

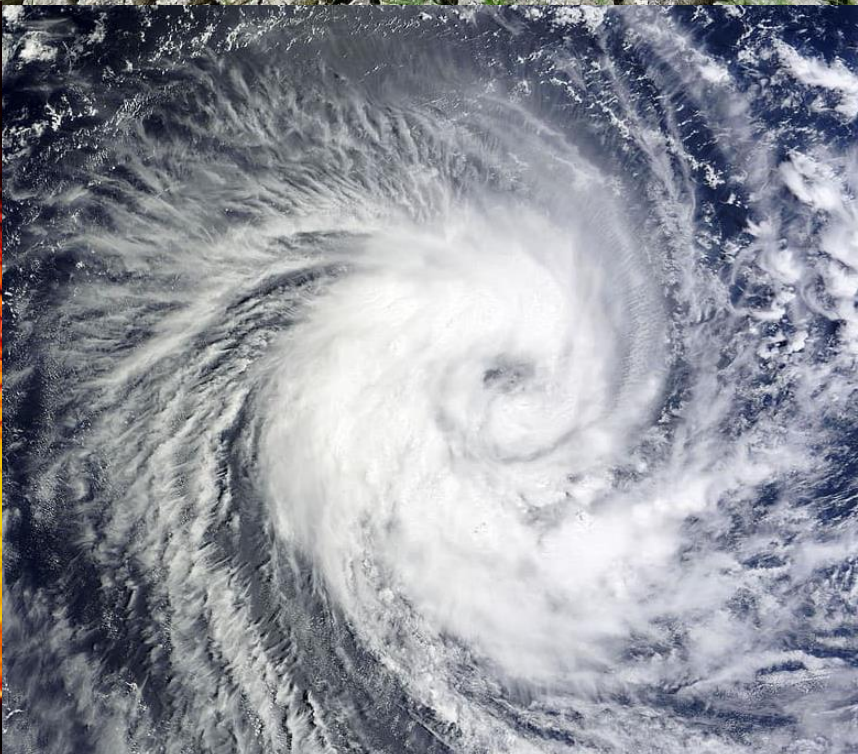
# Citizen engagement in policymaking

Rationales, meaning and context

*16<sup>th</sup> March, 2024*

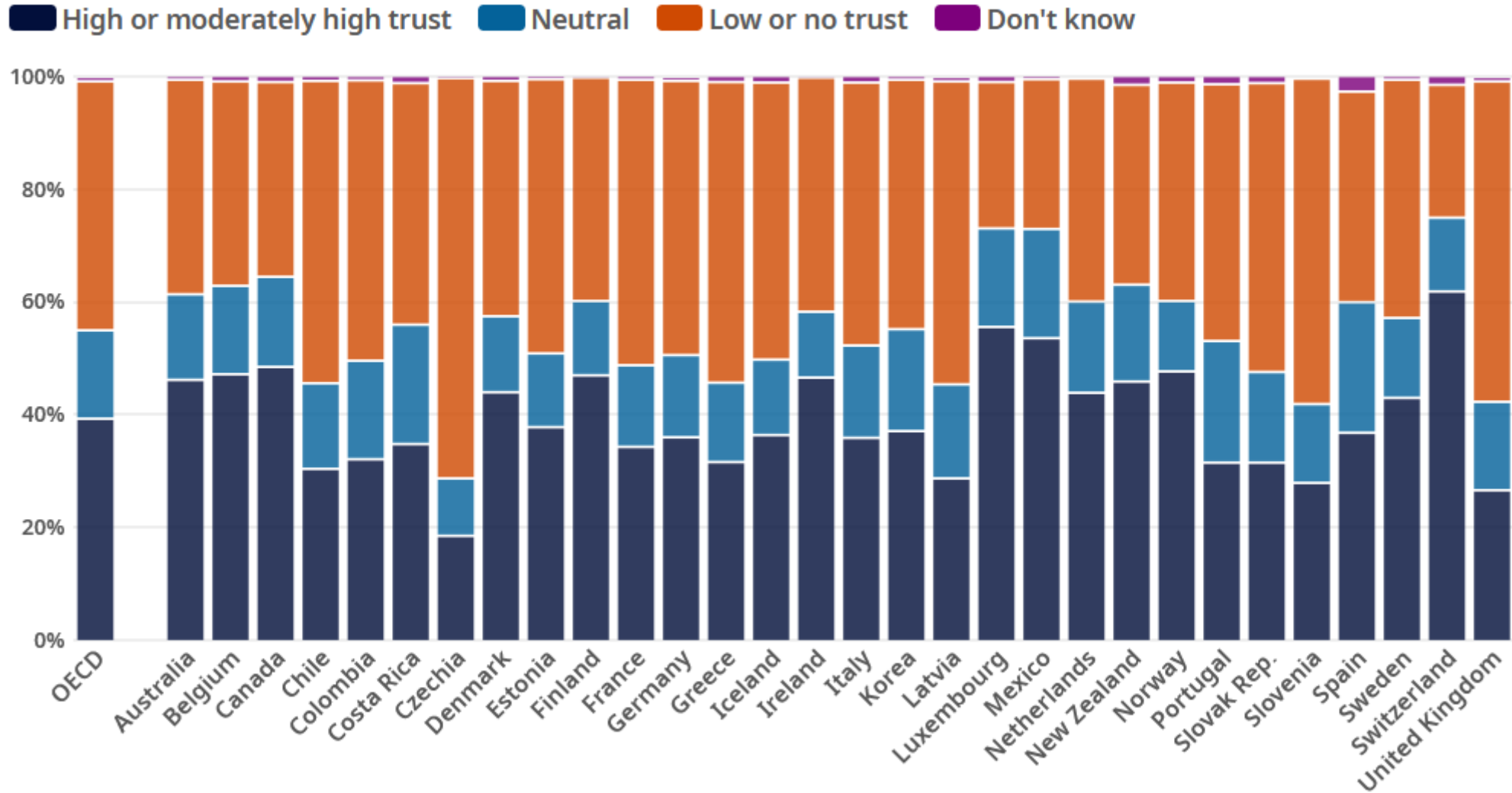
*Elisa Vecchione and Ângela Guimarães Pereira,  
Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy*

