe the properties of well-designed participatory instances.[58] Note that these examples are by no means an exhaustive list of frameworks. They do, however, show that the practical design of a participatory process or instrument requires knowledge and craftmanship.

Summary

The promises of participatory democracy can be summarized as follows: *'Properly deployed, their (citizens') local knowledge, wisdom, commitment, authority, even rectitude can address wicked failures of legitimacy, justice and effectiveness in representative and bureaucratic institutions.'* [59]

The potential for participation is high, but many reservations exist. Just like deliberative democracy, participatory democracy is an ideal that cannot always be attained. The value of participatory democracy lies in its enabling of citizens to actually partake in whatever is organized. It focuses on an inclusive design to deliver on its promises.

54 Elstub, 2018, p. 224.
55 Fung, A. (2015). Putting the public back into governance: The challenges of citizen participation and its future. *Public administration review*, 75(4), 513-522. Quote from p. 513.
56 Ianniello, M., Iacuzzi, S., Fedele, P., & Brusati, L. (2019). Obstacles and solutions on the ladder of citizen participation: a systematic review. *Public Management Review*, 21(1), 21-46.
57 Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L., & Stoker, G. (2006). Diagnosing and Remedying the Failings of Official Participation Schemes: The CLEAR framework. *Social Policy and Society*, 5(2), 281-291.
58 Fung, A. (2006). Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance. *Public Administration Review, 66* (Special Issue: Collaborative Public Management), 66-75.
59 Fung, 2006, p. 74.

The Promises, When Taken Together

The choice between a more deliberative approach versus a more participatory approach is pertinent, according to many scholars.60 Both approaches, however, aim to improve decision-making and consider some role for citizens in that improvement.

While purists in one of the approaches might say that participatory democracy is too simplistic in its conception of society – with its divide between those who govern and those who are governed – or that deliberative democracy neglects authoritative and aggregative measures, both have something to offer one another:

> *"Participatory democracy without deliberation will add to the burdens of complexity, while deliberation without inclusive participation can lead to self-interested elite dominance.*[61] *"*

They are also in a paradoxical relationship to one another, because highly inclusive participation – which leads to a high number of participants – is an obstacle to attaining good standards of deliberation. At the same time, good deliberation benefits from having some constraints on participation.[62] Della Porta has attempted to reconcile both approaches as outlined in Table 2.3. [63]

60 Bobbio, L. (2019). Designing Effective Public Participation. *Policy and Society,* 38(1), 41-57. See also Fishkin, J.S. (2012). Deliberative polling: Reflections on an ideal made practical. In Geissel, B. and Newton, K. (Eds.), *Evaluating Democratic Innovations. Curing the Democratic Malaise?* (pp. 71-89). and Elstub, 2018.

61 Dryzek, J. S. (1987). Complexity and Rationality in Public Life. *Political Studies*, 35(3), 424-442. Quote from p. 436. Re-interpreted by Elstub, 2018.

62 Bobbio, 2019, p. 47.

63 Della Porta, 2013.

Table 2.3: Types of democracy (a combination of Elstub., 2018, p. 220 and Della Porta 2013, p. 6)

		Mode of decision-making	
		Majority vote	Deliberation
Decision makers	**Delegates or Representatives**	Liberal democracy	Liberal deliberative democracy
	Participation	Aggregative or radical participatory democracy	Participatory deliberative democracy

First, liberal democracy (or aggregative liberal democracy) is a system present in most democracies. Citizens are represented, and decisions are made when the majority of representatives are in favour. Second, aggregative or radical participatory democracy is a form of participatory democracy where – in contrast to its deliberative participatory counterpart – decisions are made by citizens, but these citizens have 'exogenous' preferences, meaning that they 'just' have preferences and form them in isolation.[64] An example of this form of participation is a referendum. Third, in liberal deliberative democracy, elected representatives discuss (deliberate) to make decisions. Discussion can occur in many arenas, such as commissions, but it can also happen in the public sphere, in deliberative polling and social movements. Finally, participatory deliberative democracy is the model wherein citizens deliberate and make collective decisions. An example of this is **participatory budgeting**.

64 Elstub, 2018, p. 223.

A Theory of Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend a portion of a public budget. Nonelected participants are part of this process. There are several specific variations in how a participatory budgeting process can take shape; these specifics are covered later in this handbook.

With regard to deliberative and participatory democracy, participatory budgeting embodies important properties of both deliberation and participation. Participants must often discuss the selection of projects or the allocation of public finances. They must deliberate with one another about what is important. Because they are required to talk about their preferences, argue the importance of certain projects or budget items, listen to others, and reach agreements, the chances of fulfilling the three promises of deliberative democracy (in Section 1.3.1) increase:

- The participants can become a group who recognize their shared needs and interests; they can consequently produce a public that reflectively recognizes those shared needs and interests.
- They must reach decisions that, in some sense, reflect 'the best solutions to the problems involved'.
- The participants are building some kind of relationship with one another.

However, participatory budgeting is – often – not just talk. The processes must lead to some kind of decision-making by the participants. This is where it delivers on some of the promises of participatory democracy. The following are two examples of fulfilments:

- When participants reach a conclusion, there is indeed a sharp, authentic interpretation of democracy: Citizens have made a decision that affects them. Their collective decision reaches some *true meaning of democracy*.[65]
- When nonelected participants take a decision, they do so purely based on values. Their decisions are then based on arguments that technocratic experts may have missed.[66]

Background, Definitions, and Principles of Participatory Budgeting

Even though participatory budgeting exists in many different forms – because of its implementation in a wide range of contexts related to political systems, legal framework, civic cultures, and institutional capabilities)[67] – most refer to its origin story in Porto Alegre in Brazil in the 80s.

Even since its success in involving several different community groups and shaping a substantive part of the municipal budget,[68] many instances of participatory budgeting have occurred. The Participatory Budgeting World Atlas recorded more than 11,000 instances in 2019.[69]

In terms of a definition, it is difficult to provide one clear definition of PB to demarcate what it is and what it is not:[70]

> *"In some cases, the term "participatory budget" refers merely to an informative event connected with the budget without including consultation with the citizens. Other examples, however, which are locally not referred to as "participatory budgets", may feature an intensive participation procedure.*[71] *"*

Generally speaking, there are criteria that help define whether or not something can be considered PB (aside from the previously mentioned nonelected participants):

1. **Financial/budgetary discussion:** A PB process must involve discussions on the financial or budgetary aspects, addressing the issue of (limited) resources.
2. **City or district involvement:** A PB must involve the city level or a decentralized district with some administrative power.
3. **Repetitive process:** A PB should not be a one-off event but a recurring process (this can be practically achieved, for example, through various meetings on project formulation, decisions, and feedback).
4. **Public Deliberation:** A PB process should include public deliberation within specific meetings or forums.
5. **Accountability of Outputs:** A PB process should have some form of accountability concerning the outcomes of the process.

65 Elstub's (2018) first argument.

66 Fiorino's (1990) substantive and normative argument.

67 Miller, S. A., Hildreth, R. W., & Stewart, L. M. (2019). The modes of participation: A revised frame for identifying and analyzing participatory budgeting practices. *Administration & Society,* 51(8), 1254-1281.

68 Hartz-Karp, J., Carson, L., & Briand, M. (2018). Deliberative democracy as a reform movement. In Bächtiger, A., Dryzek, J. S., Mansbridge, J., & Warren, M. E. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy* (pp. 772-786).

69 Dias N., Enríquez S., Júlio S. (org) (2019). The participatory budgeting World Atlas 2019. Epopeia/ Oficina, Portugal.

70 Sintomer, Y., Herzberg, C., & Röcke, A. (2008). Participatory budgeting in Europe: Potentials and challenges. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32(1), 164-178.

71 Ibid., p. 168.

Lessons From Theory

The theoretical foundations don't present a list of design principles for the hands-on implementation of PB. They do, however, provide a more thorough understanding, which is the starting point for better designs and implementation.

The key lessons from the theory on **democratic innovations** are that these innovations embody some ideal of democracy that is better than the current status quo and that many different forms of democratic innovation exist. The literature therefore presents strong arguments against *'participation washing' and tokenism,*[72] which is the use of democratic innovations to lure citizens into consent or support for policies.

The promises and lessons from **deliberative democracy** provide the principles for the deliberative part of PB. A process of PB should be organized such that (1) the public can recognize shared needs and interests, (2) the best solutions can be found to the problems at hand, and (3) individuals can be brought into close and fulfilling relationships with a community. Important considerations for deliberation are cultural differences, the standards of 'good' deliberation, and the use of facilitators. Especially when dealing with vulnerable or socially excluded groups, imposed standards might hinder 'good' deliberation from other points of view.

The promises and lessons from **participatory democracy** provide the principles for the participatory component of PB. The theory of participatory democracy offers many reasons for why participation is valuable, ranging from *'nonexperts see problems, issues and solutions that technocratic experts miss'* to *'participation embodies a more authentic interpretation of democracy because it is direct'*. Participatory democracy, put bluntly, needs 'more' participants because it is focused on the value of participatory democracy lies in its enabling of citizens to actually partake in whatever is organized.

Participatory budgeting embodies the properties of both deliberative and participatory democracy. This is its unique selling point. Designing PB therefore comes down to finding a balance between deliberative and participatory properties: *'Participatory democracy without deliberation will add to the burdens of complexity, while deliberation without inclusive participation can lead to self-interested elite dominance.'*

72 Arnstein, 1969.

3 Designing PB

Chapter 3 - Designing PB

How to design an effective and coherent PB initiative with a PB roadmap

This chapter answers part of the question regarding whether and to what extent PB has the potential to deliver higher and more enlightened citizen engagement.

In this chapter, we

- investigate various organisational elements – online versus offline meetings and voting methods – of PB and the implications for engagement.
- present a road map for practical PB organisation.
- share lessons on PB organisation from each of the cities and countries that participate in DEMOTEC.

Key findings and general recommendations

In this chapter, the results of experiments, lessons from seven countries, and a road map to PB are presented. **If you want to organise PB and are unsure of where to start, then see the road map on page 44!**

We offer the following findings and lessons for practitioners:

1. PB has a democratic effect on participants.
From the experiments, we learnt that when people participate in PB, they are likely to be enthusiastic about future participation. Collaborating in a PB process – whether through multiple in-person meetings or online – breeds excitement about future processes as well.

Joining the experiments caused participants to be more likely to think
- that PB is an ideal way to make decisions,
- that it will lead to appropriate decisions for their city, and
- that the decisions from the process are satisfactory, legitimate, and worthy of implementation.

These findings translate into this recommendation: for future engagement and democratic renewal, offering people the opportunity to participate and enjoy the experience is crucial. Taking part in PB has positive effects on engagement.

2. Consider the trade-off between democratic effects, technology, and accessibility.

The experiments demonstrate the difference between offline and online PB processes:

- People who participate in online versions are less enthusiastic about future participation (but still enthusiastic).
- People find it more difficult to reach consensus in online PB variants than in offline variants.

The effects of PB are, based on our research findings, weaker with online variants, which is logical, as there is no face-to-face interaction between participants. Concurrently, online PB variants are seen as more accessible. From the case studies, we noted that online voting increases efficiency (Poland: Wałbrzych), that the platform's user friendliness is important (Romania: Cluj-Napoca), and that addressing the digital divide is essential for inclusive PB processes (Greece).

Regarding recommendations, these findings suggest a trade-off between democratic effects on the one hand and accessibility through technology on the other hand. If inclusivity, reach, and user friendliness are important, then online PB variants are appropriate. If enlightened understanding, consensus, and positive experiences are important, then offline variants are the better choice.

3. Organisational considerations are critical.

First, voting type matters, according to the experiments that we performed:

- Providing multiple voting options or a freely divisible budget is preferred by participants.
- The ease of use with various voting methods does not seem to matter, but participants do not find it easy to have only one vote.
- Some kinds of voting require more time: *ranked* voting (in which a voter rates preferred projects) and *knapsack* voting (in which a voter has a specific amount to allocate on projects) takes participants the most time. However, knapsack voting is one of the best options (according to participants), so the amount of time it takes does not conflict with quality.

Second, from the case studies, we learnt the following:

- Scaling builds confidence. Starting with small grants and gradually increasing budgets generates confidence and allows issues to be addressed while the stakes are lower (Scotland: Fife).
- It is better to be safe than sorry. A lack of clear criteria and underutilisation of community groups hampers PB rollout (Ireland: Sligo). A lack of follow-up and evaluation is not helpful: Clear communication about financial allocations are crucial (the Netherlands: Rotterdam), and a lack of data collection impedes PB evaluation and growth (Poland: Wałbrzych).

These findings lead to the following recommendations:

1. Offer participants the opportunity to have multiple votes in PB processes, as it better reflects their decisions and is easier than just one vote.
2. Account for the organisational design principles and known best practices. We offer such road maps, recommendations, and country lessons in this chapter.

4. Embedding PB makes a difference.

Many of the case studies concern embedding PB in legislation, policy, or government execution. We mention concrete examples as recommendations:

- Legislation mandates that 1% of local budgets involve PB. This contributes to sustainability and embeds the concept into regular governance practices (Scotland: Fife).
- Mandatory PB in large cities embeds PB within government structures, thereby reducing individual pressures on politicians and civil servants (Poland: Wałbrzych).
- Although specific PB legislation is lacking in the Netherlands, aligning PB projects with local policies empowers neighbourhoods (the Netherlands: Rotterdam).
- Centralised governance and underfunded local administrations hinder PB initiatives. Reforms for decentralisation are necessary (Cyprus).

PB is not merely a project that produces desirable effects. It is a democratic effort that must be embedded in institutions. Legislation, funding, reducing pressure on civil servants (and politicians), and connecting with other policy domains anchors PB.

Introduction

Background information on this chapter

This chapter is based Work Package 3 of DEMOTEC. Part of Work Package 3 were experiments that were aimed at simulating real-world cases in the seven countries. Different conditions were designed to offer varying degrees of scope for deliberative interaction. People who participated in the experiments simulated a PB process and were asked questions that were used for further analysis. Explanation regarding the experimental conditions is provided later in this chapter. Another part of this chapter is based on various case studies for Work Package 3 that were conducted by the DEMOTEC project team and were based on interviews with local stakeholders as well as a literature review.

Experiment design and outcomes

One of the key elements of the DEMOTEC research was conducting experiments to study the effects of different setups of the PB process. These experiments were executed across the seven participating countries: Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Poland, Romania, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. What follows in this section are experiment summaries and analyses; in each subsection, we delve into the specific experiment elements.

To understand PB's different aspects, multiple experiments were performed, all of which regarded PB. There were four variants, or cohorts as we called them, of experiments. These cohorts participated either offline or online and completed one, two, or three simulations. Additionally, different voting methods were deployed in Cohort D to determine preferences for proposals.

Each cohort covered different aspects of the PB process and is described below.

- **Cohort A.** Participants in this cohort attended three offline sessions: a priority setting meeting in which participants identified community needs; a proposal setting meeting in which the aforementioned priorities were formulated into specific PB spending proposals; and a decision-making meeting in which participants decided which proposals would receive funding. Participants in Cohort A were involved for roughly seven to eight hours overall.
- **Cohort B.** Participants in this cohort attended two offline sessions: a proposal setting meeting and a decision-making meeting. Participants in Cohort B were involved for roughly five to six hours overall.
- **Cohort C.** Participants in this cohort attended one offline session: a decision-making meeting. Participants in Cohort B were involved for roughly 10 to 30 minutes.
- **Cohort D.** Participants in this cohort attended an online PB platform. Participants were randomly allocated to perform some version of the Session 1 tasks (priority setting), Session 2 tasks (proposal setting), or Session 3 tasks (decision-making). This cohort's involvement was expected to be a total of 10 to 30 minutes. Cohort D were provided different ways of decision-making that are elaborated later in this chapter.

What did we learn from the experiments?

Participants who attended were asked multiple questions. To start, we asked respondents a range of questions evaluated their experience. For the evaluation, respondents had to respond to statements ranging from 'I learnt things from others' to 'I am very satisfied with the decisions made by the group'. The first thing we see is that generally, all participants evaluated the process very positively.

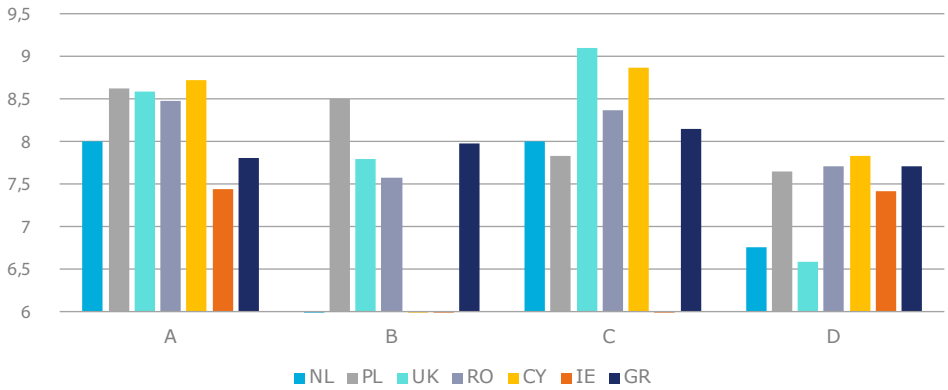
Next, we present four findings from the experiments as well as implications for practice. The first finding is the effect of PB participation on future willingness for PB participation; the second finding regards people's thoughts about the ease of reaching consensus; the third finding concerns people's preferences regarding voting methods, and the fourth finding presents people's thoughts about PB as *policy*: are they enthusiastic about this democratic innovation for their city?

Against the scientific backdrop of these experiments, there are considerations about the participants, the strength of the findings, the wording of the questions, and more. In this handbook, we do not elaborate on every methodological consideration, as these are offered in other DEMOTEC products, deliverables, and papers.

Effects of PB participation on future PB participation

Participants were asked whether they would collaborate in PB in their own city if it were organised the same as in their experimental cohort. Answers could range from 0 (not likely at all) to 10 (very likely).

Figure 3.1. Future intent after participating in an experimental PB cohort



In Figure 3.1, the averages per country are presented. The total averages are as follows:

- Cohort A (three offline sessions) had the second highest scores on this question: 8.24 (out of 10).
- Cohort B (two offline sessions) had, on average, a score of 7.96 on this question.
- Cohort C (one offline session) had the highest score on this question: 8.38.
- Cohort D (one online session) had, on average, the lowest score on this question: 7.38.

However, Figure 3.1 illustrates some notable differences per country. For example, the UK and the Netherlands, on average, had much lower future intent scores in Cohort D.

Generally, people who participated were highly likely to indicate that they would likely participate in the future; the averages are relatively high. It seems, however, that the people who participated in the online version (Cohort D), were, compared to the other cohorts, the least enthusiastic about future PB participation, although they were still highly willing. There could be selection effects: people chose to participate initially, which indicates that they're civic minded and more likely than the average person to seek to better their community. However, is it important to consider that – under the assumption that selection effects are present – people are enthusiastic about future participation. The experimental encounter did not lead to low proportions of future willingness; in other words, it was not a negative experience.

For practice, these findings indicate that when people have participated in a PB, they are likely to be enthusiastic about future participation. The different ratings between online and offline participants may due to a less pleasant experience for the online variant as well as the lack of interaction and deliberation, which is present in offline variants.

The possibility of reaching consensus

In Chapter 2, we discussed the merits of deliberation and its importance in PB and democratic innovations. The process of deliberation, when performed well, could

- produce a public that reflectively recognises shared needs and interests.
- produce ideal solutions to problems in meeting those needs and interests.

