

Designing an effective and social climate policy together

Plans and Objectives

Citizens' assemblies can produce broad social consensus as they consider potential conflicts of interest and develop concrete recommendations for action. The **Citizens' Assembly on Climate Protection** is intended to develop a **climate policy that is supported by the citizens**.

The starting point for these open-ended discussions **among randomly selected citizens** is the state of scientific research, objectives agreed in advance, and planned political steps. The discussions cover both the climate objectives and measures to achieve these objectives. The Citizens' Assembly on Climate offers the space to determine **which political measures are supported by well-informed citizens**; the common good shall be in the foreground.

The Citizens' Assembly on Climate succeeds the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy (www.buergererrat.de) which was instated in 2019 and will take into account the experiences and results from various environmental policy participation activities and negotiation procedures in Germany.

Europe's Role Models

- In June 2019, **President Macron** established a national **Citizens' Assembly on Climate** in France which shall convene until early 2020. 150 randomly selected participants shall propose a coherent package of measures over the course of three weekends within six months.
- **Six committees of the British Parliament** will instate a randomly-selected citizens' assembly at the beginning of 2020. These citizens will receive expert information on all relevant issues and will then jointly develop a solution strategy. The UK intends to be the first major industrialized nation to become carbon-neutral by 2050.

Starting Point

- Almost four years after the adoption of the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris, it is still not foreseeable that sufficient steps to implement the agreement will be taken. It stipulates that the maximum increase in global temperatures should be considerably lower than 2 degrees Celsius. The global political measures planned thus far are **likely to generate an increase in global temperatures of at least 3 degrees Celsius**.
- The IPCC Special Report published in 2018 came to the **conclusion that the target of a 1.5 degrees Celsius increase is both achievable** and affordable and would minimize many negative consequences of global warming compared to the less ambitious 2 degree target.
- The German government assumes that **the 2020 climate targets will not be met**. There is increasing willingness within the business community to accept state climate protection requirements, but companies are calling for **reliable long-term planning**.
- On 15 November, 2019, the German parliament passed the climate law which is a topic of controversial discussion not only among politicians but also the public and the scientific community.
- Climate protection measures must be conceived in such a way that they are **socially acceptable** (see **yellow vest** protests in France), but they must not lead to economic stagnation. Prioritising carbon-neutral trade must not be at the expense of society's most disadvantaged.
- The threat of an environmental catastrophe is seen by **young people (Fridays for Future)** and on **social media (Rezo, among others)** as a failure of the political system and is one of the main reasons for the loss of trust and credibility in politics, as well as the alienation between politics and citizens.

Inclusion of Citizens and all Relevant Groups

To this day, we have seen a variety of climate and other committees at all political levels. But thus far, climate policy has been more about 'bargaining' and is not consistently oriented toward urgent need.

A study commissioned by the Germany Ministry of the Environment showed that a **majority of people** in Germany believe there is a need for a fundamental change in energy, agriculture and transport policies.

The transformation into a climate-friendly society must include all sectors of the population. For this reason, in order to develop such a plan, the citizen participation processes are used that guarantee the broadest involvement of the population.

The awareness among citizens that the consequences of what they do, or fail to do, today will have a considerable impact on the lives of their children and grandchildren must be reflected in government policies.

The majority of citizens are prepared to make cuts and accept costs that are socially balanced.

All relevant groups or interest groups, such as businesses, agricultural organisations, social associations, trade unions, churches, activists, the media (particularly social media), and relevant representatives of the scientific community must be involved in the debate on climate protection.

For many measures, there will not only be winners, but also losers. Climate protection must not only be environmentally effective, it must also be **socially fair, equitable across generations, make economic sense and serve the common good**. Only democratically legitimised political bodies can make these decisions. They shall be supported by recommendations from a citizens' assembly on climate which develops concrete proposals for the German parliament and German government. The more climate decisions involve a cross-section of the population, the more the decisions will be accepted.

Sortition-based German Citizens' Assembly on Climate Protection

A Defining objectives

The Paris Agreement sets a target bound by international law to limit the increase in average global temperatures to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius in comparison to pre-industrial levels and recommends limiting the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The IPCC Special Report published in 2018 emphasizes that by limiting the increase of global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the negative impacts of global warming could be avoided or significantly reduced. This suggests that Germany's climate contribution should be to set a limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius. In any case, the objectives for the Citizens' Assembly on Climate Protection must be clearly defined. These can then be discussed at the beginning of the Citizens' Assembly and reviewed with regard to their acceptance.

B Addressing national measures as a first step

The citizens' assembly should only discuss those measures that can actually be implemented by the German federal government and parliament at a national level. This will ensure direct responsibility and transparent accountability. It will also mean that results can be achieved more quickly.

European and international solutions are desirable and can be developed in a second step, possibly in participation formats at a European level.