*JRC.S2*



# Trust in national government

% of population with different levels of trust in national government, 2023



Source: OECD (2024), [OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results](#) (Figure 1.2).

# DECISIONS



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# KNOWLEDGE







*The ways in which **we know and represent the world** (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which **we choose to live in it**” (Sheila Jasanoff, 2004:2-3).*

*...and also to **intervene in it** (Ian Hacking, 1983).*



*The ways in which **we know** and represent the world are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it ...and also to intervene in it.*

# KNOWLEDGE THAT IS FIT FOR PURPOSE



**Alternative Water Sources: Extended facts, matters of concern**







*The ways in which we know and **represent** the world are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it ...and also to intervene in it.*

# BETTER REPRESENTING THE PUBLICS AND THEIR PROBLEMS

# A pragmatic view of knowledge and science



John Dewey

- The Public and its Problems (1927)
  - "it is not necessary that the many should have the knowledge and skill to carry on the needed investigations; what is required is that they have the **ability to judge of the bearing** of the knowledge supplied by others **upon common concerns.**" (p.365)
  - Knowledge is not external to **experience** and Intelligence is practical - and so is public intelligence (democracy)

# Dealing with complexity: consensus conference on food safety (BE)

- What food safety is according to policymakers and citizens
- What counts in food safety
  - Transparency about food chain
  - Environmental pollution
  - Preservation of small producers and distributors

