

Submitting assembly\*

Parliament of Wallonia

Contact person\*

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Name of the initiative\*

Deliberative Commissions between Deputies and Randomly Selected Citizens in the Parliament of Wallonia

Type of initiative\*

This initiative is a democratic and participatory process implemented by the Parliament of Wallonia. It involves the establishment of Deliberative Commissions that bring together both elected representatives and citizens selected through random sampling to discuss and develop recommendations on specific matters of public interest.

Start date of the initiative

15<sup>th</sup> of October, 2023.

End date of the initiative

Early 2024.

Web page of the initiative

<https://www.parlement-wallonie.be/commission-deliberative-entre-deputes-et-citoyens-tires-au-sort>

Short description of the initiative\*

Deliberative Commissions between Elected Representatives and Randomly Selected Citizens, is a novel and innovative initiative within the framework of the Parliament of Wallonia, designed to revitalize democracy and enhance citizen engagement in decision-making processes. This initiative is a testament to the region's commitment to participatory democracy and its belief in the value of involving ordinary citizens in shaping public policies and addressing complex societal issues.

At its core, this initiative seeks to bridge the gap between elected representatives and the people they serve by inviting randomly selected citizens to deliberate and collaborate with elected deputies. It operates as a collaborative experiment in which citizen voices are valued and given a prominent role in shaping the policies and recommendations put forth by the Parliament. The process can be divided into several key elements:

The Deliberative Commissions initiative stands as a beacon of participatory democracy in the Walloon region, promoting the idea that the collective intelligence of its citizens, along with

their elected representatives, can lead to well-informed and well-rounded policy recommendations. It encourages a sense of shared ownership over the decisions that affect the region and is a testament to Wallonia's commitment to democratic principles and robust citizen engagement. By actively involving the public, this initiative strengthens the bonds between the Parliament and its constituents, ultimately creating a more responsive and inclusive form of governance.

#### Main features of the initiative\*

1. Democratic participation : The Deliberative Commissions initiative begins with the idea that the best solutions to public problems often emerge through inclusive and transparent processes. It provides a platform for citizens, representing a cross-section of the Walloon population, to directly participate in the democratic process.
2. Parliamentary involvement : The Parliament is deeply involved in this initiative. At least 38 deputies can propose the creation of a Deliberative Commission. This involvement by elected representatives demonstrates their commitment to enhancing citizen participation and fostering a sense of shared responsibility in the decision-making process.
3. Transparent selection process : A selection process for the randomly chosen citizens ensures diversity in gender, age, geographical representation, and educational background. This comprehensive approach ensures that different perspectives and experiences are brought to the deliberative table.
4. Voluntary participation : Citizens who are randomly selected to participate in the Deliberative Commissions do so voluntarily. This approach recognizes that each person's participation is a valuable civic contribution and that engagement should be accessible and comfortable for all, irrespective of their background or circumstances.
5. Expert guidance: A support committee, along with experts in the relevant fields, assists the Deliberative Commissions. These experts help guide discussions, provide necessary information, and promote inclusivity and the expression of diverse viewpoints during deliberations.
6. Deliberation and recommendation: Deliberations are designed to be comprehensive, featuring both open and closed sessions, and discussions by smaller groups, ensuring thorough and balanced discussions. When considering recommendations, a dual voting process is employed, allowing both citizens and deputies to express their views. This process promotes a multi-perspective approach to decision-making.
7. Transparency and evaluation: The entire process is transparent, with the proceedings of the Deliberative Commissions made available to the public. Moreover, citizens are invited to assess the quality of the process, thereby providing valuable feedback for continuous improvement.
8. Engagement and reporting: The culmination of this initiative is the delivery of a report to the Parliament, outlining the deliberations, recommendations, and the statistical results of the voting process. This report provides a comprehensive record of the citizens' participation in the deliberative process and the impact they have had on the decisions reached by the Parliament.

#### Role of the assembly in the success of the initiative\*

The Parliament plays a pivotal role in the success of the "Deliberative Commissions between Elected Representatives and Randomly Selected Citizens" initiative in several key ways. The Parliament notably :

- is responsible for creating and maintaining the legal framework that enables this initiative to exist and operate. It sets the rules, guidelines, and procedures that govern the functioning of Deliberative Commissions, ensuring that the initiative is conducted in a lawful and transparent manner. The Assembly's oversight helps maintain the integrity of the process ;
- provides a platform for deputies to propose the creation of Deliberative Commissions. To initiate the process, a minimum of 38 deputies must support the establishment of such a commission. This demonstrates the commitment of elected representatives to engage with citizens and collaborate on critical issues ;
- ensures that the selection of randomly chosen citizens for participation in Deliberative Commissions is conducted in a transparent and unbiased manner. This selection process, which guarantees diversity in terms of gender, age, geographical representation, and educational background, is essential to the inclusivity of the initiative.
- allocates the necessary resources and expertise for the successful functioning of Deliberative Commissions. This includes providing funding, staff, and experts in relevant fields to assist the Commissions and ensure that they have the support needed to deliberate effectively.
- emphasizes transparency throughout the initiative. It ensures that the proceedings of Deliberative Commissions are made available to the public, promoting accountability in the process. This transparency builds trust among the public and reinforces the legitimacy of the initiative.
- engages in the assessment of the Deliberative Commissions initiative. The citizens' feedback and the overall quality of the process are taken into account, leading to potential improvements and refinements. This demonstrates a commitment to evolving the initiative based on the needs and expectations of the public.
- receives the reports generated by the Deliberative Commissions and uses them as valuable resources for decision-making. These reports provide insights into the perspectives of citizens, enriching the legislative process with diverse viewpoints.

#### European orientation of the initiative\*

The initiative is closely aligned with the European spirit of democratic governance. This initiative embodies values such as transparency, inclusivity, and participatory democracy, which resonate with the broader European political landscape.

By involving randomly selected citizens in the legislative process and promoting open dialogue between citizens and elected representatives, the initiative contributes to the core democratic principles that underpin the European Union. This commitment to citizen engagement and accountability is fundamental to the European project.

The initiative's dedication to diversity, both in terms of the composition of deliberative commissions and the consideration of various demographic factors, reflects a commitment to inclusivity, mirroring the European Union's emphasis on equal representation.

Furthermore, the Wallonia region's participation in the "Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies" (CALRE) highlights its commitment to cross-border collaboration and

knowledge sharing. The initiative not only benefits Wallonia but also offers valuable insights and practices that align with the European approach to regional governance.

#### Documentation