C Collaboration between Politicians and the Citizens' Assembly on Climate Protection

German Parliament / German Federal Government

The Citizens' Assembly on Climate Protection shall be commissioned by a broad consensus in German parliament, wherever possible. Alternatively, the federal government can also act as the initiator. Politicians shall support the process and ensure that the results are dealt with seriously. It is also their responsibility to ensure that results are not lost due to departmental disputes. A process that only pays lip services will lead to a further loss of trust in the democratic institutions and thus result in lower citizen participation.

Citizens' Assembly on Climate Protection

Based on the experience and established working structure of the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy (www.buergerrat.de), the conception and implementation of a Citizens' Assembly on Climate Protection can begin immediately. The Citizens' Assembly team offers to develop and execute a suitable process in collaboration with politicians. In addition, a broad advisory board composed of members of civil society and a scientific board will be established.

By working in this way, the work accomplished by the Citizens' Assembly on Climate Protection and the results that emerge from it have a much greater chance of being accepted by both civil society and citizens in general. Besides resulting in feasible programs, this way of working can ideally lead to greater social cohesion. The Citizens' Assembly on Climate Protection could lead the way in terms of collaboration between citizens and political institutions, and thus overcome the problem of disillusionment with politics.

Designing Procedures Based on the Irish Model

A Proposed issues for a Citizens' Assembly on Climate

To ensure the success of the project, the Citizens' Assembly must have a **political mandate with a precise definition of issues**. This definition shall be developed collaboratively by politicians and the Citizens' Assembly team. In each case, the question must also be addressed of how **higher burdens can be distributed in a socially fair and equitable manner across generations**.

Depending on the issues at hand, the time frame for this project will be between nine to twelve months. Preparations have already begun. Citizens' Assembly on Climate is planned for autumn 2020, enabling completion of the project the same year.

B Other issues for consideration in relation to climate protection

For such a cross-cutting issue as climate protection, numerous decisions have to be made in various sectors:

- a. construction
- b. transport
- c. industry and commerce
- d. agriculture
- e. energy

For preparation of the content, proposals and existing concepts will be obtained from members of civil society, political parties as well as from the business and scientific communities. Based on this, the conception of the citizens' assemblies, the proclaimed objectives and the issues at hand shall be developed together with scientists, politicians and the Citizens' Assembly consortium.

To ensure scientific competence from the very beginning, a scientific board consisting of recognized scientists shall be established to advise the initiators on the conception of the Citizens' Assemblies on Climate, the definition of objectives and the issues to be dealt with.

This scientific board could consist of scientists from the area of climate research (e.g. PIK, IASS, DLR, GEOMAR, AWI), institutes dealing with the environment and renewable energies (e.g. Ökoinstitut, MPI, Wuppertal, HTB, KIT) as well as economics (e.g. Ifo, IfW, IW, DIW) and social sciences (e.g. WZB).

The primary focus shall be the discussion of measures that can be implemented directly in Germany. This will demonstrate where Germany stands compared to other countries in Europe and among the OECD nations.

The proposals gathered and narrowed down together with the scientific board can then be used to identify the **critical implementation issues** in each sector.

In the next step, the initiators develop the final process design (number of weekends, which formats, etc.), supported with content from the scientific board, in order to adequately address each issue.

C Basic procedural structure of a citizens' assembly

- 100 – 200 randomly selected citizens meet across several weekends for one or more citizens' assemblies on climate protection. The resulting selection represents society in its diversity. This applies in particular to all educational levels and age groups.
- All key stakeholders are given the opportunity to present their views to the citizens. Based on this, the citizens of the assembly can process and work through the topics and issues under discussion. The more concrete and precisely the issues considered by the citizens' assembly are defined, the better the results will be.
- Guidance from scientific experts, professional group facilitators and appropriate documentation ensure that even complex issues are presented in a way that is clear and comprehensible to all participants.
- Special attention is paid to ensuring the involvement of the public, traditional media, and in particular, social media and its users.

D Advantages of the sortition process

- The solutions proposed by citizens are perceived to reflect 'common sense' and perceived to be fair. **They can achieve majority support.**
- The social consequences of measures can be comprehensively thought out and dealt with. The cornerstones of widely supported **citizens' compromises** become very obvious and apparent.
- Trust is built on both sides. Citizens get a better understanding of how politicians work. They come into contact with politicians and with other citizens from outside their usual 'filter bubbles' and echo chambers.
- With the participation of ordinary citizens, **social exclusion** is minimised. For example, participants receive compensation for loss of earnings, and childcare and dependent support is also provided, as is translation, etc.
- The process is transparent and not dominated by lobby groups. All interested parties get a chance to have their say.
- The result is a respectful, rational, **fact-based discourse.**

Politicians obtain a clear idea of **just how far citizens can and want to go with concrete measures.** It is on this basis that legislation can then be prepared and formulated.

Contact

Mehr Demokratie e.V.	Roman Huber, 0179-9162056, roman.huber@mehr-demokratie.de
buergerpolitik.org	Dr. Joachim Haas, 0160-3658212, haas@buergerpolitik.org
Demokratie Innovation	Katharina Liesenberg, 0157-31321407, katharina@esgehtlos.org