Both these properties require participants to co-operate and agree on the fact of shared needs and interests before consensus can be achieved regarding universally desirable solutions.

We asked respondents in each cohort whether it is difficult, maybe even impossible, to find solutions on which everyone agrees. Answers could vary from 0 (does not apply at all) to 10 (applies perfectly).

In Figure 3.2, we present the results per cohort and country. **Note that in these graphs and summaries, higher scores indicate that it is difficult to find solutions, and lower scores indicate that it is easier to find solutions.** The totals are as follows:

- Cohort A (three offline sessions) had, on average, a score of 5.29 (out of 10) on this question.
- Cohort B (two offline sessions) had, on average, a score of 5.05 on this question.
- Cohort C (one offline session) had, on average, a score of 5.45 on this question.
- Cohort D (one online session) had, on average, the highest score on this question: 6.13.

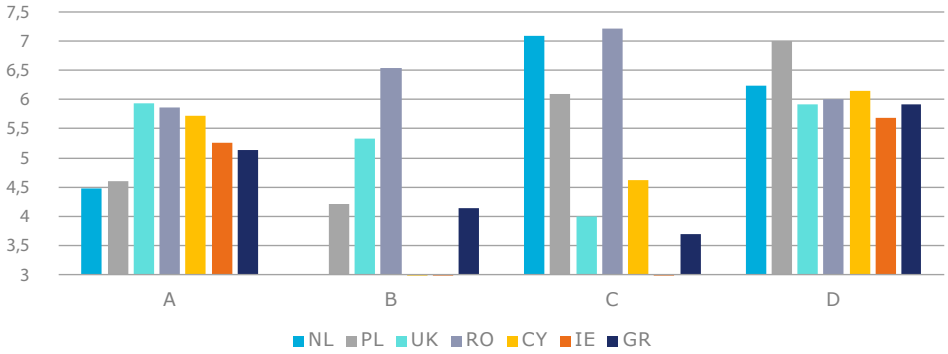


Figure 3.2. The difficulty of finding solutions that work for everyone
Generally, people who participated in the online version of the experiment (Cohort D) featured higher average scores on this question, which means that they think it is more difficult to find solutions on which everyone agrees. In the offline versions, participants thought it was not easy to find consensus solutions (there are no average scores near 1 or 2), but their scores were more favourable than those of Cohort D. Notably, Cohort C expressed a stark difference between countries, thereby indicating that meeting once – and reaching consensus – is evaluated differently across countries.

For practice, these findings indicate that people generally think it is more difficult to reach consensus in online PB variants than in offline variants. If the PB ambitions are aimed towards greater understanding, deliberation, and mutually beneficial solutions, then offline variants are likely to offer more success.

What do people think of the voting methods?

As mentioned previously, the experiments had four voting methods:

- single vote: a voter casts only one vote
- k-vote: a voter casts more than one vote
- ranked vote: a voter rates all available options from most to least desirable
- knapsack (or budget) vote: a voter allocates a monetary amount (in this case, the whole PB allowance, e.g., €100,000) to each available project (e.g., €15,000 for Project A, €20,000 for project B, etc.).

Participants were asked several questions about the voting methods to assess their evaluation of the method that they used and how easy the method was to use. Finally, each voting method was timed in seconds.

Cohort D participants were assigned a random voting method. We present findings regarding the voting methods.

Voting method evaluation

One statement to assess participants' evaluation was as follows: The voting method I used is a good way to make decisions about participatory budgeting.

1. When people from the same country cohort were offered either the ranked vote or k-vote, they deemed the k-vote as a better option.[1]
2. When people from the same country cohort were offered either the single vote or the knapsack vote, they deemed the knapsack vote as a better option.[2]

Voting method ease of use

Participants were also asked which type of voting they found easiest to use. The results indicate that, first, participants found ranked vote to be easier than the single vote.[3] Second, when people from the same country cohort were asked their opinion regarding ease of use for the single vote or the knapsack vote, the differences were non-significant. The scores for ease of use were, however, higher for the knapsack vote in these cases.

1 This was a significant difference.
2 This was a significant difference.
3 This was a significant difference.

Voting method time requirements

- In almost all instances, ranked voting required the most participant time.
- In all instances, knapsack voting (when ranked voting was not an option) required the most participant time.
- In Poland, participants were randomly offered one of three voting methods. Knapsack voting required the most time, followed by ranked voting; k-voting required the least time.

For practice, these findings indicate that participants felt that there were better and worse voting options. Generally, participants preferred having multiple voting options or a budget that they could freely divide. The ease of use for voting methods did not seem to matter significantly; however, people did not find it easy to have only one vote. Finally, ranked voting and knapsack voting required the most time, which is another indication that these types of voting may be more difficult. It demanded more time from participants, but they rated knapsack voting as one of the best options, so perhaps they felt that the amount of time required did not conflict with quality, and therefore, they did not mind if it demanded additional time.

What do people think of PB as policy?

In three countries (Poland, the United Kingdom, and Ireland), participants were asked how much they agreed with three statements regarding PB implementation as policy in their city **before and after participating in an experiment**:

1. In general, PB is a good way of making decisions related to the budget for local authorities.
2. PB would not lead to good decisions for [own city name].[4]
3. Any decision reached through the PB process should be implemented regardless of whether they were part of the PB.

The pre- and post-participation measurements demonstrate that most participants were more positive after their PB participation. When people collaborated in an experiment, they increasingly considered PB to be an ideal way of making decisions related to the local authorities' budgets, that PB would lead to appropriate decisions for their municipality, and that any decision reached through the PB process should be implemented.

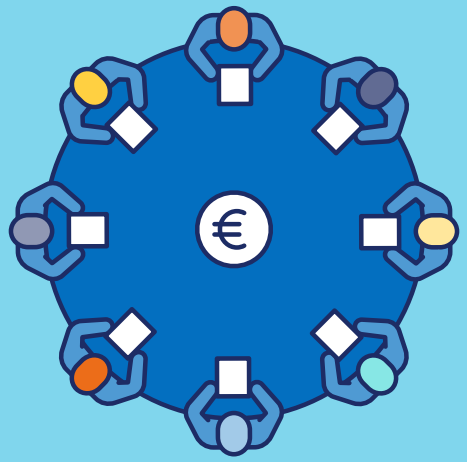
For practice, these results indicate that when people engage in PB, the experience enhances their enthusiasm about PB, making them more likely to think that PB is an effective way to make decisions, that it leads to healthy decisions for their city, and that the decisions from the process are appropriate, legitimate, and worthy of implementation.

4 This question is phrased negatively, meaning that higher responses in the post-measurement indicate that people became less enthusiastic about PB for their city. For the next figure, we recoded the measurements. In order to have the same directions as the others (higher = better, lower = worse).

Our PB road map

Follow this roadmap to design a PB yourself

The signs are clickable!



1 example

The first step involves participant selection. Who should participate in PB and why should they participate?

2 example

The purpose of Step 2 is to clearly establish internal parameters and strict processes regarding the initiative's design, implementation, and performance.

3 example

The third step delineates the PB process and finalises parts of Step 2, such as establishing the budget and making the planning for the sessions. These rules should be publicised in an official document or webpage that is freely accessible.

4 example

Step 4 is aimed ensuring that the people who should be participating are reached and invited. Frequently, projects begin without a clear plan regarding publicising and advertising.

5 example

In Step 5, the municipality and those responsible for the project must determine the method and medium through which the project will be conducted.

6 example

In this step, the actual decision-making occurs. When it is time to vote and decide upon proposals, this can be executed in a variety of ways.

7 example

In Step 7, the results, outcomes, and votes are declared. The way this information is conveyed and announced is decided by those responsible for the project.

8 example

Finally, in Step 8, the process comes full circle. At the end of the initiative, it is essential to evaluate how the process was designed, conducted, and implemented so that future endeavour participants can avoid mistakes and build upon the successes.

Our PB road map

A PB handbook should provide proper support for practical PB organisation. Throughout our research and writing of this handbook, we poured over data and numerous examples of successful PB implementation (and read about potential mistakes). When a country, municipality, or authority successfully implements PB, this is often due to meticulous planning, rigorous research, and careful evaluation.

We present our own road map, which has been synthesised from the DEMOTEC research, other road maps that are publicly available, and consultations with our DEMOTEC partners.

This road map comprises eight stages; we describe each stage and detail the required elements. We believe that following these stages has the potential to ensure that PB initiatives are implemented to achieve their full potential, whilst limiting errors that can be encountered.

Along with the descriptions and elements required for each stage, we offer examples chosen from eight European cities that experienced PB in different formats. We present these examples to provide a clear picture of how implementing a step *could* look.

Step 1: Prepare – identify stakeholders and form a planning group

The first step involves participant selection. Who should participate in PB and why should they participate? How should they be reached? Many PB processes are designed to be universally accessible, which means that they are open to all individuals within a territory or institution. However, some are targeted at specific audiences, including people of specific ages, residents of specific areas, people with migration backgrounds, people of specific sex, or other predefined groups.

- Create a steering committee that reflects the community and city. Include representatives from different target groups, such as the elderly, young people, those with disabilities, and those who experience poverty.
- Decide a meeting time frame, frequency, and location. This shapes the PB initiative and begins the overall design process.
- Instruct the steering committee to provide advice to the organizing authority, and ensure that the process is inclusive. This creates buy-in from the stakeholders and community.

Step 1 example: Antwerp

1. In their participatory endeavour, the city of Antwerp selected a steering group who would advise and oversee the project.
2. This steering committee was specifically designed to reflect city residents. It also guaranteed that those within the steering group came from marginalised groups.
3. The steering group did not vote or propose suggestions; their presence ensured that the project was not just left to the usual suspects.

Step 2: Prepare – establish internal parameters and name the PB process

The purpose of this stage is to clearly establish internal parameters and strict processes regarding the initiative's design, implementation, and performance. This is where the finer details are decided upon, so it is vital to consider questions such as the following:

1. Who is running and managing the process? Essentially, who is responsible and accountable for this project overall?
2. What is the budget?
3. Which institution is responsible to promote, advertise, and administer the project?
4. Are there specific mechanisms in place to ensure that the overall process is clear, open, and transparent?
5. What is the chosen route for idea generation and proposals? And how can this be clearly communicated to all stakeholders?
6. How will the possible choices and voting be addressed? Which types of voting will be decided upon? Each method has its own consequences (see page 41 for an explanation of the voting methods).
7. Are there specific themes and subjects that should be the focus of this PB journey? Should time and attention be devoted to a specific policy area, such as urban regeneration or sports activities?
8. Are the public's decisions binding, or are they merely a suggestion? This must be decided prior to starting the project.

For the PB process to run smoothly and to achieve its goals, clear expectations and parameters must be established for those who are designing and creating the initiative.

The internal expectations and parameters should cover topics and issues such as where the PB event will occur, what the geographical limits of the initiative will be, how much money will be available, how the projects will be deliberated and voted upon (i.e., offline deliberation but online voting), and what the PB time frame will be from inception to final delivery of project (i.e., six months, 12 months, or 18 months).

Step 2 example: Zeist

- The Dutch municipality of Zeist approved a PB process in which residents could determine how money would be spent regarding upcoming budget cuts. However, before this could begin, they established and agreed upon the parameters.
- Responsibility and accountability for the project was left to the municipality of Zeist. Additionally, the college (mayor and aldermen) and the city council of Zeist managed and designed the implementation process. The municipality was responsible to promote the initiative and inform residents.
- Transparency and clarity were ensured by detailing the process in the beginning. This guaranteed that all participants understood the process from idea generation to final decision-making.
- The residents' advisory committee chose a consent-based approach within thematic groups. The college reviewed final proposals for feasibility before submitting these to the council.
- Furthermore, the municipality clearly determined the geographical limits of the participation process, the voting process, and the financial scope of the PB scheme.

Step 3: Establish rules of the game – agree and publicise proposal criteria

The third step delineates the PB process and finalises parts of Step 2, such as establishing the budget and making the planning for the sessions. These rules should be publicised in an official document or webpage that is freely accessible. It is crucial to outline criteria regarding the types of projects that will be accepted for the PB initiative. These criteria can include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Time frame: can the project be completed within 12 months?
- Voting: what is the procedure, and are votes binding?
- Budget: do the proposals meet budget requirements?
- Novelty: is the project new? Does the submission fill a current service void, or is it a project that is currently not available within the area?
- Location: can the proposal be delivered within the geographical area?
- Beneficial: who or what will benefit from the proposal? Does it suit the needs of the residents in said area?
- Purpose: does the proposal have any religious or political connotations? PB initiatives often require projects to be apolitical or without religious affiliation.

Step 3 example: Roeselare and Gent

1. Within the Belgian area of Roeselare, clear criteria were outlined for citizens regarding acceptable proposals.
2. These outlines provided structure and clarity to those who desired to participate and suggest ideas.
3. The city of Gent added two additional sets of criteria: proposals must have a co-creation dynamic and must not have any religious or political connotations.

4. This ensured that the project was accessible and aimed for all citizens rather than one section of the city or population group.

Step 4: Create engagement – communicate aims

Step 4 is aimed ensuring that the people who should be participating are reached and invited. Frequently, projects begin without a clear plan regarding publicising and advertising. If a municipality desires to engage and inspire as many citizens as possible, then a media plan is essential.

- To engage as many people as possible, a comprehensive marketing campaign is required.
- This can be done in many ways: advertisements with legacy media, viral campaigns using social media, pop-up stations in busy areas, or work with local stakeholders and community leaders.
- Additionally, there can be added incentives to participate, such as vouchers or prizes awarded to individuals who submit an application or vote on the proposals.
- Using online platforms can also be an efficient way of collecting citizen data.

Step 4 example: Copenhagen

1. The Danish city of Copenhagen contacted over 20,000 people and secured 12,000 registrations for their projects within four months.
2. They employed a comprehensive campaign that utilised both offline and online technologies.
3. They based project representatives at popular city locations that have large numbers of commuters, shoppers, and residents. This ensured that they spoke with people in high-traffic areas.
4. Moreover, they created excitement and buzz throughout the project by offering prizes and bonuses for those who participated and submitted. Additionally, they held events at community spaces that were separate from the participatory initiatives, using these opportunities to discuss their participatory schemes with residents who attended these events.

Step 5: Perform PB – process applications and create a space (online or offline) for deliberation

In Step 5, the municipality and those responsible for the project must determine the method and medium through which the project will be conducted. These choices include whether proposals should be listed online on a webpage, messaging board, or forum or offline via a suggestion box or during a physical meeting. Additionally, those responsible for the project must decide how choices will be made and deliberated: offline, online, or a combination of both; however, each choice has benefits and consequences. The offline option can be more time consuming but may ensure greater deliberation due to the face-to-face nature of the experience. Online deliberation can allow certain citizens (such as those with impairments or language barriers) the time and space to consider their choices.

- Idea generation: citizens are encouraged to submit proposals, which can be collected through various platforms or at meetings; this ensures that the process is inclusive and accessible.
- Idea submission: before processing and deliberating on the submissions begins, the steering committee must choose whether this will occur offline or online.

- Online submission and deliberation enable citizens and civil servants to view and assess submissions in real time, thereby allowing debate and discussion regarding the submissions' merits on the forum. Moderators can dispel myths or rumours about particular submissions. Additionally, this can increase transparency and overall confidence in the process.
- Offline submission and deliberation provide a physical space where citizens can meet and discuss the proposals. Those who lack access to technology or are digitally illiterate have better opportunities to contribute; however, this process is more time consuming and expensive overall.
- From ideas to proposals: feasible proposals can be developed in workshops or in collaboration between citizens and experts or officials to ensure that proposals are viable and impactful.

Step 5 example: Fife

1. Within the region of Fife, Scotland, the submission and deliberation phase was conducted online.
2. They created an online forum where submissions were uploaded.
3. This allowed ideas and suggestions to be debated and evaluated.
4. Facilitators and moderators could examine submissions in real time and respond directly to questions posed by citizens within the forum. Any particular rumours or myths surrounding the submissions and proposals could be addressed on the forum. This process was deemed largely transparent and enhanced overall confidence in the scheme.

Step 6: Decide – begin voting rounds

In this step, the actual decision-making occurs. When it is time to vote and decide upon proposals, this can be executed in a variety of ways.

- Voting can occur in person, and proposals can be evaluated and decided upon by the citizenry in a short time (i.e., one day).
- Voting can occur online, with the time span lasting for several days or even weeks.
- Voting execution is also open to various formats, such as in single votes, k-votes, ranked votes, and knapsack votes (see page 41 for an explanation of voting methods).
- Voting manner and format should be decided well in advance, ideally during Step 2, with formal establishment in Step 3.

Step 6 example: London

1. Within the borough of Tower Hamlets, the voting process was conducted offline whilst utilising technology.
2. Citizens gathered in the town hall.
3. Participants were asked to vote for the project they deemed most important.
4. The proposal with the most votes was purchased, and the money required for this project was removed from the total PB sum. Voting then began for the second most important project.
5. This process was repeated until all the money was spent.
6. All votes and the total amount of money for each project were displayed on a screen at the front of the hall.
7. The voting process was conducted via electronic voting pads.
8. Voting was instantaneous and transparent.

Step 7: Make it happen – determine results and outcomes

In Step 7, the results, outcomes, and votes are declared. The way this information is conveyed and announced is decided by those responsible for the project, but the results must be communicated clearly and widely.

- Once all the votes have been collected and processed, the results are announced. This can be done instantly if the votes are submitted and collected physically, or they can be announced at a later date once the voting process has closed.
- Those who have participated (and the wider community) must be able to access the voting outcomes. They can be published online or offline, but the results must be clear and transparent.
- Local authorities are an invaluable part of the implementation phase. They oversee the technical, logistical, and financial aspects of executing the projects selected through the PB process, ensuring that everything runs smoothly. This includes procuring services, managing contracts, requiring compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks, and providing technical support. Their role in PB implementation should not be underestimated (especially in Steps 2 and 3).

Frequently, criticisms levelled at municipalities and local authorities have suggested that the PB results are not widely communicated, which can detract from the momentum that has been generated throughout the PB process.

Step 7 example: Liverpool

1. Within the city of Liverpool, residents participated to decide how to split £26,000 across 16 proposals that were designed to reduce and prevent crime while promoting youth-based projects.
2. Residents noted that the participatory initiative nurtured and cultivated key relationships and networks amongst the community. The monetary gain was a secondary bonus to the actual networking and support instigated by the initiative.
3. Afterwards, residents explained that the project produced a more cohesive front, which in turn contributed to addressing issues that are deemed important to the community.

Step 8: Close the circle – evaluate, improve, and repeat

Finally, in Step 8, the process comes full circle. At the end of the initiative, it is essential to evaluate how the process was designed, conducted, and implemented so that future endeavours can avoid mistakes and build upon the successes. It is therefore important to have both internal and external evaluations.

- Internal evaluations should be distributed to all involved departments, bodies, and actors that were involved in the initiative. These evaluations should be used to assess not only relevant statistics, such as work hours required for the initiative, but also to measure expenditures and experiences from civil servants and policymakers.
- External evaluations should be disseminated amongst the citizens who participated (and if possible, those who did not participate to establish why they did not participate). Additionally, the evaluation should determine participants' demographics, motivation, and willingness to

participate as well as suggestions regarding how the project and initiative can be improved for future implementations. Further questions could seek information regarding which initiative participants voted for and why they voted in this manner.

- Once these steps are completed, the feedback must be processed, internalised, and implemented to ensure that the next PB round improves on previous mistakes and errors.