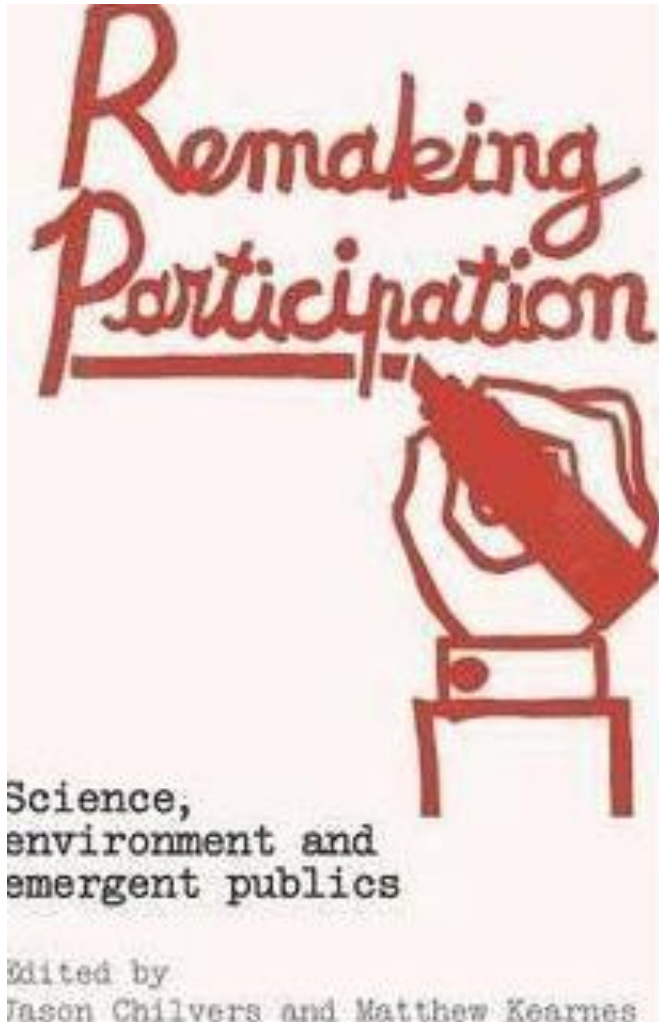




*The ways in which we know and represent the world are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it ...and also to **intervene** in it.*

# PARTICIPATORY ACTION

## Beyond involvement: **co-creation** with citizens



“[invited] citizen engagement is not just about exploring opinions and interests, or eliciting knowledge and values, “but about **openly discussing matters of ‘concern’ and controversy”**”

*based on Chilvers and Kearnes, 2015*



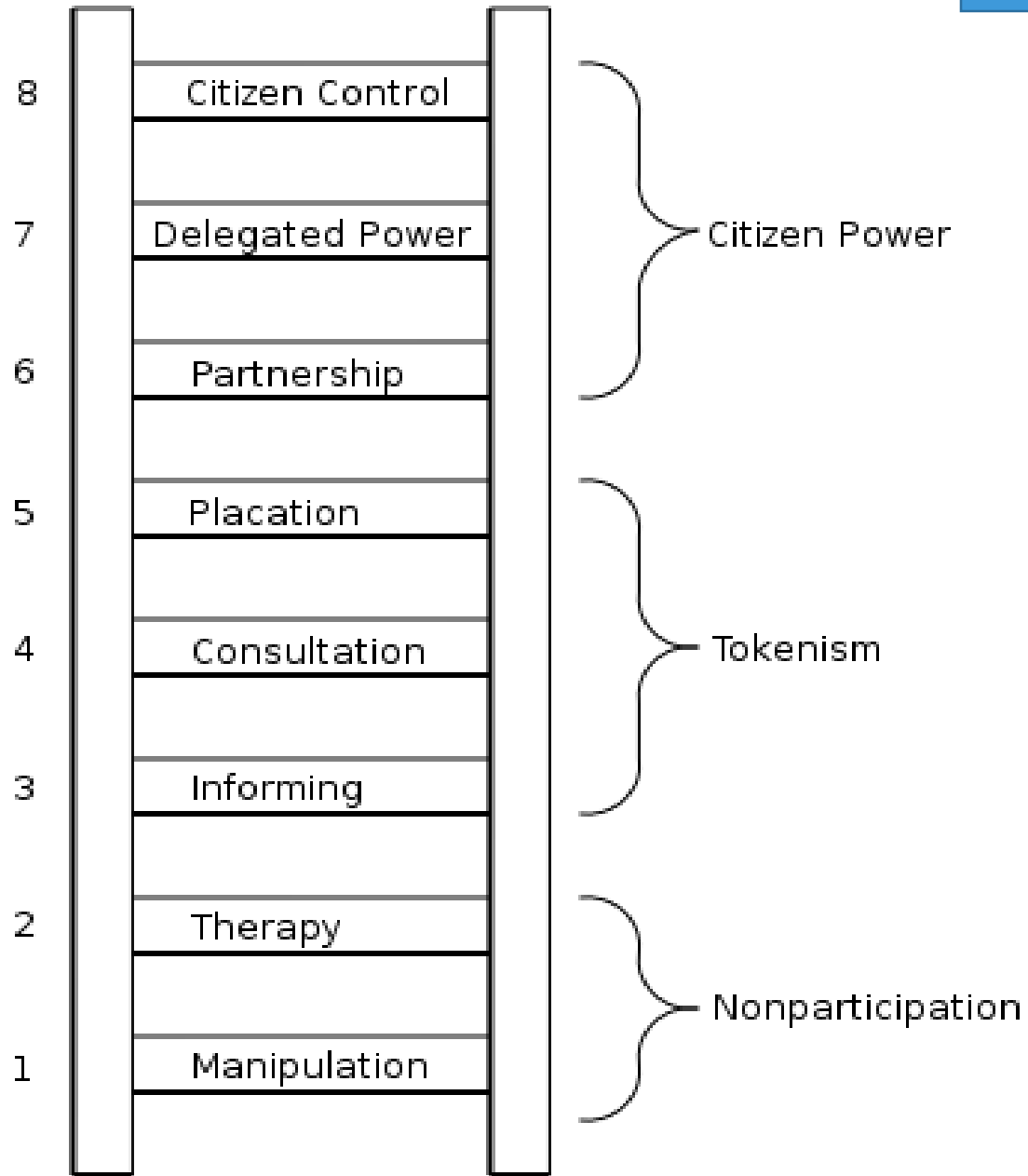
*[...] citizen engagement involves much more than just organising different opportunities to mobilise citizens' knowledge into debates, co-creation or other processes [...]. Citizen engagement requires that policymaking institutions recognise and accept participatory governance styles and therefore create listening mechanisms to bring citizens' knowledge, expectations, values and imaginaries into the planning, decision or policy processes.*

