

Climate Assemblies to engage citizens in political decision-making

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The introduction of Climate Assemblies (CAs) as a response to climate change has gained popularity in Europe. Classified as 'deliberative mini-publics' (Boswell, Dean, & Smith, 2023), these assemblies provide a platform for citizens to contribute to the improvement of climate change policies through information-driven discussions. While most assemblies have traditionally been organised to address climate change mitigation policies, the Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Action CLIMAS (CLIMAtE change citizens engagement toolbox for dealing with Societal resilience, s.f.) aims to apply the CA model to climate change adaptation policies and strategies.

CLIMAS (CLIMAtE change citizens engagement toolbox for dealing with Societal resilience) provides inclusive organisational and facilitation tools to be tested within CAs in three European locations: Catalunya (Spain), Riga (Latvia) and Edermünde (Germany), at regional, city and small community level respectively. In the current initial phase of the project, CLIMAS is exploring stakeholders' practices and needs related to CAs by applying the design-thinking methodology (Carlgren, Rauth, & Elmquist, 2016). The stakeholders jointly identified drivers, barriers, and bottlenecks for CAs.

During the design-thinking workshops, stakeholder dialogues identified drivers for successful deliberation, including (1) emphasising the use of simple language, (2) recognising the importance of clear communication, (3) offering incentives for participation (especially for youth and low-income groups), (4) adopting a needs-based approach, (5) focusing on detailed and concrete issues, (6) involving politicians from different parties in the design phase, among others. Findings on bottlenecks and barriers included (1) lack of understanding of the objectives of the CAs and their impact, (2) politicians' fear of losing control over the results, (3) over-representation of highly educated participants in the absence of vulnerable groups. In this context, media and communication aspects play a crucial role in shaping the success and impact of CAs, and can in turn contribute significantly to building a sustainable society. Effective media and communication strategies can enhance the legitimacy, inclusiveness and impact of CAs, as highlighted in Figure 1.

Key words: *climate change policy, climate assembly, climate governance, stakeholder engagement*



Figure 1- Prioritised bottlenecks, barriers and drivers for deliberation

References

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