Step 8 example: Lisbon

1. Lisbon's city council developed and implemented both internal and external feedback mechanisms.
2. Surveys were sent to those who were involved in the project on the municipality's side as well as external actors, such as the citizens who participated.
3. After the results and data were collected and collated, the results were uploaded to ensure transparency and to enable citizens to see how the project was perceived by both internal and external actors.

Final remarks on the road map

This road map details PB stages; however, we must stress that it is not set in stone and can be moulded and shaped depending on the context, scale, and viability of the PB initiative. Similarly, the examples listed are included for inspiration regarding PB implementation in your own jurisdiction.

Lessons on PB organisation from DEMOTEC countries

Thus far, we presented findings from our experiments. These findings reveal important consequences of distinctive types of PB organisation – offline, online, and voting type.

Then we presented a PB road map for practical PB organisation.

Here, we present lessons from DEMOTEC countries. For each country, we performed a case study about the PB in that country or city. Each case presents practical lessons.

What follows are the experiences that were witnessed during PB processes in seven DEMOTEC countries. From these experiences, we extracted lessons and warnings that focus on the experience of the PB process and the specifics of what happened as a consequence of the PB project.

Scotland: Fife

Legislation secures PB growth. Strong legislation and regulations enabled the institutionalisation of PB and embedded it further into the governance ecosystem: 1% of local budgets are mandated to be spent on PB initiatives. This ensures that PB is not a gimmick or a one-time event whilst sustaining and further establishing the practice.

Start small and grow. PB initiatives have been scaled over time, thereby demonstrating a route from which others can learn. Fife council began with a small-grants model and have gradually implemented PB with larger budget areas, such as transport. This allows for uncertainties and potential issues to be resolved when the stakes are low whilst building confidence in the process overall and can help foster support.

Conclusion. Fife's PB journey reflects a commendable level of citizen participation, challenge navigation, and effective outcomes. By harnessing PB's power to engage citizens in shaping their communities, Fife is a positive example of participatory democracy. As PB continues to evolve with related deliberative instruments such as citizen juries, addressing challenges and maximising its effectiveness are critical to sustain its role in driving inclusive and responsive governance.

Poland: Wałbrzych

Legislation helps. Mandatory PB implementation in large cities has ensured that PB is continued and embedded within local Polish government structures. This alleviates some of the pressure for politicians and civil servants to justify PB projects.

Technology's double-edged sword. Voting for PB projects is often completed online. This can make the process more efficient and transparent; however, this can also hinder participation from older voters, those who experience digital poverty, or those who are technologically illiterate.

PB enthusiasm gradually wanes. Citizen participation is decreasing since the initial highs and adoption by citizens. This is attributed to delays and legal constraints as well as initial high expectations. Additionally, there has been a shift away from local projects towards citywide ventures, which further decreases uptake and enthusiasm for PB.

Lack of evaluations and data. PB initiatives are criticised for collecting insufficient ex ante and post-project data. This prevents the city's ability to assess and evaluate the success (and failure) of PB projects, which in turn stunts the opportunity for growth and tailoring future participatory initiatives.

Conclusion. Wałbrzych's PB journey reflects the city's commitment to engage citizens in local decision-making and promote collaborative governance. PB leaders noted challenges in maintaining citizen participation and overcoming implementation hurdles; however, the initiative contributed to urban revitalisation and self-organisation. The city recognises the importance of continuous efforts to enhance participation, streamline administrative processes, and gather meaningful data for evaluation. By learning from both successes and challenges, Wałbrzych is positioned to further strengthen its PB approach and contribute to the evolution of Poland's participatory democracy.

Romania: Cluj-Napoca

Internal implementation. Critics dislike the internal workings and bureaucracy of Romanian municipalities when designing and implementing PB, which means that leaders must address technical, administrative, and organisational culture as well as challenges if PB is to grow within the city and country.

PB platform tweaking. The platform that is often used to collate and process PB suggestions and applications has been accused of limiting PB projects. For PB initiatives to run online, the platform used must be easily accessible and user-friendly. If this is not achievable, then PB initiatives should operate both online and offline in a multi-channel approach.

Social justice dynamic. Romanian PB projects have, at times, been noted as lacking a social-justice perspective. PB is often used to offer communities and sections of society a voice in local decisions; hence, there must be a stronger emphasis on projects that rectify historical injustices and prioritise underprivileged sections of society.

Conclusion. Cluj-Napoca's PB provides valuable insights into the challenges and potential of democratic engagement through budget allocation. Whilst there are positive outcomes, such as building trust and stimulating community involvement, the observed shortcomings are limited inclusivity, lack of deliberation, slow rollout of winning projects and project scale. Addressing these challenges and incorporating lessons learnt can enhance PB to promote citizen participation and improve local governance.

The Netherlands: Rotterdam

Building on citizen participation culture can ensure further PB momentum. The Netherlands lacks specific PB legislation. However, PB projects have been linked and aligned with other local policies such as Wijk Aan Zet (which translates to 'it's the neighbourhood's turn'), which aims to empower local neighbourhoods and transfer power to them. This culture of working together with communities and local citizens can launch more PB projects.

Financial uncertainties and unclear communication. Rotterdam's PB initiatives have been criticised for not establishing clear expectations or outlining the specific PB project allocations. This lack of communication and inability to clearly express how much funding is available is detrimental to the PB processes. Neighbourhoods within Rotterdam have observed the lack of a dedicated PB budget as well as uncertainties surrounding project

funding. Both are a brake on the momentum and energy being invested into PB initiatives.

Participatory processes improve wider knowledge and comprehension of governance structures. Residents who collaborated in the participatory schemes are reported to have an improved comprehension of local governance and decision-making processes. Citizens working together in conjunction with those at the municipality create a learning experience that exceeds mere engagement and enables a culture of empowerment and ownership.

Conclusion. The Rotterdam case study highlights the city's journey towards institutionalising PB within the framework of neighbourhood empowerment. Challenges related to commitment, representation, and urban context shape the evolution of PB processes. Lessons from experiences in specific neighbourhoods (Middelland and Bospolder-Tussendijken) emphasise the significance of transparent communication, accountability, and flexibility in implementing successful PB initiatives.

Ireland: Sligo

Previous participatory and citizen initiatives suggest an appetite for schemes. Throughout Ireland, various implementations of democratic innovations and participatory schemes have occurred, such as the citizen assemblies and citizen juries that focus on controversial issues within Irish society. The success and utilisation of these democratic innovations imply that Irish society has space to increase participatory initiatives.

Need to utilise existing organisations in local initiatives. Within Sligo, existing community groups, such as Sligo Local Community Development Committee and Public Participation Network assist in community planning and connecting local community groups; however, PB events are yet to be hosted under the umbrella of these groups. There is a base of supportive community groups; if these can be harnessed correctly, then PB events can be hosted more regularly and on a larger scale.

Moreover, the pilot event implemented in Sligo showed that deliberative methods can be successfully delivered with sufficient capacity and support through existing funding instruments such as the Town Centre Fund.

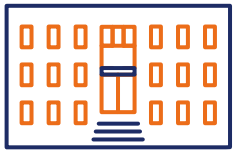
Conclusion. The case study highlights Sligo's potential for PB implementation within an existing framework of citizen engagement. Whilst PB experiences are limited in Ireland, there is growing interest and commitment to enhancing citizen involvement. Overcoming challenges such as knowledge dissemination, contextual understanding, and capacity building is crucial for successful PB implementation in Sligo specifically and in Ireland as a whole.

Cyprus: Ypsonas

Structural administrative issues. Cyprus has been criticised for having an overly centralised governance structure and has been accused of underfunding local administrations. Consequently, minimal staff work in local authorities, and the authorities have minimal finances. The combination of a lack of autonomy and minimal funding often prevents the development and implementation of PB initiatives.

Underdeveloped civic society. For PB schemes to be implemented, there is often a relationship between the local authorities and local community or civic groups. These groups work in conjunction to design and implement these proposals. However, within Cyprus, this is often not the case. Civic society on the island is reportedly underdeveloped, which seriously harms efforts in initiating these schemes.

Conclusion. Cyprus has experienced phases of fragmentation, centralisation, and reform in local governance that have influenced its current structure and challenges. Reforms aimed at decentralisation and financial autonomy have begun, but underfunding and limited administrative capacity persist. PB implementation in Cyprus is nascent, and issues of design, recruitment, and documentation need attention. Civic society is underdeveloped, which hinders participatory processes beyond formal politics. Cyprus must promote awareness, understanding, and support for civil society organisations and participatory democracy.



Greece: Neapoli-Sykies

Greece lacks PB experiences. This requires political will, engagement efforts, and inclusion of socially excluded groups. Some municipalities, such as Ioannina, Chalandri and Kifissia, have tried out different forms of PB. These have been successful because the local administrations have been willing to try this and there is already a culture of participation among citizens.

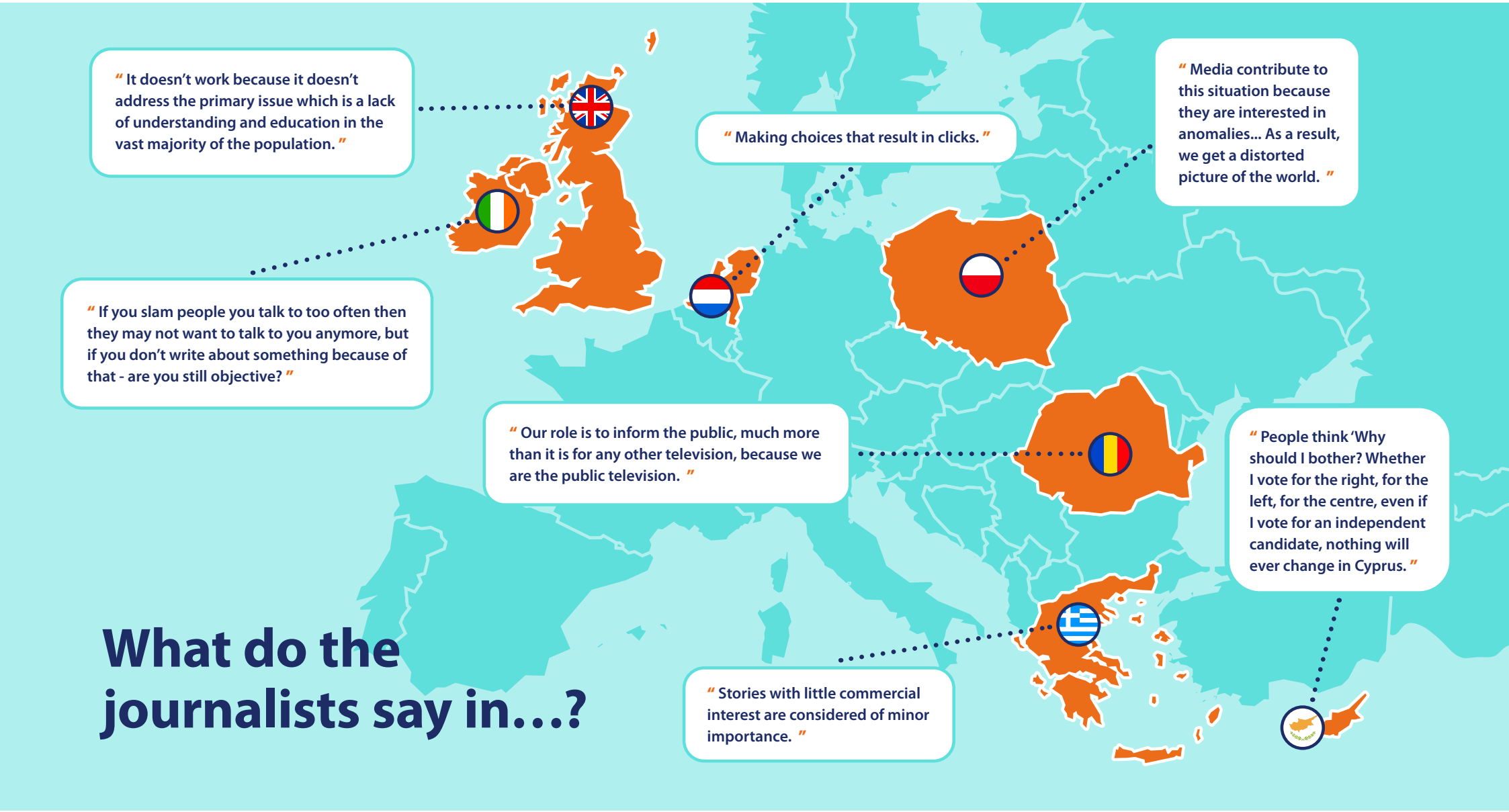
- Keep an open mind and listen to others. Fix mistakes, make processes easier and use EU funding.
- EU funding can help make PB work, but you need to plan for it to continue after the funding ends.

Conclusion: The analysis shows the challenges, efforts and potential of PB in Greece. To make digital divide issues, trust, empowering underrepresented groups and long-term sustainability work, you need to plan and use resources well.

Closing remarks

In this chapter, we presented findings from our experiments in DEMOTEC countries, a road map for practical PB design and organisation, and lessons from DEMOTEC cities and countries regarding PB organisation. For more information on the experiments or the source material for the lessons, please refer to the DEMOTEC project website: https://demotec-project.eu/

4 Media and engagement



What do the journalists say in…?

Chapter 4 - Media and engagement

Recognising the challenges and benefits of working with the media to better publicise PB initiatives

The goal of this chapter is to present an exploration of the media's role in creating societal engagement with democratic innovations.

In this chapter, we consider specific challenges and issues that journalists face when reporting on democratic innovation; these considerations are important for how civil servants and policymakers can bridge the gaps that are relevant to journalists. Appropriate synergies between local authorities or governments and journalists can promote greater awareness of and engagement in democratic innovations, thereby increasing the perceived legitimacy of such democratic processes.

To mediate the media

General key findings and recommendations

Media organisations and journalists are generally not involved in designing and implementing democratic innovations. However, they can have a relatively strong influence on democratic innovations via their framing, reporting, and publicising or lack thereof.

This chapter presents recommendations for resolving the challenges and tensions that are often experienced between local authorities, civil servants, policymakers, journalists, and the wider media:

- Collaborative planning
- Multichannel outreach, online resource hub, and open communication channels
- Media landscape analysis and scope of opportunities for collaboration
- Training and capacity enhancement

Each of these recommendations is related to the challenges that journalists experience, which are described later. These challenges and tensions are as follows:

- Limited media resources
- National relevance versus local irrelevance
- Professional perceptions of newsworthiness versus public interest
- Short-form coverage versus long-form coverage
- General unwillingness to report complicated issues
- Knowledge-based reluctance to report on political issues that they are not fully aware of or do not fully comprehend

These challenges and tensions do not have simple fixes, and governments often cannot solve them; however, these issues delineate the media's capacity and willingness to cover democratic innovations. These problems aid governments as they establish realistic expectations regarding their expectations of the media. Additionally, they can guide the development of synergies and mechanisms that assist media professionals as they cover democratic innovations that are framed as relevant, exciting, and interesting stories. The following analysis is the culmination of processing numerous datasets and reports that were delivered for DEMOTEC's Work Package 2.[1]

1 Work Package 2 was devoted to examining the mediated deliberation of participatory budgeting. Its purpose was to analyse the determinants of effective citizen engagement in PB, identify lessons for effect and efficient methods for citizen engagement as well as to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and exchange of experience on democratic innovations among practitioners between countries and authorities at different levels.

Introduction

When local authorities initiate and implement a democratic innovation such as PB, many issues must be considered for that participatory act to run smoothly and successfully. This could range from ensuring that the process is transparent to local citizenry's potentially large uptake or to adequate and useful media coverage that increases people's interest and engagement.

Outside of a municipality's actions and decisions and citizens' willingness, the media can be a determining factor regarding whether the process will be successful. The media can report on democratic innovations, make them known to the public, and monitor events in and around these democratic innovations. Additionally, the media's framing of the democratic innovation's conception and implementation influences the perceived legitimacy and success of these initiatives.

The media's role is covered in this chapter, and the chapter's purpose is to assist those who are trying to design, implement, and execute PB initiatives. Throughout this chapter, we consider specific challenges and issues faced by journalists when reporting on democratic innovations; these considerations are important as civil servants and policymakers bridge gaps that are relevant to journalists. Appropriate synergies between governments and journalists can contribute to a greater awareness of and engagement in democratic innovations and ultimately to their perceived legitimacy.

The media is not an extension of a government's communication department, but journalists and news outlets have an important role in democracy: they inform citizens, gatekeep certain stories, and hold politicians accountable. These functions are also relevant within democratic innovations, as citizens need to know that an initiative is occurring before they participate. Informing citizens about upcoming PB events is a government task, but the media *can* have a significant role. Additionally, the media fulfil an important purpose during and after a PB: they inform the public how the budget is divided, how decisions are made, and the overall outcome of the PB process.

This chapter is divided into three parts.

Recommendations for synergy and overcoming media challenges. First, we present four detailed recommendations that can be used to overcome specific challenges and issues faced by journalists when reporting on democratic innovations. These recommendations address multiple tensions, and then we justify the rationale behind each recommendation.

Journalists perceptions and motivations. Based on interviews with journalists, we consider various issues, examining journalists' felt duties and responsibilities as well as how these influence coverage and reporting of democratic innovations. Additionally, we address journalists' specific needs and system incentives as well as journalists' perceptions towards democratic innovations, their audiences, and their roles and duties as journalists.

Context and factors to consider when engaging with the media. Finally, we contextualise important aspects: the current media reach within the case study countries, the various trust levels between different media types, the media landscape differences between the seven case study countries, and the media framing and reporting of democratic innovations.

By the end of this chapter, readers will have a broader understanding of the dynamics between the media and those in governance roles and can use the lessons, frameworks, and recommendations to enhance their PB initiatives and processes.

Recommendations for synergy and overcoming media tensions

Whilst policymakers and civil servants may not necessarily be able to resolve the tensions detailed below, it is essential to draw attention to and be aware of these issues. What follows in this section are four recommendations that address overlapping tensions that are often present in the media landscape. By utilising these suggestions and recognising some of the difficulties faced by journalists, policymakers may decrease some of journalists' challenges and increase synergy between the media and the municipalities, which could increase engagement and participation while also improving PB processes.

Recommendation 1: Collaborative planning and segmented reporting

Foster partnerships between different outlets and encourage collaboration and resource pooling amongst different media outlets. Often, media organisations lack resources, so urging the sharing of, for example, data and research materials can enhance the depth and breadth of reporting.

Aim to separate long-term PB processes into smaller, more digestible segments that journalists can cover. This enables media outlets to manage their limited resources, offer reasonable assignments to journalists, and report developments incrementally.

Finally, media outlets need to have information, crucial updates, and intermediate reports provided to illuminate project developments.

This recommendation simplifies the following three challenges:

- Limited resources
- National versus local reporting
- Short-form versus long-form reporting

PB is often a lengthy process, taking weeks or months, which requires a significant investment of resources from outlets and journalists, which is often not available, especially in local media (although these journalists are best situated to report on the story). A balance must be found in which adequate mechanisms are in place to allow journalists and outlets to be in a position from which they can accurately and repeatedly report on PB's various stages.

Recommendation 2: Media landscape analysis and scope of opportunities for collaboration

We suggest conducting a comprehensive analysis to identify key outlets at all levels (national, regional, and local) and to understand their strengths and weaknesses. The same can be performed to identify both online and offline outlets. Such an analysis can be the start of targeted engagement and improved resource allocation, which would ensure better coverage of PB initiatives.