*Ângela Guimarães Pereira, Thomas Völker, 2020*

# Pay attention to acceptance politics



- Who is represented and who is doing the selecting?
- Risk of manufacturing consensus
- Foreclosing more radical forms of 'participation'







# Levels of engagement

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	<b>INFORM</b>	<b>CONSULT</b>	<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>COLLABORATE</b>
<b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
<b>MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into

Source: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

# Citizen participation in the EU political context

EU driven initiatives and beyond

# Topics

- Legal Basis (current)
- It is happening!

# backbones of democratic governance

“WE RECOGNISE that strong citizen and stakeholder participation, public integrity, inclusive representation, openness, quality evidence and accountability are essential backbones of democratic governance and necessary to support trust in public institutions.”

OECD, Declaration on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy, 2022



I expect you to **actively communicate** on the Commission's actions and decisions and explain the benefits and opportunities stemming from our work. You should also help **tackle disinformation**, notably by providing clear and accurate information at all times.

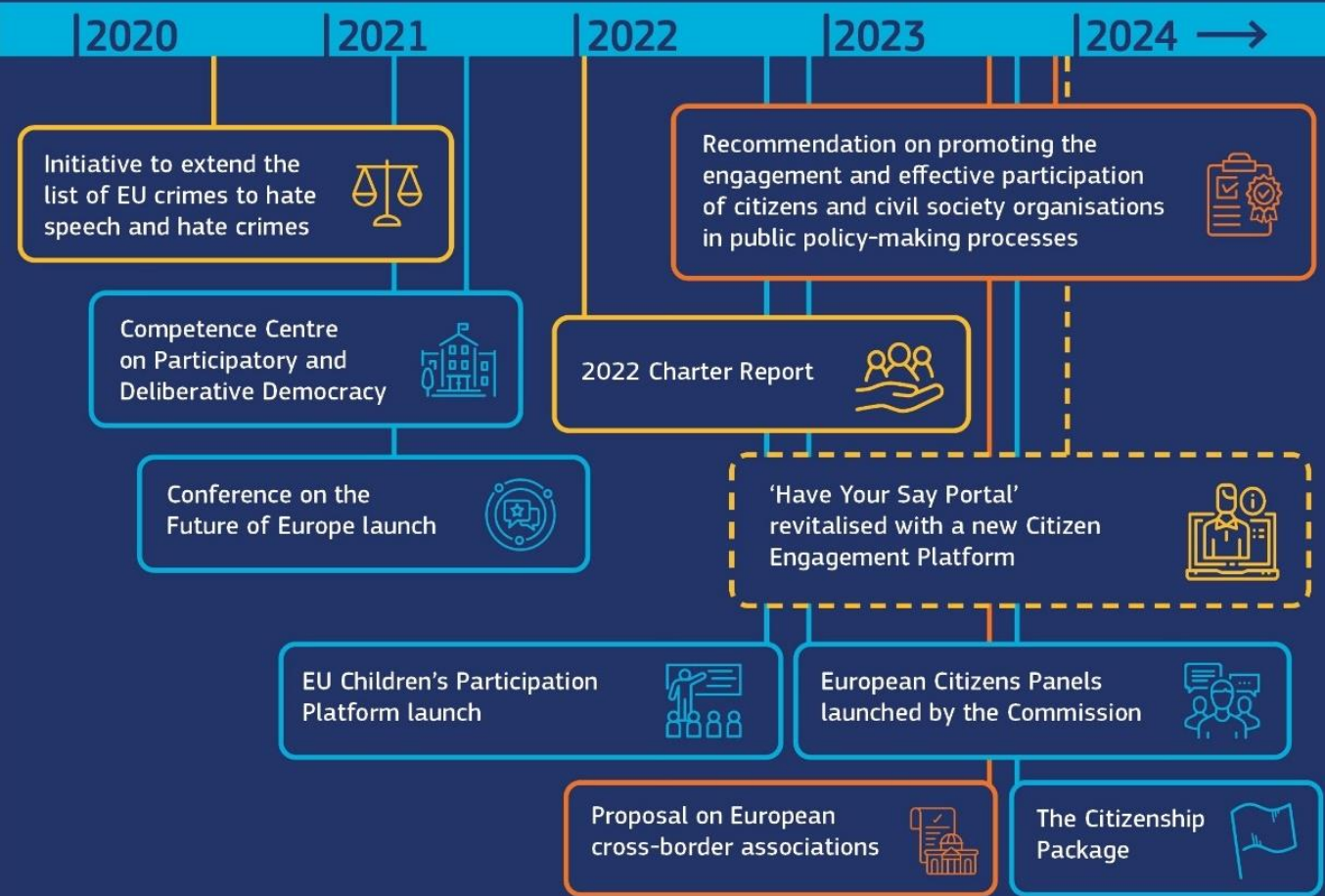
Third, this Commission will start **a new era of dialogue** with citizens and stakeholders. You should organise a first edition of the **annual Youth Policy Dialogues** within the first 100 days so that young people can be heard and can help shape your work.