This recommendation has the potential to facilitate the following three challenges:

- Limited resources
- National versus local media
- Offline versus online media

Many journalists stated during the interviews that they have limited access to resources, including time, money, contacts, skills, and staff within the workplace. Commercial pressures lead to short, click-bait-driven stories because articles that cover PB are often driven by clicks and views, which results in shallow reporting. Such coverage can be to the detriment of the PB process. Additionally, journalists stated that there has been a steady decline in the professionalisation of journalists, which further contributes to poor reporting and a lack of contacts with those in power who may initiate PB acts.

Often, there is a divide between national and local media outlets. National media outlets typically have more funds, journalists, and other resources than local media. However, national reporters are frequently unfamiliar with local areas or communities that are developing PB initiatives or other democratic innovations, which can lead to an imbalance of reporting, as local journalists may be under-resourced and underqualified but best positioned to report on local PB and democratic innovations since they know the community, with journalists often residing in the area. This imbalance is a contradiction that can be detrimental to PB initiatives and those reporting on them.

For example, a Dutch journalist who worked for a national outlet stated that they would not devote time to a 'budget thing in Woerden',[2] since this small-town story was not worthy of such resources.

Recommendation 3: Training and capacity enhancement

Invest in journalist training programmes and workshops with a focus on PB and democratic innovations. Enhanced skills and knowledge can lead to better, more appropriate reporting that connects democratic innovations with various audiences.

When possible, encourage co-operation between different levels of media outlets. Partnerships between local and national outlets increase information sharing as well as overall coverage of the initiative.

This also promotes synergy between the different levels, as national outlets provide more resources and expertise whilst local outlets contribute a greater understanding of community needs and local actors.

This recommendation may facilitate the following four challenges:

- Limited resource access
- Reporting quality
- Rural versus urban divide
- Online versus offline divide
- Knowledge-based reluctance to report on political issues that journalists are not fully aware of or do not fully comprehend
- Professional perceptions of newsworthiness versus public interest

2 A Dutch city with approximately 50.000 inhabitants.

There is a split between those who report, work, and live in rural areas and those in urban areas. People who live in rural areas tend to be older and rely on traditional media, such as print media or TV outlets, whilst those who are younger tend to live in urban areas and receive their news from digital or social media outlets.

The issue is then that older constituents may have more time to participate but may not know of initiatives in their area (or may not have the option of collaborating in PB in rural areas). Those who are younger may be more likely to know how to follow and vote on PB developments but may not participate due to the click-bait framing of PB acts that they may read online.

The interviewees noted the tension between the needs and requirements of each outlet's audiences, which can mean that journalists are wary of covering a story that they believe is not aimed at their audience.

Internet availability varies from country to country and region to region, impacting not only those who read about new PB stories but also those who live in different geographical areas. The interviewees repeatedly mentioned the frequent focus on the negative aspects of PB stories, such as specific scandals or conflicts and controversies.

Recommendation 4: Multichannel outreach, online resource hub, and open channels of communication

Develop a multichannel outreach strategy that leverages both traditional and digital media to reach diverse audiences in urban and rural geographies. An online resource hub can provide accessible information, reports, and contacts that aid journalists in their reporting efforts. Establishing regular and open communication channels as well as updating journalists on policy developments and PB initiatives offers opportunities to report on democratic innovations.

This final recommendation may ease the following six challenges:

- Rural versus urban audiences
- Online versus offline preferences
- National versus local media
- General unwillingness to report complicated issues
- Knowledge-based reluctance to report on political issues that journalists are not fully aware of or do not fully comprehend
- Professional perceptions of newsworthiness versus public interest

Here again, the addressed challenges are similar to those for the previous recommendation: (1) the split between rural and urban areas and (2) the age gaps that accompany this split. Additionally, internet availability is relevant in reaching people in various regions; consequently, a combination of online and offline media may increase reach and engagement.

Finally, due to the commercial pressures placed upon media outlets, journalists are motivated to frame stories in a sensationalist way to increase circulation and readership levels, which may not only turn people off to participating but also result in a decrease in trust in both citizens and those in the public sector who work with those in the media. The idea should be to develop communication mechanisms and channels that address different types of media. It is considerably important that journalists receive ready-made material as PB progresses so that they can cover each implementation step, the outcome of the process, and the final product of the PB.

Conclusion

This section was devoted to understanding the tensions and challenges within the media, the pressures journalists encounter, and how civil servants, policymakers, and journalists can improve their working relationships when covering democratic innovations. Whilst each country has a unique media landscape and governance structures, we hope that these recommendations are a starting point for improving possible synergies between local authorities and media organisations.

Media organisations and journalists are not extensions of local authorities, but they are important actors in democracy. Knowing stakeholders' challenges and tensions can enable civil servants and policymakers to initially determine realistic expectations when they want to involve journalists. However, these recommendations are not a magic bullet that can solve and cure all the issues detailed in this section; rather, they provide understanding of the complexities and dynamics within these networks. In the next section, we examine journalists' individual perceptions and motivations; the included responses were extracted from dozens of interviews conducted throughout this research project.

Journalists' perceptions and motivations

Throughout the interviews, journalists frequently detailed their perceptions and opinions towards local authorities, citizens, and their own industry. Whilst their beliefs may be unique and idiosyncratic (and not necessarily representative of journalists in all countries), they begin to paint a broader picture of journalists' perceptions of their own work, their audience, and their colleagues.

Civil servants and policymakers should consider how those in the media view others and employ these perceptions to create fruitful relationships. Therefore, the function of this section is to elucidate the perceptions of and wider relationship between journalists, policymakers, governance structures, and media outlets.

The first section includes some key takeaways and then offers a detailed overview of the journalists' responses that shaped these observations.

Key takeaways based on journalists' views

1. Depending on the country, PB can alienate or empower citizens.
Journalists are mixed in their belief towards participatory acts: some outlined that there is already a high degree of political corruption within society; this corruption fosters alienation and apathy towards new forms of democratic renewal and democratic innovations.

Other journalists, however, specified that participatory acts encourage public involvement, although they must be implemented in good faith, not just as symbolic acts.

2. Local authorities can either make or break participatory acts.
Whilst some journalists reported that local authorities are valued and demonstrate their responsibility towards citizens, others recognised that an excessive amount of power can be centralised within a country, which weakens the local authority's capacity and therefore limits the potential of citizen participation.

3. Journalists believe in people power (most of the time).
Journalists often recognised that citizens desire to participate but may need to be encouraged to empower themselves. However, for citizens to participate, more structure is needed, as often citizens may be lacking in resources and skills that allow successful participation.

4. Journalists have mixed levels of enthusiasm towards participation.
Some journalists spoke passionately regarding personal collaboration in participatory acts, recognising that including journalists in the process may ensure greater accountability from all participants (citizens, media, and local authorities).

However, other journalists were reluctant to participate, as this could blur the lines between a journalist's responsibilities: their role is not to promote values but to report facts.

Perceptions of the effectiveness of participatory acts

Journalists in both Cyprus and Greece perceived that participatory acts have a limited impact. They attributed this to their nations' significant degree of political corruption, weak economy, and high unemployment. When combined, these factors contribute to alienation and general apathy towards democratic practices, which in turn weakens efforts to initiate novel forms of democratic participation.

Conversely, journalists in Ireland, Poland, and Romania tended to be more positive regarding the effectiveness of participatory acts. The Irish journalists we interviewed stated that these democratic tools are valued, and trust in democratic institutions is relatively high compared to the other countries studied. Romanian journalists spoke of how citizens value these participatory acts and how these acts are seen as a method to improve public involvement. This sentiment was shared by Polish journalists who provide practical and advisory information that increases public engagement in participatory acts.

The Dutch and British journalists, however, reported that their citizens remain undecided on the impact and effectiveness of these participatory acts. Dutch journalists mentioned that the low trust in democratic institutions has impacted citizens' willingness to participate within democratic initiatives. British journalists echoed this sentiment, noting that whilst some view participatory acts as useful, others consider them to be mostly symbolic, lacking genuine transformational power.

Perceptions of local authorities

In Cyprus, Greece, Poland, and the Netherlands, the journalists' perception was mixed: journalists stated that local authorities have a significant and influential (both good and bad) role in shaping the outcome of participatory acts. The Polish journalists said that local authorities feel responsible towards communities; however, they noted the deepening links and dependencies between authorities and the media, which can border into favours and unseen influence between the two parties. Similarly, the journalists from the Netherlands expressed that local authorities significantly impact what is reported in the media. Related decisions, actions, and transparency – and how these influence the news coverage – may not be clear. Journalists from both Cyprus and Greece explained that there are mixed images of the local authorities as well as conflicting interest groups; when these are present, journalists stated that they doubt the capabilities of citizens when having to make informed decisions.

The journalists from Ireland and Romania were more negative than others regarding local authorities. Irish journalists stated that a centralised system in the country weakens local authorities and constrains citizen participation, whereas Romanian journalists stated that it can be challenging to report on PB because media outlets and journalists have limited resources, which makes it difficult to cover and then follow up on PB processes. Additionally, they reported that there are close ties between the media and politicians, which implies that corruption may be present.

The UK journalists were the only participants who offered a more positive perception: they stated that local authorities recognise that PB can contribute to identifying community needs. Moreover, using PB can be beneficial PR for local authorities, as it fosters trust between citizens and increases participation. However, journalists stated that they believe PB acts that are instigated by local authorities can be viewed as tokenistic and warn that these beliefs could increase if the process is not sufficiently transparent.

Perceptions of average citizens

Dutch, Irish, and Romanian journalists presented more positive perceptions of citizens than our other participants. Irish journalists stated that citizens are often capable and qualified to participate; however, the level of interest varies depending on the citizens, and available time is an important parameter. Romanian journalists were hopeful regarding citizens and noted a positive view of those who collaborate in participatory acts, explaining that citizens are often knowledgeable

and effective when participating. Dutch journalists outlined that citizen participation is necessary; additionally, they stated that Dutch citizens demonstrate a desire to influence their community. British journalists had a mixed perception, noting that citizens are generally interested in participation, although challenges exist; for example, disparities in resources and skills may limit involvement by average citizens and PB can be exploited by politicians.

Greek and Cypriot journalists saw little hope among the citizens, doubting whether the populace have the skills or knowledge to participate; furthermore, they questioned whether citizens would prioritise personal interests over those of the wider community.

Willingness and motivations to participate

Journalists from Cyprus, Britain, and Ireland offered similar views regarding their own willingness to participate. The Cypriot and Irish journalists stated their desire to participate, although citizens need further education and information. The journalists from Ireland noted a belief in democratic innovations, as these build inclusion, empower citizens, and provide greater clarity regarding the public decision-making process, which can counter democratic apathy as well as enhance collective problem-solving. Journalists noted that, within the UK, they can present the PB case as attractive and interesting; additionally, they stated that when they participate in the process, they ensure greater accountability.

Greek, Polish, and Dutch journalists presented slightly more mixed views. Greek journalists expressed their disappointment in their profession's failure to fulfil its societal role. However, they suggested ways and proposed solutions to improve civic engagement. Polish journalists were

also mixed: some were willing to promote civic values and participate in these democratic innovations, whilst others stated that it is not their role to promote values but only to report facts.

The Dutch detailed that participation is contingent on the journalists' personal interest in the participatory acts and the individual subject matter, as these influence whether a journalist will choose to cover the PB process.

Conclusion

There are strong differences in journalists' perceptions of the effectiveness of participatory acts, the role of local authorities in participatory acts, and the citizens' willingness and ability to participate. Every case is different when developing a media strategy, so it is vital that policymakers and civil servants understand the initial conditions, as these shape the way the project is perceived, framed, and reported. Additionally, journalists have their own normative stances and biases; therefore, it is important to invest in relationships with local reporters and journalists. Building a strong and reciprocal relationship with media professionals whilst providing information and assistance – which may be tailored to their needs (e.g., audiovisual material introducing local PB initiatives) – can have an important impact on how journalists are informed, understand the particular project, and present as well as frame PB.

In our final section, we examine contextual factors that shape media consumption and frame democratic innovations.

Context and factors to consider when engaging the media

Here, we attempt to contextualise the key takeaways, professionals' perceptions, and our conclusions. Media context varies from country to country and region to region; therefore, journalists' view of their job, their role, and the citizens differ significantly, thereby affecting the overall perception and coverage of PB processes.

The information that follows is based on two work packages that focussed on media behaviour; they included both qualitative and quantitative datasets.

Media context observations

National over local. National media outlets tend to ignore local initiatives and focus on national news stories.

Local outlet conflicts. Smaller outlets may be the ideal way to publicise PB processes, but there can be conflicts of interest between those in the media and local politicians, sometimes to the detriment of the democratic innovation in question.

Volume of articles. The ratio of articles and tweets concerning or focusing on PB is relatively low considering the number of initiatives present within society.

Relevance of reporting. When PB was mentioned, it was typically a secondary theme in a story rather than the focus as a tool or initiative to solve problems and create effective policy.

Tone of reporting. Data scraping analysis revealed that the tone of articles that focus on PB are generally neutral or positive.

Framing of reporting. The analysis of articles and tweets concerning PB in several countries revealed that the three dominant frames were democratic values, social justice, and resources. The first includes ideas of accountability, empowerment, and democratic solutions. In other words, PB is framed in a positive manner and echoes democratisation and citizen agency. According to the social justice frame, PB is presented as a policy that offers a voice to people who are not heard. Finally, the third most common frame was resources, although this framing could be either negative or positive. In its positive manifestation, PB is discussed as a means to use money based on people's needs. In its negative manifestation, journalists question local authorities' resources and capacity to implement PB in a transparent, inclusive manner with a constructive outcome.

How do citizens consume their news, and do they trust it?

Typically, citizens learn about PB events and the opportunity to participate in these initiatives from both traditional and new media outlets and organisations. However, one's access to these different types of media is often influenced by varying factors: age, educational level, geographical location, and income level. Older citizens may be inclined to employ traditional outlets whilst younger citizens might receive their news via social media or other online sources. To make this more concrete, we consider factors such as education, age, and location.

Educational level can influence the types of outlets one chooses when receiving their news, such as a tabloid, a national radio station, a local YouTuber, or a social media story. Likewise, people's habitation, whether rural or urban, influences how they consume news, such as via a regional newspaper or national television station. Whilst this might seem elementary, we considered it important to examine the various elements and factors that influence and shape how European citizens seek news and information as well as local authorities' desire to inform their constituents of new democratic innovations such as PB.

Additionally, considering the growing consumption of news via the Internet, we deemed it pertinent to note both the Internet penetration levels and trust levels within the seven case study countries (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Internet penetration and trust in media

Country	Cyprus	Greece	Ireland	Poland	Romania	Netherlands	UK
Internet penetration[3] %	N/A	73	92	78	74	96	95
Trust in written press %	30	39	52	41	44	71	35
Trust in radio %	49	47	65	52	52	72	61
Trust in TV %	47	25	59	48	52	59	53
Trust in Internet %	42	55	26	51	38	34	21
Trust in online social networks %	33	36	17	42	30	9	5

Note. *Internet penetration data is taken from Reuters Institute. Currently, no data is available for Cyprus regarding Internet penetration. Data regarding trust in written press, radio, TV, Internet, and online social networks is taken from Eurobarometer.*

3 Internet Penetration is defined as *'The relationship between the number of Internet users in each country and its demographic data.'* See Ferro, E., Dwivedi, Y. K., Gil-Garcia, J. R., & Williams, M. D. (Eds.). (2009). *Handbook of Research on Overcoming Digital Divides: Constructing an Equitable and Competitive Information Society.* IGI Global.

The available data for the six countries illustrates that Greece has the lowest Internet penetration whilst the Netherlands has the highest. The Dutch have the highest trust in older forms of media such as the written press, radio, and TV whilst Cypriots and Greeks have the lowest; however, we do not infer that Internet penetration and trust are linked, although this concept may deserve to be researched in the future. The British and Dutch have little trust (less than 10% of the population) in information they receive via online social networks.

Quantitative aspects of journalist interviews

Table 4.2 presents details regarding the additional quantitative elements from the interviews with journalists, such as the number of interviews conducted, the number of journalists who were employed by private or public organisations, and the number of journalists who previously covered a story regarding democratic innovations. The data in the table was sourced from Deliverable 2.6 and can be found on the DEMOTEC website.[4]

Table 4.2: Number of interviews conducted and media types across the case study countries

Country	Cyprus	Greece	Ireland	Poland	Romania	Netherlands	UK
# of interviews	12	15	8	15	11	15	14
# of interviewees who have covered a PB process	2	7	2	11	7	1	10
% of journalists who have covered a PB process	16.6	46.6	25	73.3	63.3	6.6	71.4
Public ownership	1	3	3	6	2	7*	6
Private ownership	11	12	2	9	9	7	8
TOM website or online	7	10	4	10	8	10	14
TOM print	6	4	4	0	2	8	6
TOM radio	1	1	0	4	0	0	0
TOM TV	3	2	3	0	3	5	1

Note. *This data was taken from Deliverable 2.6, including the interviews from that deliverable. TOM = Type of media*
**Three of the seven public media outlets were semi-public or not-for-profit.*

4 D2.6 was titled "The Role of Media in Participatory Budgeting" and this deliverable was a review of the role of journalism in PB relating to agenda-setting and mobilisation, public opinion formation, and the review of PB processes.

Media framing of democratic innovations

In addition to the journalist interviews, we conducted significant data scraping within the DEMOTEC research project; this entailed searching news media articles and tweets that contained the term *participatory budgeting*. We searched online with the parameters that the term must be mentioned in the local reported language and that the news item must have been published in the past 10 years. It is important to note that the news media dataset was defined by language, not country, which means that the results were neither limited to nor defined by countries but rather by language. News items that fulfilled our parameters were then analysed to determine the following:

- The number (or volume) of PB stories;
- The relevance of PB within news stories;
- The framing of PB within these news stories; and
- The valence (tone) of PB within these news stories.

We present a selection of data to paint a picture of PB's representation in news stories.[5] In the following sequence, we first present (1) the volume of news stories, (2) the assessed relevance of PB in these stories, (3) the framing of the news stories, (4) and the tone of the news stories.

1. Volume

We examined thousands of articles and tweets, which resulted in 42,932 documents (news stories) and 336,702 tweets that mentioned PB (see Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 for an overview). Whilst this may seem high, considering the number of PB implementations around the world, this is relatively low. Moreover, because our data scraping specified language over country, the data was skewed heavily towards Spanish content due to the inclusion of articles from South America and Spain.

Figure 4.1: Number of PB stories over time

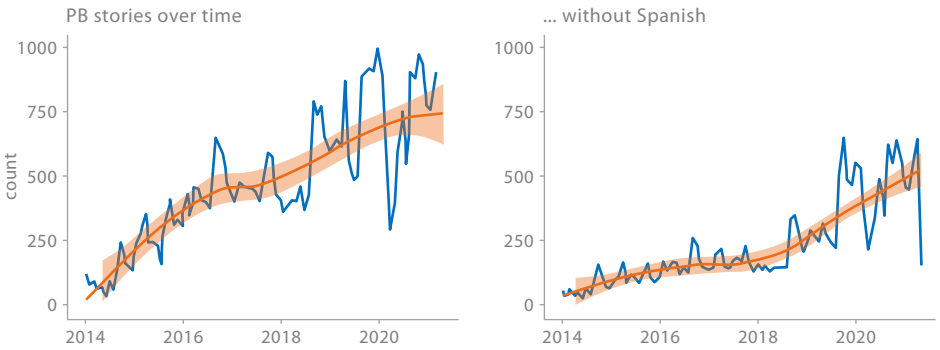
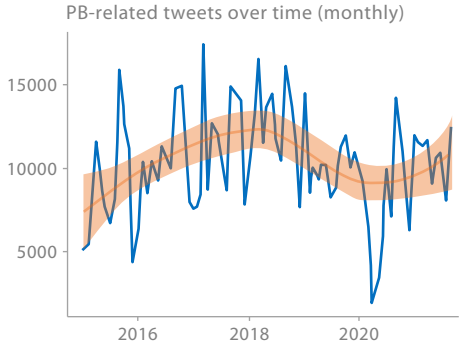


Figure 4.2: Number of PB tweets over time



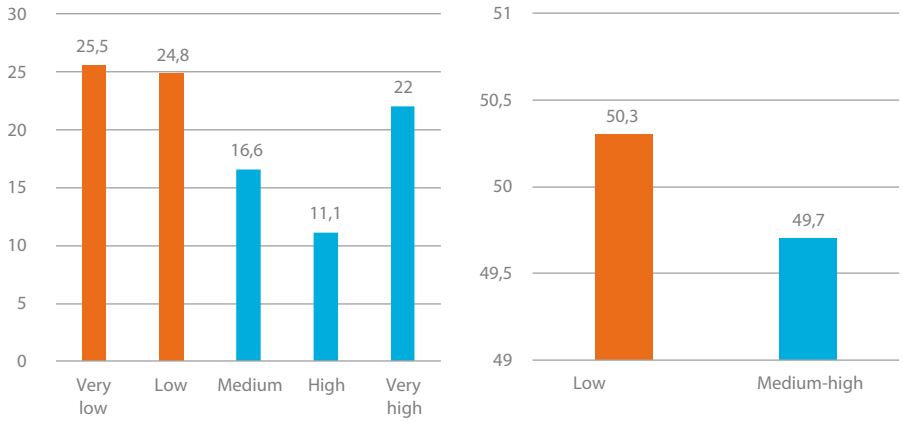
5 The results from this extensive research have been condensed and shortened for the purpose of this handbook. We refer to *DEMOTEC Deliverable 5.2 Case studies of citizen engagement in territorial cohesion policies*

2. Relevance

Through further analysis, we determined that these articles and tweets were not focusing explicitly on PB; rather, they made a passing reference. Coding the news items on a 5-point scale revealed that only one-fifth of the collected news items had a high relevance core and seriously engaged with PB as a policymaking tool, see Figure 4.3.

Put simply, PB was often mentioned in passing, rather than being the focus as a tool or initiative to solve problems and create policy.

Figure 4.3 Relevance of PB in news stories (ordinal scale on the left, binary scale on the right) in percentages



3. Framing

We also wanted to determine PB's framing within the media, as this reveals how the media are representing, discussing, and reporting PB. We used the following news frame definition:

> *"a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue.* (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 143)[6] "

Analysing the articles and tweets revealed that the two dominant frames were democratic values and resources (see Figure 4.4). Within DEMOTEC, we defined the framing of

- democratic values as representing discussions surrounding accountability, transparency, and empowerment whilst
- resources represent a focus on PB fund allocation and PB's economic benefits.

Finally, the least mentioned framing was problems, by which we mean delays, bureaucracy and insufficient funding to organise the PB processes (not the budget on which participants vote), and political conflicts surrounding PB.

6 Gamson, W. A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1-37.

Figure 4.4 Framing in news stories in percentages

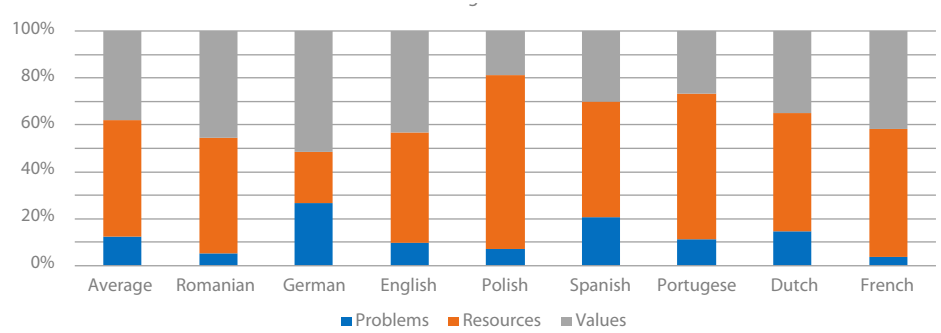
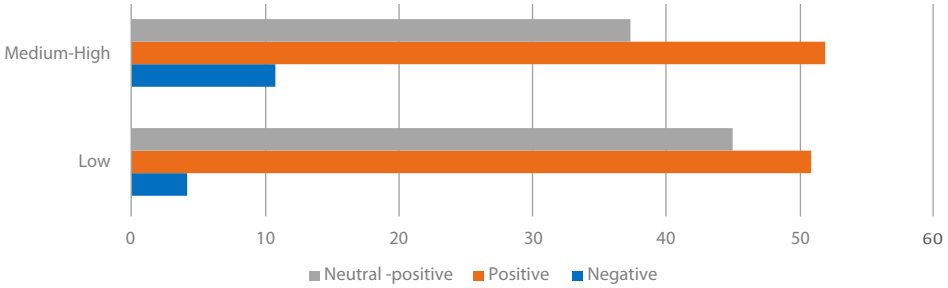


Figure 4.4 illustrates that, on average, most stories frame PB in terms of resources and values.

4. Tone of media stories

Finally, we investigated and analysed the tone of the articles and tweets. We divided the articles and tweets into two categories: those that were relevant to PB and those that were not relevant. We found, however, that in both categories, PB was treated as a positive phenomenon (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5 Average tone of media stories (for low and medium-high relevance) in percentages



Discussion: Is PB newsworthy?

Across the globe, the functioning of representative democracy is increasingly being criticised. Citizens distrust the political system, especially politicians, political parties, and European as well as transnational institutions. They criticise economic performance, governmental competence, and the overall fairness of the political and economic system. These developments raise an important question: *How can governments better connect with citizens and regain trust?*

To answer this question, a growing body of normative-driven research promotes participatory and deliberative models of democracy. The idea is to develop democratic innovations – tools and processes that support citizens' engagement and participation in policymaking to remedy the malaise of representative democracy.

However, democratic innovations are not widely acknowledged, let alone endorsed by citizens. The intersection between democracy, participation, and the media is well-established due to the media's critical role in shaping citizens' attention to and understanding of issues and political processes in addition to mobilising citizens.

The main takeaway of extensive research on both media framing and journalists' views is that PB is a satisfactory policy solution in theory, but it has not been implemented properly. Lack of resources, accountability, and inclusiveness diminish PB's value as a tool to empower citizens and foster social justice. Most often, PB stories are superficially covered based on standardised means of news production (e.g., press releases). Negative aspects of PB – for example, a particular scandal, conflict, or potential controversy – tend to trigger more media coverage. This phenomenon is justified by the commercial pressures placed on media professionals, which encourages dramatised and sensational coverage.

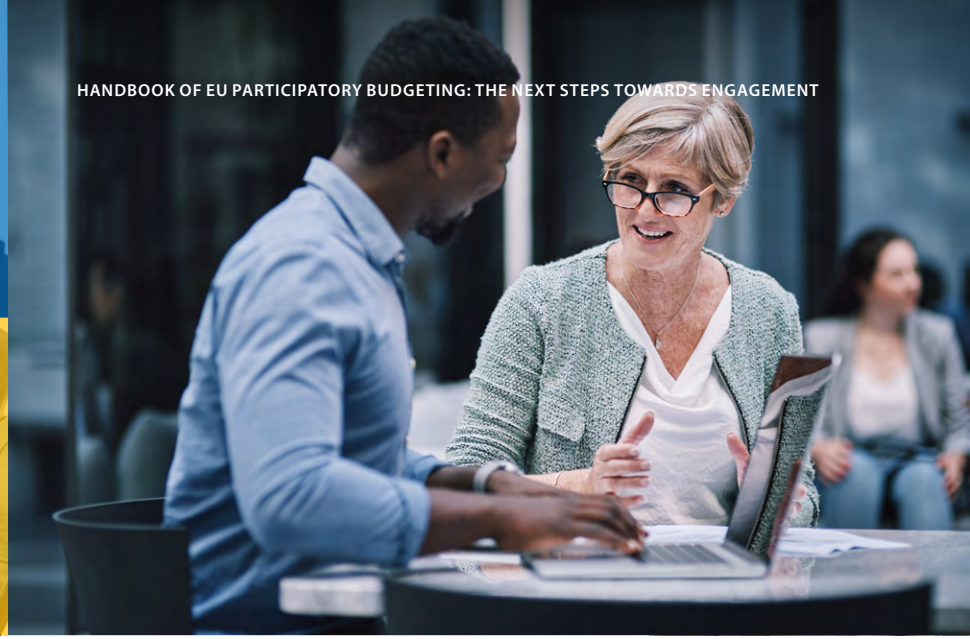
Other issues that bear negative consequences on PB coverage include the size of the organisation, the issue of self-censorship, and conflicts of interest. Journalists may withhold a story or omit details for fear of jeopardising their career by incorrectly antagonising municipal or local business leaders who have interests in and connections to local politicians. We found this to be the practice of journalists in local areas where there could be greater co-operation between politicians and media outlet owners. Additionally, small media outlets tend to be reluctant to report on controversial stories that might result in legal costs or other consequences.

The media are reluctant to prioritise PB in their agenda because they see it as a complicated issue of low interest amongst the citizenry. Lack of resources and other dependencies as well as role perceptions of reporting only facts seem to decrease journalists' willingness to truly support democratic innovations. Journalists and media outlets do not accurately report on PB initiatives, although it should be noted that local authorities and municipalities often fail to significantly improve their PB initiatives and projects.

A lack of reporting and room for improvement can lead to a vicious circle in which journalists are inactive in shaping attention and mobilising citizens to capitalise on room for improvement. This is a missed opportunity for improving and developing PB. When media *only* report mistakes by local authorities and governments, another vicious circle may emerge. In such a situation, governments may in turn wish to exclude the media, which limits accountability and exposure, thus further increasing the likelihood of mistakes.

The media can report on democratic innovations such as PB, publicise them to the community, and monitor happenings in and around these democratic innovations. They have an important role in creating engagement amongst citizens. The DEMOTEC research and some of the findings presented here suggest that there is considerable room for improving the space where media and democratic innovations interact because reporting on PB is either absent or driven by controversial outliers. The recommendations presented at the beginning of this chapter and explained more thoroughly throughout this chapter are the first steps in creating a more productive space in which the public, the media, and democratic innovations interact.

In this chapter, we presented findings from our media research in the seven DEMOTEC countries. For more information on the scraping of news articles, analyses, or the interviews with journalists, please refer to the DEMOTEC project website: https://demotec-project.eu/



5 Willingness and engagement

Chapter 5 - Willingness and engagement

What are the important factors are that influence peoples' willingness to participate?

The goal of this chapter is to answer (part) of the question as to whether and to what extent participatory budgeting has the potential to deliver greater and more enlightened citizen engagement.

In this chapter, we investigate citizen engagement through democratic innovations and the implications for participatory democracy and democratic renewal. This chapter is based on a large-scale survey, from which we present various key findings, lessons, and recommendations. The focus is on people's willingness to engage in democratic innovations and the determinants for their possible engagement or disengagement.

Key findings and recommendations

The effects of democratic innovations such as PB are dependent on citizens actually participating in such innovations. The willingness to participate is a prerequisite for every promise that follows. DEMOTEC's research has shown that willingness to participate is mostly affected by the following factors:

- First, there seem to be strong 'lock-in' effects. Citizens who have been involved in democratic innovations or participated in some way are much more likely to be willing to participate in PB or any other democratic innovation. While this key finding may be perceived as an open door, it has crucial implications.

Given that lock-in effects exist, the following question remains: How do you get someone 'locked in?' Multiple factors have been found:

- People's self-efficacy and self-belief, as well as their belief that their involvement effectuates some form of change, influence their willingness to participate.
- The various objectives people can possibly fulfil influence their willingness to participate. If they can, for example, learn about politics and democracy or improve their neighbourhood, they are more likely to be willing.

- Political involvement, in the broadest sense, plays a role in citizens' willingness to participate. Voting in various elections and political interest matter.
- Finally, many other aspects are associated with people's willingness to participate, ranging from broader societal involvement, such as volunteering, to opinions about political systems. These aspects are further elaborated on in this chapter.

Our research and key findings lead to several recommendations. We start with the overarching recommendations (with specific opportunities for various levels of government) and then offer some specific recommendations per democratic innovation. Regarding the latter, we do not repeat already-known recommendations or best practices for the organization of democratic innovations. Moreover, our recommendations are based on the findings from our research.

General recommendations for the organization of democratic innovations

Many are available, and we provide a few examples:
A scientific recommendation: Bryson, J. M., Quick, K. S., Slotterback, C. S., & Crosby, B. C. (2013). Designing public participation processes. *Public administration review*, 73(1), 23-34.

Examples from practice:
- From the Council of Europe
- From the OECD
- From a consultancy company
- From the Environmental Protection Agency (US)

1. Increase and Complement Self-Confidence

Feelings of confidence matter a great deal. Therefore, it is important to create measures that could increase feelings of confidence. Such measures can be established through the following recommendations.

First, make specific appeals and invitations to citizens more accessible. Policies at the national, regional, and local levels can aid with accessibility issues for democratic innovations. Additional governmental support for implementing the respective policies could consist of budgets, frameworks, or (adaptive) blueprints for organizing democratic innovations. The European Commission [EC] could provide a combination of budgets and frameworks to local governments to organize democratic innovations such as PB according to the frameworks.

Furthermore, formats or frameworks for the organisation of PB by national or regional governments could consist of various models of PB that local governments can use. Given that PB requires a strong organization and many points that should be addressed, ensuring that local governments can be unburdened helps them address motives and confidence issues.

Second, implement supporting mediating measures such as

- local knowledge brokers or ambassadors who invite local residents and support residents during PB processes; and
- independent intermediaries who can ensure that the processes are not too technical, administrative, or elitist.

Governments at various levels could enable a pool of '*complementers*' who can aid in the accessible organisation of democratic innovations and who can aid local (groups of) citizens when they are participating. This pool of *complementers* can be organised by national and/or regional governments to support local governments and citizens with specific processes.

2. Allow for the Fulfilment of Various (Democratic) Motivations

Because various motives influence the willingness to participate, ensure that invitations, budgets, and processes actively address these various motives of possible participants in PB. This is especially applicable for local governments, which are usually responsible for organising public participation and the PB process. An example of a motivation could be the proximity between the citizen and the location of the initiative. Studies show that the closer the initiative is to the citizen, the more likely they are to participate in the event. Therefore, it is in the interests of localities to emphasize and frame how the event and project can shape and influence the geographical area in which the citizens reside.

On the national or regional level, public participation could be enabled by policies that address not only multiple motives of citizens but also the confidence issues that prevent people from participating.

3. Focused Learning

This chapter demonstrates that, while populism can, rightfully, occupy national governments and parliaments, it shouldn't be falsely linked to people's willingness to get involved. Given that motives matter for citizens, society's call for more participative avenues should not be convoluted by populism, as this may crowd out the motivation of citizens to get engaged. We recommend that involved parties search for research-based elements that need to be addressed in order to improve specific democratic innovations. Different people and people with different preferences are drawn towards different kinds of involvement with democratic innovations.

Initiate knowledge exchange between local governments on important issues (such as motives and feelings of confidence in the case of this handbook) to develop models and best practices and to test local measures in an experimental way. Local, regional, and national governments can organize avenues for such types of exchanges.

EU institutions can set up programmes that encourage PB in a more experimental, targeted and creative way, addressing certain factors such as motives and feelings of confidence.

4. Create a Space Where People Can Experience Democratic Innovations

Finally, one of the key findings is the lock-in effect, which is most important to people's willingness to get engaged. This specific finding means that any experience with democratic innovations, from small innovations in local neighbourhoods to larger ones at the national level, is likely to increase people's openness to participating in future initiatives. Organising multiple democratic innovations – on different topics, on different scales, and in different locations – is the key to creating these experiences. Naturally, positive experiences will be more effective at creating these experiences.

Furthermore, the lessons in this chapter are hopeful. Citizens must participate to realise the promises of participative and deliberative democracy. Their willingness to participate is an important factor for their actual participation. This chapter shows that just organizing democratic innovations as governments is a meaningful step to allow citizens to gain an experience, which would in turn increase their openness to future engagement. This last recommendation is encouraging for governments on many levels. Organising PB in cities, referendums on regional levels, or citizens' assemblies on the national level can all create meaningful experiences with democratic innovations. Creating spaces where citizens (regularly) have the opportunity to participate may lead to some form of social learning for future engagement.

The EC can enable more open, experimental arenas for PB where certain factors that are important to people's positive experiences can be addressed. Budgets for local governments to implement PB according to the EC formats would also increase the number of spaces and opportunities for PB in member states and localities.

Regarding openness to participating in the four democratic innovations, we make the following recommendations:

For PB, it seems that openness to participation in PB is – again – in a lock-in with other aspects of willingness. Factors that don't rely on willingness are feelings of confidence and some form of attachment to the place where people live.

With regard to people with more attachment (i.e., they have lived in a place for a longer time), a dilemma arises. One might argue that it is counterproductive to target citizens who have just moved into a community. At the same time, people who have recently relocated to a place are yet to be represented there and may be seeking a community. However, we find that citizens who have lived in a municipality for a long time and/or citizens who consciously believe that all citizens should play a greater role in local decision-making are target groups that are likely to be open to participating in a PB process.

We make a few specific recommendations for raising awareness among various groups:

- Recent polling of citizens in the US has revealed that when citizens are aware of initiatives, they are more likely to participate in them. The greatest inhibitor to being involved was their lack of awareness of the event. Our suggestion is thus that local authorities embark on a hyperlocalised awareness campaign.
- When publicizing an event, it is best to focus time, energy, and resources on ensuring that those who live in the area are aware of the initiative itself. While ensuring that information is widely available online and on social media platforms, targeted messaging and information campaigns are encouraged.
- Considering that an interest in politics is an influential factor for participation in these initiatives, we suggest reaching out to public groups and community organizations, particularly those that could already have a political (but not a party political) dimension, such as faith-based organizations or neighbourhood support groups. This would increase not only awareness of these initiatives but also the likelihood of targeting those who are already politically minded.

For local referendums, openness to participation is linked to other aspects of openness and previous participation. Factors that don't depend on the other aspects of openness are political factors such as interest and how often people vote. Feelings of confidence do not play a role in openness to participation in local referendums, which may make it a more accessible democratic innovation. When accessibility is an absolute goal – even at the expense of other goals such as deliberation, social learning, or fulfilling certain motivations that cannot be addressed by voting on an issue – local referendums are the preferred democratic innovation.

For citizens' assemblies, openness to participation is mostly related to lock-in effects and two motives for participation: 'getting more involved in the local community to learn about politics and democracy' and 'getting more involved in the local community to improve things in the neighbourhood'. In line with the previous recommendations, we highlight again that citizens' assemblies should allow for the possibility of fulfilment of motives – in this case, specifically to learn about politics and democracy and to ensure that the local community is improved.

For citizens' juries, in terms of people's openness to such juries, apart from the lock-in factors, people must be able to fulfil their motives, and somewhat socially active citizens who are likely to be open to participating in citizens' juries must be included.

Considering that being societally active is an influential factor for participation in citizens' juries, we suggest reaching out to public groups and community organizations such as nonprofit or voluntary organizations to seek out those who already have a societally active disposition. This would increase not only awareness of these initiatives but also the likelihood of targeting those who are already societally minded.

Introduction

Background information on this chapter

This chapter is based on the citizen survey that was part of the work package 'Understanding citizen engagement and deliberation' (WP4), the overall aim of which was, among other things, to analyse the determinants of effective citizen engagement in participatory budgeting (PB).

The survey was completed by 27,000 European citizens in 10 countries. We selected and analysed important findings and associations between relevant topics from this survey for discussion in this chapter.

In Chapter 2, many promises of deliberative democracy and participatory democracy were discussed. However, there is a prerequisite: people must actually participate in democratic innovations in order for the promises to be fulfilled. Thus, in this chapter, we explore people's willingness to participate. We present the factors that are important for understanding the (possible) engagement of citizens. In this chapter, you will find multiple answers, findings, and recommendations related to the question, what makes people (un)willing to participate?

This chapter covers the following topics: people's general willingness to participate, people's openness to participating in the four democratic innovations (that are covered in this handbook,) and the most important factors that influence this willingness and openness.

We also (in the second section on general willingness) test some hypotheses to determine what is truly relevant. Many ideas and hypotheses exist that try to account for people's (un)willingness. Knowing what truly matters and what does not helps in making the right decisions when choosing and designing democratic innovations.

Again, like the previous chapters, this chapter is also based on extensive research. Therefore, practically, we present recommendations and key findings with a strong scientific base, but we also use this chapter to 'debunk' obvious or well-known ideas for which we didn't find a scientific base. For each of the recommendations and key findings that follow, we pick results, connections, and particularities that useful to various levels of government.

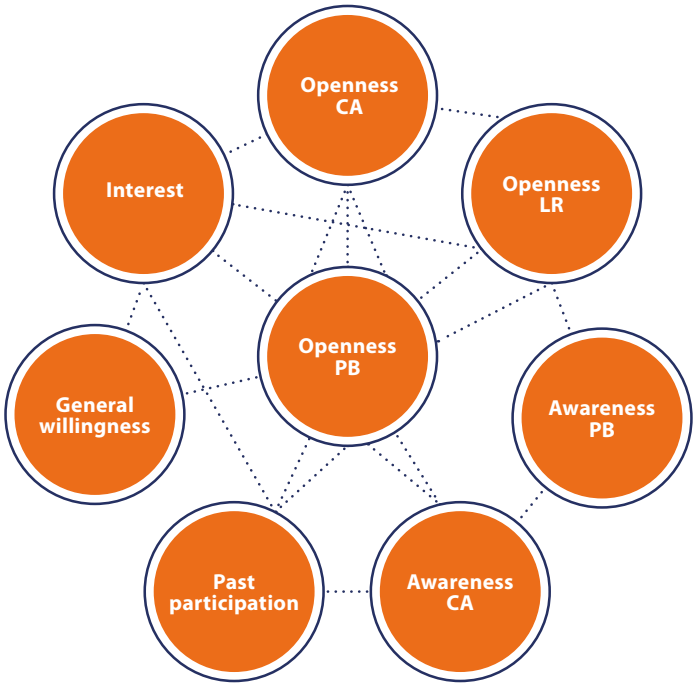
The remainder of this handbook is structured as follows:

1. We start with the most fundamental finding in this chapter: the strong lock-in effects of involvement in democratic innovation.
2. The second section concerns one's general willingness to be involved. We discuss the most important factors contributing to this willingness and some common ideas about what allegedly influences this willingness – in other words, we bust some myths.
3. The third section explores the openness to participation in the four democratic innovations. We discuss each of these innovations and elaborate further on PB – because this handbook is about PB.
4. We close this chapter by discussing the findings.

When You're in, You're in

From analysing the data of 27,000 respondents on aspects of willingness, we learned that some kind of lock-in effect exists.

A willingness to be involved in decision-making in the locality, awareness, previous participation, and openness to participation in the future are somewhat associated for all four democratic innovations. Many of these factors all strongly influence one another – that is, when someone is already 'in', they are likely to be aware, open, and willing to engage in some way.



These lock-in effects differ slightly per democratic innovation. One example could be previous participation in other democratic innovations that makes people willing to participate in a citizens' jury. Another example could be openness to or awareness of other democratic innovations that increases people's willingness to join a citizens' assembly. Yet another example could be that participating in a previous innovation, such as a local referendum, encourages citizens to then involve themselves in a new participatory budgeting initiative in their community. Alternatively, community awareness of these innovations could embolden citizens to be willing and open to being involved in a local citizens' assembly. These lock-in effects are not always consistent, however, and vary by innovation and individual.

This more general key finding, the presence of a lock-in effect, might seem like an open door. However, it highlights an important perspective for action. When people are aware of or have previously participated in any democratic innovation, they are more willing and open to participating again. These people can become further engaged.

The question that remains is, 'how does one get someone in?' In the remainder of this chapter, we cover several aspects that are important for citizens to get involved, in one way or another, in local decision-making.

Willingness to Become Involved

Understanding citizens' general willingness to participate is the key to improving citizen engagement. A more thorough understanding of people's willingness would explain how engagement is affected and is a prerequisite for delivering on the promises of democratic innovations. If citizens don't participate, the benefits of democratic innovations cannot be reaped.

We first present the differences between the DEMOTEC countries in terms of general willingness. Some geographical variations are evident.

Table 5.1

Country	RO	UK	CY	PL	NL	GR	IR
Proportions of the respondents who would like to be involved in decision-making in their locality	22.1%	12.8%	19.5%	15.2%	8.5%	15.3%	10.4%

These numbers indicate that, on average, the Dutch and Irish are least willing to be involved in decision-making, whereas Romanians and Cypriots are, on average, most willing to get involved. These averages reveal some differences between countries – which is interesting – but don't explain what influences the willingness to be involved.

General Willingness: Belief Matters

We found multiple factors that influence people's willingness to get involved. We ranked them from most impactful to least impactful, as follows:[1]

Table 5.2

Factor	Impact
1. Openness to participating in PB	+++
2. Interest in how things work in the locality where you live	+++
3. When people like me get involved in their local community, they really can change the way that their area is run	+++
4. Confidence in abilities to participate in politics	++
5. I would get more involved in my local community to influence political decisions	++
6. I would get more involved in my local community to learn about politics and democracy	++
7. I would get more involved in my local community to contribute with my knowledge and experience	+
8. Age	0

1 All shown variables show significant effects.

The lock-in factors mentioned earlier are obvious factors that affect people's general willingness to get involved in local decision-making. It makes sense that an openness to participating in PB and an interest in how things work are correlated with the willingness to participate. However, a range of other factors also influence people's willingness to get involved.[2]

First, what is particularly interesting is that 'feelings of confidence' have a very strong effect on people's willingness to get involved. Moreover, the statement *'When people like me get involved in their local community, they really can change the way that their area is run'* revealed that people who strongly agree with this statement are more willing to get involved. This finding is interesting because getting people more interested (factor 2) in order to increase their willingness is akin to circular reasoning. People's feelings of confidence to change things, however, says something about the two sides of citizens' relationship to their local community:

1. citizens' vision regarding the receptiveness and responsiveness of their local community and government (focusing on the way their area is run). In other words, does something happen when citizens get involved? When someone participates, are other people, other communities, or other entities able to change or be affected?
2. citizens' vision of their own capabilities and whether they see themselves as quality participants.

2 We selected the most important factors based on statistical analyses.

3 White, K. A. (2009). Self-confidence: A concept analysis. In *Nursing Norum* (Vol. 44, No. 2, pp. 103-114). Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing Inc.;
Maddux, J. E. (2012). Self-Efficacy: The Power of Believing You Can. In Lopez, S. J. and Snyder, C. R. (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, (pp. 335-344). Oxford Handbooks Online;
Maddux, J. E. (2016). Self-efficacy. *In Interpersonal and intrapersonal expectancies* (pp. 41-46). Routledge

What we know about increasing self-confidence

From the field of social psychology, multiple factors that influence feelings of self-confidence (and efficacy) are known (White, 2009; Maddux, 2012; Maddux, 2016 [3]). These factors include the following:

Knowledge: Confidence requires a certain level of knowledge and skills. Educational and training programmes are essential to build these competencies, which in turn can enhance self-confidence.

Support: Encouraging support from peers, mentors, and educators is vital. This includes both external support and internal strategies such as positive self-talk.

Experience and Exposure: Frequent exposure to relevant activities increases self-confidence, which can be achieved by providing more hands-on experiences.

'Gearing Up': Preparing for upcoming tasks or roles is crucial. This includes both psychological preparation and practical preparation, such as time management.

Celebration and Affirmation of Success: Recognising and celebrating (even small) victories can greatly increase self-confidence. It reinforces the belief in one's abilities and motivates towards further achievements.

'Vicarious Experiences': Observing others successfully completing tasks can boost one's belief in their own capabilities.

Finally, participants' responses to the statements about their 'confidence in abilities to participate in politics' revealed a strong connection between confidence and a willingness to get involved: People who are more confident are more willing to participate.

Second, **multiple motives** could increase citizens' willingness to participate. People who want to

- 'contribute with their knowledge and experience';
- 'influence political decisions'; and
- 'learn about politics and democracy'

are all more likely to get involved. While these findings may initially seem like circular reasoning as well, they show the more particular motives of people for which they are willing to show up. The fact that these motives appear to be important is consistent with the discussion in Chapter 2, where some of these motives are also discussed.

Country-Specific Variations

Across all seven DEMOTEC countries, the factors that influence willingness are rather similar. Lock-in effects from 'interest in how things work' and awareness, previous participation, and openness to participating in specific democratic innovations are often important factors. The following are some notable exceptions:

- An interest in politics is also important in Romania, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.
- Opinions about who should have a larger say in decision-making – politicians or experts – are also important in Cyprus and Greece.
- Opinions about good ways to govern a country, such as having a strong leader or having the army rule, are also influential in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Confirming and Debunking Other Possibilities

Above, we presented a fairly strong list of factors that explain people's general willingness to get involved. These factors are based on a model with the strongest predictors we could find. Additional streams of thought also predict people's willingness to get involved, and we discuss three of them which are usually mentioned when accounting for people's willingness or unwillingness to get involved: populistic attitudes, perceptions of local authorities, and perceptions of participatory/political acts.

A. Populistic Attitudes

Previous research has demonstrated that populism has an ambivalent relationship with citizens' willingness to get involved. Our analysis revealed the following effects of populistic attitudes:

First, strong populistic attitudes[4] had a modest influence on willingness to get involved. It barely explained any variation in people's willingness.

4 For example 'The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions' and 'The political differences between the elite and the people are larger than the differences among the people.'

Nevertheless, we observed some significant effects within this modest effect. Four of the six variables yielded a significant effect: When people agree with statements, they are less likely to be willing to participate.

Differences in populism and populistic attitudes

Barr[5] (2009) argues that antiestablishment attitudes can produce a form of populism. These same anti-establishment attitudes can make participants hesitant to join participatory processes organized by the establishment.

But populistic attitudes can also emphasise direct forms of democracy, making citizens likely to participate, Barr argues (2009; see also Zaslove, Geurkink, Jacobs, & Akkerman[6], 2021).

There can be variants of populism: thin – often nationally oriented – variants and thick variants. The latter is more oriented towards long-term institutional change and civic capacity building and views governments as a 'public project' instead of a force to be minimized. This variant can be highly participative (Dzur & Hendriks[7], 2018).

In summary, the literature shows different relationships between populism and willingness to participate.

Second, when we added the populistic attitudes (the variables) to our previous model, we observed a slight increase in the strength of the explanation. Adding these populistic attitudes made our previous model not much stronger in explaining willingness to participate. When populism was added to the model, two variables showed a significant (but small) influence:

- The people, and not politicians, should make the most important policy decisions.
- What people call 'compromise' in politics is really just selling out on one's principles.

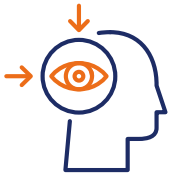
Both significant variables had a negative relationship with people's willingness to participate. However, they both showed the least influence on people's willingness to get involved.

We conclude that while there are many narratives about populistic attitudes and people's willingness or unwillingness to get involved, other factors are much more important, as evidenced by our research. Populistic attitudes barely explain the differences in people's willingness to get involved.

5 Barr, R. R. (2009). Populists, outsiders and anti-establishment politics. *Party Politics*, 15(1), 29-48

6 Zaslove, A., Geurkink, B., Jacobs, K., & Akkerman, A. (2021). Power to the people? Populism, democracy, and political participation: a citizen's perspective. *West European Politics*, 44(4), 727-751.

7 Dzur, A. W., & Hendriks, C. M. (2018). Thick populism: democracy-enhancing popular participation. *Policy Studies*, 39(3), 334-351.



B. Perceptions of Local Authorities

People's willingness to be involved can be influenced by their level of satisfaction with local authorities, their beliefs that local authorities could do better, or even their perceptions of local authorities as corrupt. Analysis of the available data about local authorities and their willingness to get involved revealed the following:

First, strong perceptions about local authorities had a modest influence on willingness to get involved. All four variables were significant.

Second, when perceptions about local authorities were added to the previous model, the increase was again modest. Out of the four variables, only two remained influential:

- the perception that local authorities should make more of an effort to understand what local people want: when people agree with this statement, they are more likely to be willing to get involved.
- the perception that corruption in local authorities is widespread: when people agree with this statement, they are also more likely to be willing to get involved.

We conclude that perceptions of local authorities barely explain differences in people's willingness to get involved. Perceptions that local authorities could do better or are corrupt could incite some willingness to get involved, but other factors are more important.

C. Perceptions of Participatory/Political Acts

People's responses to questions about their perceptions of how effective it is to vote (in European, national, and local elections) and how effective it is to be a member of a nongovernmental organization showed that

- these variables had a small influence on willingness to get involved. However, all the variables were significant; and
- when perceptions about local authorities were added to the previous model, the increase in explanatory was barely noticeable.

From the four variables, only two remained influential:

- the perceived effectiveness of voting in national elections – and here, the relationship is negative: The more effective they think it is, the less likely they are to be willing to participate.
- The perceived effectiveness of being a member of a nongovernmental organisation or an association: The more effective people think this is, the more likely they are to be willing to participate.

We conclude that perceptions of local authorities barely explain differences in people's willingness to get involved. Perceptions that local authorities could do better or are corrupt could incite some willingness to get involved, but other factors are more important.

Openness to Participating in Democratic Innovations

Getting citizens involved and engaged requires that they be somewhat open to participating in the various democratic innovations. We explore the factors contributing to this openness in the next sections.

The DEMOTEC Picture of PB

Awareness of PB and previous participation in PB vary strongly between countries.

Table 5.3

Country	RO	UK	CY	PL	NL	GR	IR
Awareness of PB	28.5%	28.5%	11.2%	80.4%	20.6%	17.7%	13.5%
Participated in PB	6.2%	14.9%	1.0%	41.7%	5.7%	5.7%	4.7%
Openness to participating in PB	68.0%	58.1%	73.1%	77.4%	37.7%	64.4%	55.2%

In Cyprus, citizens are generally the least aware of PB and are least likely to have previously participated in PB. In the Netherlands, citizens are least likely to show interest in PB. As expected (see Chapter 3 on the Polish policy), in Poland, citizens are most likely to have heard of PB, to have participated in PB, and to be willing to participate in PB in the future.

But what makes people in general likely to have high awareness of PB? From the data, we learned that when people 'would get more involved in my local community to contribute with my knowledge and experience', they are likely to have heard of PB. Moreover, previous participation in PB is likely to be affected when people 'would get more involved in my local community to improve things in the neighbourhood' and when they are open to participating in citizens' juries.

Based on the country-specific factors that influence awareness, previous participation, and openness to participation, some notable findings arise.

With regard to awareness, we observed the following:

- Whether the place where someone lives actually has a PB is influential in the United Kingdom, Poland, and Greece.
- Whether one thinks that one's locality would benefit from introducing a participatory budgeting process is influential in the United Kingdom, Poland, Greece, and Ireland.

Previous participation in PB is:

- Influenced by awareness of PB, and the strongest effect was found in Romania, Cyprus, Greece and Ireland; and
- Whether the place where someone lives actually has a PB is influential in the United Kingdom, Poland and the Netherlands.

Openness to Participating in PB Unpacked

Many factors influence people's openness to participating in PB. The first is the 'obvious' factor: whether people have heard of PB and whether they are willing to – generally – get involved in decision-making. When this is the case, people are more likely to be open to joining a PB process. The second factor is whether people vote in local elections (and whether they think voting in local elections is effective) and whether they have an interest in politics. People who are interested in politics, vote in local elections, and think that voting in local elections is effective are more open to PB.

Other – more interesting factors – also exist. Just as general willingness to get involved makes a difference, so too does confidence in one's own capacities, and specifically for PB, the length of time a person has lived in their city positively predicts their openness to getting involved.

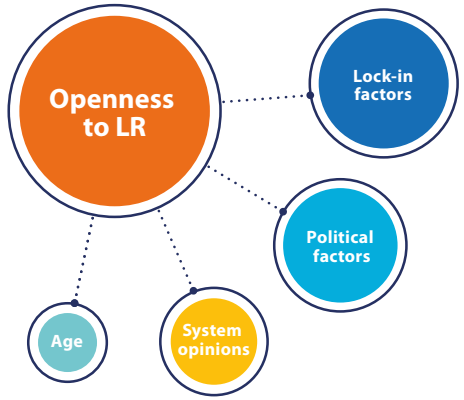
Finally, these factors have a small (but positive) impact. If people think that citizens should play a larger role in local decision-making than politicians, they are more open to participating in PB.[8]

8 All shown variables show significant effects.

Table 5.4

Factor	Impact
1. The extent to which people would like to be involved in decision-making in the locality	+++
2. Interest in politics	++
3. I've heard of participatory budgeting before, from social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	+
4. Confidence in abilities to participate in politics	+
5. How long they lived in the city	+
6. Having voted on the local level	+
7. Voting in local elections matters	+
8. Age and opinions about the statements 'the average citizen does not have the time to be meaningfully involved in decision-making at the local level' and 'who should have a larger role in decision-making: citizens or. politicians?'	0

Openness to Participating in Local Referendums Unpacked



There are many interesting yet predictable findings regarding people's openness to participating in local referendums.

First, and this is again related to the lock-in effect, people who are open to participating in citizens' assemblies and PB are also more likely to be open to participating in local referendums. In fact, these factors have more influence than awareness of local referendums and having participated in local referendums in the past – even though these two aspects influence one's openness to local referendums as well.

Second, a range of 'politically oriented' variables have a strong influence on people's openness to participation. For example, having an interest in politics, voting in national elections, voting in local elections, and having an opinion about political systems are all predictive.

- Voting in national elections has more of an influence than voting in local elections,[9] but both are influential.
- People who believe that 'having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections' is not a good way to organize a political system are more open to local referendums.

9 Here is a difference here between local referendums and participatory budgeting. While voting in local elections was found to be a strong predictor for participatory budgeting, national level voting did not emerge as a significant factor in the analyses. When we manually incorporated national level voting into the analyses, the explanatory power remained unchanged, and the effect of national level voting was found to be insignificant.

A general willingness to participate in local decision-making does not have an influence on people's openness to local referendums – this is opposed to the three other democratic innovations where it is.

Table 5.5

Factor	Impact
1. Openness to participating in PB in the future	+++
2. Openness to participating in citizens' assemblies in the future	+++
3. Awareness of local referendums	+++
4. Previous participation in local referendums	+++
5. Having voted on the national level	+
6. Interest in politics	+
7. Having voted on the local level	+
8. Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections	+
9. Age	0

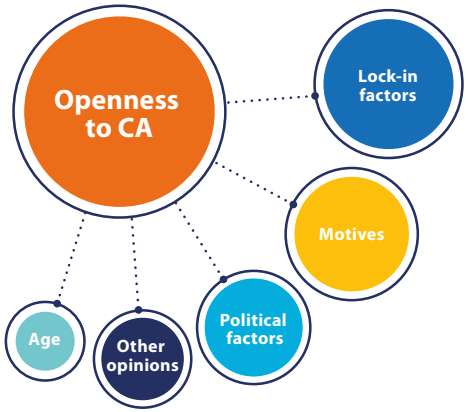
Remarkable differences so far

Comparisons of the strongest predictors for openness to participating in PB and LR revealed immediate differences:

- Confidence in one's abilities to participate in politics was a strong predictor of openness to participation in PB. The more confident the respondents were, the more open they were. Please see text box on page 87 for recommendations on how to build confidence.
- For LR, the variable about confidence was not one of the top 10 features. When we added this confidence to the model, it barely revealed anything more than is shown now. We did, however, observe a significant effect on openness to LR, but it was relatively small – and reverse! The more confident respondents were about their capacities, the less open they were to participating in LR.

These findings, so far, indicate that feelings of confidence are less important for local referendums.

Openness to Participating in Citizens' Assemblies Unpacked

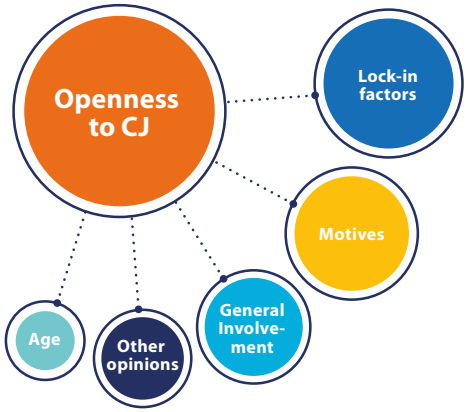


Several factors are important with regard to people's openness to participating in citizens' assemblies in the future. First, we once again observed a strong lock-in effect of willingness aspects, among others. Openness to participating in local referendums and PB are strong predictors of one's openness to participating in citizens' assemblies. As with local referendums, openness to participating in other democratic innovations shows a stronger effect than previous participation and awareness. Furthermore, general willingness to get involved has a positive effect. Second, the willingness or motivation to learn about politics and democracy and/or to improve things in the neighbourhood are also strong predictors of people's openness to citizens' assemblies. Interestingly, however, 'confidence in one's abilities to participate' does not have a significant effect on one's openness to participating in citizens' assemblies.

Table 5.6

Factor	Impact
1. Openness to participating in local referendums in the future	+++
2. Openness to participating in PB in the future	+++
3. Previous participation in citizens' assemblies	+++
4. Awareness of citizens' assemblies	++
5. Extent to which people would like to be involved in decision-making in the locality	++
6. I would get more involved in my local community to learn about politics and democracy	+
7. I would get more involved in my local community to improve things in the neighbourhood	+
8. Interest in politics	+
9. The average citizen lacks the knowledge and technical capacity required to be trusted to decide on policy at the local level	0

Openness to Participating in Citizens' Juries Unpacked



Finally, numerous aspects matter when it comes to people's openness to participating in citizens' juries. First, we observed another strong lock-in effect of other willingness aspects and of citizens' jury-related aspects such as awareness or previous participation. Second, as was the case for citizens' assemblies, the willingness or motivation to learn about politics and democracy and/or to improve things in the neighbourhood are also strong predictors of people's openness to citizens' juries. Finally, people's 'general involvement' is important for their openness to participating in citizens' juries. In this case, that involvement pertains to whether people have volunteered for a nonprofit/NGO and whether they have posted about politics online. In both cases, if the answer is yes, then people would be more open to taking part in citizens' juries.

In the case of citizens' juries, when we added 'confidence in abilities to participate in politics', the strength of the explanation barely increased, but the effect of confidence was significant, albeit relatively small compared with the effect of the other included variables.

Table 5.6

Factor	Impact
1. Openness to participating in local referendums in the future	+++
2. Openness to participating in PB in the future	+++
3. Previous participation in citizens' juries	+++
4. Awareness of citizens' juries	+++
5. The extent to which they would like to be involved in decision-making in the locality	++
6. Posted or shared anything about politics online	++
7. I would get more involved in my local community to learn about politics and democracy	+
8. I would get more involved in my local community to improve things in the neighbourhood	+
9. Volunteered for a nonprofit organization	+

Discussion

In this chapter, we presented what we discovered about people's willingness and openness to engage in democratic innovations. Based on a large-scale survey, we discussed some key findings regarding the question of willingness and offered multiple recommendations relevant to many levels and types of government.

Willingness is a particularly difficult phenomenon to investigate. The willingness to do something is influenced by many factors, from intrinsic motivation to practical barriers. In the survey data, we found roughly two categories of factors that influence people's willingness or openness:

The first category is what we called 'lock-in effects': The willingness to be involved in decision-making in the locality, awareness, previous participation, and openness to participation in the future are somewhat associated for all four democratic innovations. Many of these factors strongly influence one another; that is, when someone is already 'in', they are likely to be aware, open, and willing to engage in some way.

The other factors that influence people's willingness to get involved range from feelings of confidence and motives to political factors such as voting and political interest.

While the key finding of lock-in effects may be perceived as an open door, it has crucial implications. It means that any experience of democratic innovation, from small innovations in one's neighbourhood to larger ones at the national level, is likely to increase people's openness to participate in future initiatives.

Organising multiple democratic innovations - on different issues, at different scales and in different places - is key to creating these experiences. Positive experiences are likely to be more effective in creating these experiences.[10]

Furthermore, the learnings from this chapter are generally hopeful. Citizens must participate to realise the promises of participative and deliberative democracy. Their willingness to participate is an important factor for their actual participation. This chapter shows that governments organising democratic innovations can be a meaningful step to allow citizens to experience these innovations, which would increase citizens' openness to future engagement. In this chapter, three common ideas (hypotheses in our words) were tested. We analysed whether populistic attitudes, perceptions of local authorities, and perceptions of participatory and political acts matter for people's willingness. The answer is 'sometimes a little' but far less than the other factors from this chapter. These three ideas might be dominant in discussing democratic innovations, but this chapter has demonstrated that the ideas may not be the most important to address when accounting for people's willingness. While these topics are important in many other discussions – perhaps indirectly related to democratic innovations – the lock-in effects and other factors are much more important.

Finally, even though this is a handbook for practice, we want to be transparent about the fact that the data and analyses in this chapter have limitations. First, the data is 'cross sectional'; that is, it has been registered at one point in time. We cannot say, for example, that a certain event or attitude at one point in time leads to a certain outcome later in time.

Second, we conducted some basic analyses of the data. More sophisticated statistical analysis might lead to more noteworthy findings.

Finally, questions in surveys are always limited by how respondents interpret them and whether they truly represent respondents' behaviour. For example, 'very interested' and 'not very interested' – as answers to 'interest in politics' – could mean different things to different people. And when people say they are willing to participate in and are open to PB, is that an answer they give in that moment while never actually showing up? These types of limitations should always be considered when evaluating survey data because, as with any research method or type of data, there are imperfections and reservations.

This chapter was based on a substantial amount of research and data to find the determinants of citizen engagement in participatory budgeting – and other democratic innovations. For the purposes of clarity, we selected the meaningful determinants that provide some action perspective for civil servants.

For more information on the survey, comparisons between the DEMOTEC countries or the methodological background on this research, we refer to materials on the DEMOTEC project website: https://demotec-project.eu/

10 As is clear from the literature and empirical research. See:
Halvorsen, K. E. (2003). Assessing the effects of public participation. *Public Administration Review*, 63(5), 535-543;
Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L., & Stoker, G. (2006). Diagnosing and remedying the failings of official participation schemes: The CLEAR framework. *Social Policy and Society*, 5(2), 281-29.;
Van Dalfsen, F., Wesseling, H. & Blok. S. N. (2021). *Leren in Participatieland: slimme participatielessen uit de praktijk*. Utrecht: Berenschot.

6 The policy agenda for participatory budgeting

Chapter 6 - The policy agenda for participatory budgeting

By Carlos Mendez, Steven Blok & William Groom

How to strengthen both participatory budgeting and EU Cohesion Policy

One of the central objectives of this handbook is to develop a policy agenda for participatory budgeting in the European Union (EU) through a Handbook of EU Participatory Budgeting. This agenda proposes principles and priorities for PB in EU Cohesion Policy and related EU funding programmes.

Disclaimer: This chapter is different from the others. It is aimed at strengthening participatory budgeting in the EU and focused on EU policies. The chapter is less about the practical organisation of PB and contextual insights about engagement for PB.

In this final chapter, we present a combination of (1) the recommendations from previous chapters in combination with (2) the policy agenda for participatory budgeting in the EU.

The policy agenda in short

The proposed DEMOTEC policy agenda for participatory budgeting (PB) aims to improve direct citizen participation in regional and urban development policies, especially in EU Cohesion policy. The proposed principles are as follows:

1. **Implement PB as a core method at the EU level:** Integrate PB as a core governance tool in EU Cohesion Policy to foster direct citizen involvement and improve decision-making processes.
2. **Provide legislative support for PB:** Mandate PB in EU Cohesion Policy to support a Europe closer to citizens through binding obligations in the upcoming reform, ensuring adequate resources and institutional backing for effective implementation.
3. **Develop a multi-level strategic communication plan:** Leverage traditional and digital media to boost awareness and engagement at EU, national and subnational levels, making use of both local and national media outlets, to publicise PB in EU Cohesion Policy.
4. **Provide comprehensive training and capacity-building:** Establish initiatives to empower local authorities and citizens to effectively participate in and manage PB processes.

5. **Use online and offline engagement tools:** Maximise accessibility and inclusivity by using both online and offline engagement tools, ensuring that digital platforms are user-friendly and widely available.
6. **Establish evaluation and feedback mechanisms:** Implement mechanisms for evaluating and providing feedback on the outputs and outcomes of democratic innovations, including measuring citizens' opinions during and after participation and the impact on trust.

Introduction

EU Cohesion Policy is the largest investment policy in the EU budget, allocating €392 billion, or 30% of the total budget, for 2021-2027. Around 70% of these resources target less developed regions to foster growth, jobs, and development, addressing economic, social, and territorial challenges. While the need to involve citizens in decisions about how the funding should be prioritised is important for ensuring that investment decisions reflect public needs and bring Europe closer to its citizens, there is a notable absence of regulatory requirements for employing well-established democratic innovation tools in Cohesion policy.

The primary objective of EU Cohesion Policy is to promote the overall harmonious development of the EU and reduce territorial disparities. Through a place-based approach, the policy tailors strategies and investments to the specific needs of regions, leveraging local knowledge and potential to foster sustainable development. It also aligns closely with the EU's strategic agendas, including the European semester and the EU's green and digital agendas.

The policy emphasises citizen engagement through enhanced visibility, participatory governance, and digital platforms for community involvement. However, engagement primarily occurs through indirect methods such as public awareness campaigns, while the partnership principle focuses more on organised stakeholders and implementing bodies rather than direct citizen participation. Despite improvements, challenges persist in achieving media visibility, optimising social media for policy promotion, and bridging the gap in public awareness and engagement. The EU has been experimenting with more innovative citizen participation in recent years, but it remains largely in a pilot phase operating on the margins of mainstream programmes.

This chapter reviews EU Cohesion Policy strategies and challenges in enhancing visibility and public participation. It highlights the EU's efforts in promoting communication and engagement initiatives to foster public awareness and participation. The chapter assesses EU initiatives aimed at fostering citizen engagement, their impacts, methodologies, and areas needing improvement for a more inclusive, participatory, and transparent governance framework. A final section highlights how Participatory Budgeting and EU Cohesion Policy can strengthen one another before turning to conclusions and recommendations for implementation.

Is Cohesion Policy visible to citizens?

Public awareness and engagement in Cohesion Policy is variable and relatively low, as underscored by Eurobarometer survey data.[1] A majority of EU citizens are unaware of the policy and projects in their local area, and most of those who are aware have not perceived any personal benefits in their daily lives, despite substantial funding allocations in some countries.[2]

Research points to direct communication methods, such as billboards and the media, as key drivers of increased awareness, with personal and professional networks, along with billboards, having become increasingly significant sources of information, while television's role has waned.[3] The internet and social media, particularly among younger audiences, represent important avenues for boosting awareness and engagement with Cohesion Policy.

Beyond opinion polling, focus group research has found that citizens across Europe have reservations about the democratic values that underpin EU Cohesion Policy.[4] While citizens recognise the success of the policy in achieving formal goals, they express concerns about its institutional performance and democratic value. To bridge this gap, the study recommends citizen co-creation through democratic innovations such as participatory budgeting and citizen juries to enhance legitimacy and effectiveness.

The visibility and communication of EU Cohesion Policy have been identified as areas requiring improvement. Despite the potential of social media, its effectiveness in promoting Cohesion Policy is not fully realised at the EU level, pointing to the need for more dynamic and citizen-focused communication and engagement strategies. While research suggests that regions with higher EU funding and greater public awareness and visibility of projects are more likely to foster a European identity among citizens,[5] public discussion on Cohesion Policy remains subdued in many countries, with social media often playing a limited role in raising its profile.

Communication experts advocate for a strategic, inclusive approach to engagement and communication, emphasising the importance of addressing citizen-relevant issues and leveraging new media for broader outreach.[6] EU institutions have undertaken various measures to enhance policy communication, but direct engagement with citizens in Cohesion Policy decision-making is limited.

1 Ipsos European Public Affairs (2023). Flash Eurobarometer FL531: Citizens' awareness and perception of EU Regional policy. European Commission. See: https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2970

2 The overall awareness of EU-funded projects is around 40% of citizens over the last three surveys (2019, 2021, 2023), representing an increase of 5 percentage points compared to previous surveys (2010, 2013, 2015, 2017).
Out of the respondents who are aware of EU-funded projects, the vast majority (ca. 80%) think that they have a positive impact on the regions, although there are wide variations across countries.

3 Charron, N. (2023). Citizen Attitudes toward EU Regional Policy. Final report to HLG on the Future of EU Cohesion Policy.

4 Mendez, C., Pegan, A., & Triga, V. (2024). Creating public value in regional policy. Bringing citizens back in. *Public Management Review, 26*(3), 811–835.

5 Borz, G., Brandenburg, H., & Mendez, C. (2024). The impact of EU Cohesion Policy on European identity: A comparative analysis of EU regions. *European Union Politics, 23*(2), 259-281.

6 Mendez et al., 2019, op.cit.; Charron, 2023, op.cit.

Key legislative changes in 2021-2027 include more unified branding, specific visibility to strategic projects, stronger sanctions for non-compliance and social media engagement. Despite these efforts and the promotion of best practices in the EU INFORM/INIO communication network, there remains a gap between the potential for effective communication and its realisation in practice across EU countries and regions, underscoring the need for enhanced strategies to promote Cohesion Policy and its benefits.

DG REGIO promotes Information measures for EU Cohesion Policy (IMREG), with an annual budget of €7 million, to enhance awareness and understanding of EU Cohesion Policy through grants for diverse projects, especially media organisations and initiatives in schools. It successfully engages wide audiences in different EU regions. However, it faces challenges in deepening digital engagement and ensuring the effectiveness of content strategies.

To sum up, public awareness and engagement in EU Cohesion Policy is relatively low and variable, with many citizens unaware of local projects and their benefits despite substantial funding in their country. Research highlights the need for improved communication strategies, especially through digital and social media, to increase visibility and engagement. This is important because citizen engagement cannot be separated from the issue of public communication of Cohesion Policy in the wider public sphere, given the role of traditional and social media in raising awareness and visibility of public policies among the general public.

Citizens participate in Cohesion Policy?

The need for citizen engagement has risen up the agenda driven by wider EU engagement initiatives, geography of discontent, visibility and communication of Cohesion Policy, and recommendations from EU Horizon projects (e.g. COHESIFY, PERCEIVE).[7]

Regulatory reforms in EU Cohesion Policy have been introduced to enhance governance and bring the policy closer to citizens, such as strengthening the partnership principle or promoting localised territorial instruments. However, their impact on citizen engagement has been limited. It is argued that the lack of public interest is primarily because citizens are not involved directly in substantive decision-making over the allocation of cohesion funding at programme, intervention or project levels.[8]

The absence of EU-level evaluations assessing citizen engagement in Cohesion Policy is striking given that it is one of the most evaluated EU policies. A notable exception evaluated engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens in Interreg programmes, focusing on the methods and challenges of engaging these groups in various stages of program management and implementation.[9] However, much of the analysis focused on CSOs rather than citizen engagement. It found that Interreg programmes increasingly engage CSOs, not just for consultation but also in co-design and decision-making roles as voting members on monitoring committees, or strategy boards and national working groups. Digital platforms and online resources also play a significant role in facilitating broader participation.

The study highlighted several challenges hindering effective engagement including language barriers, diverse administrative traditions, limited capacity and resources among CSOs, and complex administrative setups. There is also a noted lack of trust and perceptions of bureaucratic inefficiencies that may deter CSO participation. However, while there is room for more engagement, the reality of limited time and resources makes extensive engagement challenging. To address these challenges, the study calls for more innovative approaches to enhance CSO engagement. Future efforts should also focus on reducing barriers to entry, using digital tools for easier participation, and simplifying administrative processes to make involvement less daunting for smaller or less experienced CSOs. We argue that the EU needs to go much further than targeting CSOs and aim to bring citizens directly into the policy-making process.

What can be built upon?

The partnership principle is a cornerstone of the Cohesion Policy governance framework that requires Member states to involve subnational actors and other groups (economic and social partners, civil society

7 Charron, 2023.

8 Mendez, C., Pegan A. & Triga, V. (2023). The case for democratic reform of EU cohesion policy. *LSE EUROPP Blog*.

9 Ninka, B., Schausberger, B., Minichberger, B. (Interact Programme), McMaster, I., Wergles, W. & Vironen, H. (EPRC) (2024). *Civic and civil society engagement in Interreg*. Interact Programme.

organisations etc.) in the formulation, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of programmes. However, in practice, the main mechanisms for implementing this principle are consultations on programmes and participating in monitoring committees. Moreover, this does not lead to direct involvement of citizens in decision-making on policy interventions or projects following the logic of PB. Moreover, evaluations of the partnership principle show that practices vary widely across the EU, mainly focus on implementation, and are strongly influenced by existing institutional practices.

The **"European Code of Conduct on Partnership"** supports Member States to organise the partnership principle, although it is a soft law guidance document which lacks provisions on direct citizen engagement or methods. Instead, the code of conduct is restricted to setting out principles and good practices concerning consultation of partners (including CSOs) in the preparation of partnership agreements, programmes, calls of proposals, progress reports and in relation to monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

Related, the Commission established a **European Community of Practice Partnership** (ECoPP) to enhance partnership quality in the management of cohesion funds and facilitate the sharing of best practices among its members. Established in March 2022, the members include authorities from various programs. The ECoPP's stated aim is to advance the partnership principle for effective management of shared funds throughout their implementation.

The community's responsibilities are to foster the exchange of experiences, enhance capacity building, disseminate successful outcomes and innovative practices, and review and potentially update the European Code of Conduct to reflect evolving needs and insights. Among the 7 task forces running up in 2024, one is explicitly addressing the topic of citizen engagement. The plans are to explore different ways of working with citizens. However, it has not yet published any findings or concrete recommendations on granting citizens a greater decision-making role in cohesion policy through democratic innovations.

Further, the ESF has allocated EUR 1 billion to support **capacity building for social partners and civil society organisations**. All Member States should allocate an appropriate amount to the capacity building of social partners and civil society. Member States that have a European Semester country-specific recommendation in this area should allocate at least 0.25% of their ESF+ resources under shared management to this aim. Again, there is no evidence that any funding is used to support democratic innovations. The main focus is on the organisation of training for project management, including tools for monitoring and evaluation, information and publicity measures regarding financing opportunities, networking events, and capacities for social partners to implement projects.

In addition, the EU has promoted **local community economic development initiatives** for decades to support local development initiatives with community participation. For 2021-27, Policy Objective 5 "A Europe Closer to Citizens" (€19.5 billion, ERDF) funds place-based investments through integrated territorial development strategies. Almost two-thirds of this allocation is planned for investment aimed at fostering integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security within urban areas, while one-third will pursue such objectives in nonurban areas. These initiatives provide a promising and under-exploited opportunity for the integration of PB methods, given their localised nature and visibility within local communities.

Citizens can also respond to **programme consultations and EU-level consultations**. Comparative analysis of the level of citizen engagement in EU public consultations shows that EU Cohesion Policy is ranked among the lowest tier (9th out of 38 policy/issue areas), with very low average number of citizens responding to consultations.[10] Moreover, there is no evidence that these consultations directly influence decisions on Cohesion Policy in a meaningful way.

Capacity building by the EU's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) focuses on regulatory compliance issues, implementation, state aid, public procurement, and anti-fraud measures. It also offers a training module on citizen engagement to support participants in gaining expert insights into citizen engagement, exploring concepts, principles, and various methods like civic monitoring and participatory budgeting.

Lastly and more relevant, DG Regio has launched **EU pilot actions to enhance citizen involvement in EU Cohesion Policy** since 2020 in collaboration with the OECD. The first stage targeted Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies, offering support for closer collaboration with citizens and civil society organisations.[11] The second stage promoted the implementation of citizen participation initiatives. Initial findings from these pilot actions indicate that incorporating participatory processes involving citizens and young people in the 2021-2027 programmes is both feasible and beneficial. However, the learning curve for public authorities can be steep, necessitating significant time and resources to effectively engage in these participatory approaches.

What can Participatory Budgeting and EU Cohesion Policy do for one another?

Participatory Budgeting offers significant benefits for EU Cohesion Policy by promoting innovation in partnership, enhancing citizen participation, encouraging strategic thinking, and improving policy performance. By embracing PB, EU and national authorities can create more inclusive, transparent, and effective policy processes that better serve their communities and the EU.

At the same time, as this handbook shows, there are many challenges to the organisation of PB, embedding it institutionally and overcoming barriers to citizen engagement. By effectively combining PB efforts within EU Cohesion Policy, a solid foundation can be created for the continuous organisation and development of PB and other democratic innovations.

10 Nørbech, I. (2024). Does policy context matter for citizen engagement in policymaking? Evidence from the European Commission's public consultation regime. *European Union Politics, 25*(1), 130-150.

11 OECD. (2022). Engaging citizens in cohesion policy: DG REGIO and OECD pilot project final report. *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 50.*

Opportunities for EU Cohesion Policy

PB offers a range of opportunities for EU Cohesion Policy. In line with Harkins and Escobar (2015, p.3)[12], these relate to partnership/multilevel governance, citizen engagement, strategic thinking and performance.

Partnership and multi-level governance. The principles of partnership and multilevel governance are embedded in cohesion policy but have lost momentum as drivers of participatory innovation.[13] PB revitalises these principles by requiring collaboration across organisational, departmental, and geographical boundaries, providing new impetus to existing partnerships. By fostering these connections, PB encourages a more integrated approach to policymaking and resource allocation.

- **Strengthening regional and local partnerships.** PB strengthens regional and local partnerships by involving local governments, civil society organisations, and community groups in the decision-making process. This collaboration fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among stakeholders, leading to more sustainable and effective policy outcomes.
- **Breaking down silos.** In traditional governance structures, departments and organisations often operate in silos, limiting the flow of information and collaboration. PB breaks down these barriers by necessitating joint efforts across various sectors and levels of government.

12 Escobar, O., & Harkins, C. (2015). Participatory Budgeting in Scotland: An overview of strategic design choices and principles for effective delivery. Glasgow Centre for Population Health and What Works Scotland, Glasgow.

13 Mendez et al., 2024

- **Leveraging diverse expertise.** By involving a broad range of stakeholders, PB leverages the strengths and insights of diverse groups. This inclusive approach ensures that policies are well-rounded and consider various viewpoints, enhancing the overall impact of Cohesion Policy.
- **Citizen engagement.** The need for more stakeholder and citizen engagement in Cohesion Policy is frequently advocated by EU institutions but citizen engagement is far weaker. One of the primary benefits of PB is its ability to enable substantial participation by citizens and communities. It provides a platform to channel the aspirations of a citizenship that is becoming increasingly less trusting of and deferential towards traditional forms of authority and hierarchical decision-making.
- **Enhancing democratic engagement.** By involving citizens directly in the budgeting process, PB enhances democratic engagement and empowers communities to have a say in how public funds are allocated. This direct involvement not only increases transparency but also ensures that the needs and priorities of the community are accurately represented in policy decisions.
- **Showing the reliance of institutions.** This increased participation leads to decisions that better reflect the needs and priorities of the community, thereby strengthening social cohesion and the relationship with public institutions. When citizens see that their input is valued and has a tangible impact on policy, they can see their institutions as (more) reliable.
- **Encouraging civic responsibility.** PB also encourages civic responsibility by making citizens active participants in the governance process. This involvement fosters a sense of community and collective responsibility, which can lead to a more engaged and informed citizenry.

Strategic thinking. A criticism of Cohesion Policy raised in the 'High level Group on the Future of Cohesion Policy' is that strategic programming is hindered by administrative obligations and an overemphasis on mechanistic thematic targeting of funding. PB can create space for rethinking and translating EU priorities to national and local levels overcoming short-term thinking, allowing difficult decisions that authorities sometimes struggle to make to be addressed through open public deliberation and informed collective judgement.

- **Addressing complex problems.** Deliberative processes, like PB, can mobilise local knowledge and insights, helping to tackle complex and deeply rooted problems. By drawing on the collective insights of the local community, PB can identify innovative solutions that may not be apparent to policymakers working in isolation.
- **Promoting long-term planning.** By encouraging a long-term perspective and inclusive dialogue, PB contributes to more sustainable and resilient policy outcomes. This forward-thinking approach helps to ensure that policies are not just reactive but are designed to address future challenges and opportunities.
- **Inclusive dialogue.** Inclusive dialogue through PB allows for the consideration of diverse perspectives, leading to more comprehensive and robust policy solutions. This inclusiveness is essential for addressing the multifaceted nature of many policy issues.

Performance. Every reform of Cohesion Policy has stressed the need for a greater performance orientation. This is an ambition that has never been delivered on, despite the repetitive calls for increased performance in every policy review. In the past and current debates, this has mainly been pursued through mechanisms to determine the thematic allocation of funding, various forms of conditionality, performance reviews and reserves. This requires clear intervention logics in programmes and enhanced monitoring and evaluation.

Participatory Budgeting can stimulate effectiveness by increasing transparency, monitoring, and scrutiny of how public money is spent. This heightened accountability ensures that resources are used efficiently and for their intended purposes.

- **Increasing transparency.** PB increases transparency by making the budgeting process open and accessible to the public. This openness helps to prevent corruption and misuse of funds, as citizens can hold authorities accountable for their spending decisions.
- **Fostering innovation and creativity.** Cohesion policy has been criticised for losing its capacity for experimentation and creativity. PB fosters local creativity, entrepreneurialism, and collaboration, which can lead to the development of innovative solutions and initiatives. By tapping into the creativity and resourcefulness of the community, PB can uncover new approaches to persistent problems.
- **Driving performance improvements.** By engaging a broad spectrum of the community in the budgeting process, PB can uncover new opportunities and drive performance improvements, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of cohesion policy. A continuous feedback loop around PB can ensure that policies remain responsive and adaptive to the changing needs of the community.

Opportunities for PB

Realising the full potential of PB. Democratic innovations such as PB have enormous potential to realise democratic ideals and revitalise democracy.

- **Ensuring that the deliberative elements of PB are realised** requires addressing issues around social, economic and cultural differences, the standards of good deliberation and the use of facilitators.
- **Ensuring that the participatory elements of PB are realised** requires ongoing efforts to recognise, involve, recruit and retain a wide range of participants in PB and other democratic innovations.
- **Experience with PB** (or other democratic innovations) has been shown to be crucial for future engagement. EU Cohesion Policy can mandate the use of PB, thereby contributing to a wider, accessible playing field for citizens to give PB a chance - to gain experience, to get involved and to stay involved.

Creating good conditions for the organisation of PB. The chapters of this handbook have shown that PB, like other democratic innovations, is strongly dependent on the quality of its organisation. Ensuring the right conditions for EU-wide PB processes requires development, training and repeated evaluation.

- **The competences** of those involved are crucial for the course of the PB process and the experience of the participants. Centres of knowledge, expertise and competence—in line with similar EU efforts—help to create the right conditions for organising PB.
- **Resources such as frameworks, roadmaps, and toolkits** should be made accessible to a wide range of actors. The knowledge on how to organise PB in general is out there, no one has to start from scratch. More concrete guidance on specific steps, e.g. with multiple concrete examples, helps civil servants and policymakers to get it right.
- **Systematic learning** about PB. Sharing knowledge on important or unknown issues to improve current PB practices ensures the ongoing development of PB in its different contexts. Systematic learning can be increased by a greater focus on citizen participation in EU Horizon calls. Evaluation of specific PB processes, programmes and any form of knowledge exchange between institutions can promote systematic learning about how to organise PB.

Institutional embedding of PB. Throughout the DEMOTEC project, it became clear that embedding PB in legislations, policies and organisations has favourable effects. Embedding PB in EU funding structures such as EU Cohesion Policy and its Policy Objective 'A Europe closer to citizens', and other EU policies, would further strengthen the institutional embedding of PB in Europe.

- **Mandating and requiring** PB in EU and Cohesion Policy programmes, guidelines and legislation creates opportunities for citizens to experience PB and the embedding of PB in EU institutions.[14] Requiring (forms of) PB in such policies and governance structures would also allow for more direct citizen involvement in EU affairs.[15] Such efforts would also contribute to recent 'Commission Recommendations on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes'[16] as highlighted in the European Commission's Defend Democracy Package.[17]
- **Aligning PB with various other policies** at different levels of government. Aligning PB projects with local policies empowers neighbourhoods. Many member states, regions and cities need to consult their citizens on a range of issues. Having PB as part of these deliberations—to give citizens tangible influence—strengthens both PB and the deliberative processes that take place.

A healthy (media) ecosystem around PB. Part of DEMOTEC focused on gaining a better understanding of the role of the media in citizens' engagement and democratic innovations. In-depth qualitative interviews with journalists and quantitative data-scraping of media outlets revealed significant tensions and limitations faced by journalists and media organisations.

- **Conscious of the various tensions and pressures.** Journalists detailed how they experience both top-down and bottom-up pressures in their jobs that can impede (or distort) the reporting of democratic innovations. Policymakers, civil servants and different levels of government must be aware of these pressures and seek resolutions that can create an environment that is more conducive to accurate and supportive journalism.
- **Underutilisation of New Media.** PB initiatives are not widely reported by the media with the greatest audiences and resources and are instead covered by regional and local outlets. To support the reporting of democratic innovations there should be greater emphasis and effort placed on activating and utilising newer and social forms of media. This requires a coordinated public campaign where initiatives are publicised in areas that have so far been underutilised in order to maximise the reach for audiences and citizens alike.

14 See also Teunissen, I., Wesseling, H. & Blok, S. (2024). Democratic transition management: a conversation with scientists. Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

15 Blok, S., Luiten, L., de Vries, R. & Lucas, T. (2023). Citizen participation at the national level: a legal and empirical exploration. Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

16 European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers. (2023). COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes.

17 European Commission. (2023). Defence of Democracy – Commission proposes to shed light on covert foreign influence.

The DEMOTEC policy agenda

The DEMOTEC project presents six principles for PB in EU Cohesion Policy and other related EU funding programmes.

1. Implement PB as a core method within EU Cohesion Policy to foster direct citizen involvement and improve decision-making processes.

DEMOTEC has demonstrated that PB has positive effects on its participants. Citizens who participated think PB is a good way to make decisions. Moreover, gaining experience—as participants and as public organisations—is crucial for future engagement in democratic innovation and participatory democracy.

Implementing PB as a core governance method within EU Cohesion Policy has the following implications:

- **Modernise and democratise the Partnership Principle:** Update the Partnership Principle and the European Code of Conduct to explicitly include direct citizen engagement methods, ensuring a more democratic approach to governance.
- **Actively distinguish between citizen and stakeholder participation:** Differentiate the methodologies used for citizen and stakeholder involvement.
- **Transition from consultation to engagement:** Shift from merely consulting citizens to actively engaging them in decision-making processes, such as participatory budgets or deliberative assemblies.

Implementing PB as a core method harnesses participatory democracy by reaching more citizens and giving them influence beyond mere consultation. PB also strengthens regional and local partnerships by involving local governments, civil society organisations, and community groups in the decision-making process. This collaboration fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among stakeholders, leading to more sustainable and effective policy outcomes.

2. Mandate the inclusion of PB in EU Cohesion Policy with clear legislative support, ensuring adequate resources and institutional backing for effective implementation.

DEMOTEC has shown that PB is not a standalone tool divorced from the wider political system. PB needs to be embedded in institutional structure and practices. The DEMOTEC cases have also shown that, with the exception of one city, there are currently few links between PB and EU funding mechanisms even in cases with relatively high other EU funding.

Implementing PB as a core method within EU Cohesion Policy has the following implications:

- **Earmark funding for democratic innovation.** Allocate a share of EU funding specifically for participatory budgeting and deliberative mechanisms like citizen assemblies, juries and panels. Existing territorial instruments should integrate these participatory approaches. Other financial incentives could include reducing co-financing rates when such participatory approaches are used.
- **Encourage institutionalisation and participation infrastructure.** Develop ongoing participation mechanisms at the EU level, legal rights to participatory processes under conditions, and mandate citizen involvement in specific decision-making areas.
- **Require monitoring of democratic innovations.** There is a lack of evaluation, monitoring and follow-up in the organisation of democratic innovations. This

deficiency hampers their development and calls for obligations for EU-funded projects to declare whether and how they involve direct citizen participation. Managing Authorities (MAs) should outline plans for citizen participation in programmes, territorial strategies, project selection criteria and reporting on interventions.

Requiring the inclusion of PB in EU Cohesion Policy with clear institutional support would aid the development of well-implemented PB as a common European practice creating more opportunities for citizens to be aware of PB and to engage. Earmarked funding and institutional backing support the design and execution of PB processes and other democratic innovations.

3. Develop a strategic communication plan leveraging traditional and digital media to boost awareness and engagement, making use of local, national, offline and online outlets.

DEMOTEC has shown that the media provides opportunities and challenges for PB. While there can be cynical viewpoints in media coverage, analysis of news content reveals that PB is positively framed and reported overall. Providing resources and financial support, as well as developing and implementing a strategic communication plan, have the following implications:

- **Releasing untapped potential by embracing different types of media.** Social and newer forms of media have the potential to publicise initiatives and projects to a wider audience. Leveraging social and digital media to increase awareness and engagement, boosting participation in PB initiatives and enhancing knowledge about Cohesion Policy.
- **Training and capacity building.** A lack of resources and limited support for independent journalists is credited as preventing more media exposure for, and reporting on civic initiatives, ultimately preventing greater public engagement. Training workshops, pooled resources, and grants/subsidies could help increase capacity within the media for more independent reporters and journalists.
- **Invest in resource hubs.** Creating, funding and supporting an online resource hub would be beneficial to the wider media landscape. This would also work in synergy with the above two suggestions. An online media database with accessible information, reports and contacts would aid in the reporting efforts of media outlets with limited resources.

4. Develop comprehensive training programs and capacity-building initiatives to empower local authorities and citizens to effectively participate in and manage PB processes.

DEMOTEC has shown that there is a need for knowledge exchange, focused learning, stronger collaborations and capacity building to support the development, design and implementation of PB. Developing training programs and initiatives for capacity building to empower local authorities and citizens has the following implications:

- **Establish competence centres for citizen engagement.** Set up citizen engagement competence centres in DG REGIO and DG EMPL, supported with toolkits, seminars, and meetings to ensure effective implementation. Coordinate efforts with the EU competence centre on democratic engagement to streamline practices and share insights on relevant, research-based topics and learnings—like those from DEMOTEC.
- **Promote communities of practice.** Establish virtual and in-person communities of practice or networks to share experiences and best practices in citizen participation. These platforms will facilitate peer learning and inspire innovative approaches to engagement.
- **Develop a learning culture.** EU institutions can create programmes with experimental arenas for PB that address PB implementation problems. Such experimental arenas can be organised in partnership with local,

regional and national governments or with research partners from research policy such as Horizon Europe.

Developing training programs and capacity-building initiatives along these lines equips local authorities and citizens with the necessary skills and knowledge. It also fosters a collaborative environment where local governments, civil society organizations, and community groups can share best practices and current insights. This collaborative learning culture promotes sustainable and effective policy outcomes by ensuring all stakeholders are well-prepared to engage in the PB process.

5. Utilize both online and offline engagement tools to maximize accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that digital platforms are user-friendly and widely available.

DEMOTEC has shown that both offline and online variants of PB have different strengths and weaknesses. Utilising both online and offline engagement tools has the power to be accessible, inclusive, and deliberative—leading to enlightened understanding.

- **Expand the reach for public engagement online.** The digital presence and dissemination of participatory initiatives have often been limited, suggesting an opportunity to expand reach through online platforms.
- **Aim for balance.** Digital engagement has the ability to maximise reach. Online tools can help PB to reach and engage more citizens and harness the participatory power of PB. Offline, traditional engagement can harness the deliberative properties of PB and increase the chances of reaching a consensus.
- **Create synergies with other, digital ambitions.** A focus on online engagement tools also aligns with the '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade'[18], which aims for 'Empowered citizens'. Digital elements in democratic innovations contribute to a digitally skilled population.

Utilising both online and offline engagement tools maximises accessibility and inclusivity, and safeguarding deliberation and enlightened understanding.

6. Close the loop on the outputs and outcomes of democratic innovations by recommending evaluations, feedback and measuring citizens' opinions during or after democratic innovations.

DEMOTEC has shown that a lack of evaluation hinders the implementation and development of PB. Additionally, DEMOTEC has shown that citizens' experiences and opinions about democratic innovations like PB can be measured and evaluated.

- **Evaluate current practices and feasibility.** Conduct studies and evaluations to assess existing democratic innovations within Cohesion Policy programmes that may be occurring 'under the EU radar' due to the absence of reporting on democratic innovations and explore the potential for integrating participatory budgeting in the policy. These evaluations should inform future policy decisions and enhance understanding of effective practices.

18 European Commission. (2021). 2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade. Communication from the commission to the European parliament, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions.

- **Utilise EU Research Policy initiatives to undertake evaluations of democratic innovations.** Future research projects (e.g. Horizon Europe), can be used to do evaluation studies of democratic innovations, inquire specific topics of interest and measure the effects of democratic innovations on citizens' attitudes to and trust in the EU.

By implementing these evaluation and feedback measures, the EU can create a more responsive and adaptive framework for democratic innovations. This approach ensures that citizens' experiences and opinions are systematically measured and considered, leading to more informed decision-making. Furthermore, it supports the ongoing refinement and effectiveness of participatory budgeting and other democratic innovations, ultimately fostering sustained engagement.

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Engaging citizens in decision-making