This will be part of our work in embedding **citizen participation** in our work. We will build on the Conference on the Future of Europe to instil a true and **lasting culture of participative democracy**. We will choose policy areas and proposals where recommendations from a European Citizens' Panel would have the greatest value and follow up on their proposals.

*Mission letters, page 3*

4

## Flagship actions to promote civic engagement and citizen participation since 2020



### EU funding and support for:

- Building capacity in public administration for citizen engagement in public policy-making
- Boosting citizen participation, civic engagement, and trust in democracy
- Promoting media literacy and fight disinformation to make informed decisions

# Defence of democracy communication

“New and meaningful methods of citizen participation, deliberation and engagement, across all generations, can **reinforce representative democracies.**”

“Experiences with participatory and deliberative democracy, ... demonstrate that these practices can help to **bridge existing gaps between citizens and decision-makers...**” COM(2023) 630 final



**GUIDANCE**

**RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE REPOSITORY**

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

**NETWORKING**

# Deliberative processes ‘wave’



**Innovative Citizen  
Participation and New  
Democratic Institutions**  
CATCHING THE DELIBERATIVE WAVE

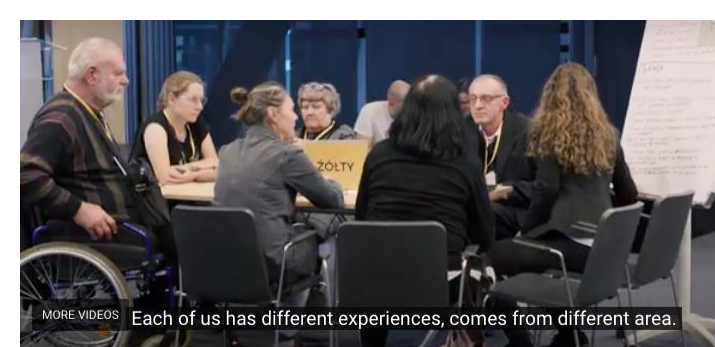


# 45%

Database of the OECD.  
Deliberative processes in the  
EU

<https://doi.org/10.1787/339306da-en>






**decidim**  
free open-source participatory democracy  
for cities and organizations

**decidim is a digital platform  
for citizen participation**

Free and safe technology.  
With all democratic guarantees.  
Reprogramming democracy is now possible with Decidim.



**citizen assemblies**

**participatory budgeting**

**participatory planning**

**co-design**



# Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens ... in public policy-making



- "The inclusive and effective involvement of citizens, civil society organisations and human rights defenders in political decision-making processes **should be actively promoted by public authorities**"
- "Member States should introduce citizen-led participatory and deliberative exercises <...>, **such as citizens panels, citizens assemblies, and other dialogue and co-creation formats.**"

# European Commission Communication on Enhancing the European Administrative Space (ComPAct), 2023

where **citizen engagement in policymaking** is an area of **skills development** at Public Administrations level – **Pillar 1**



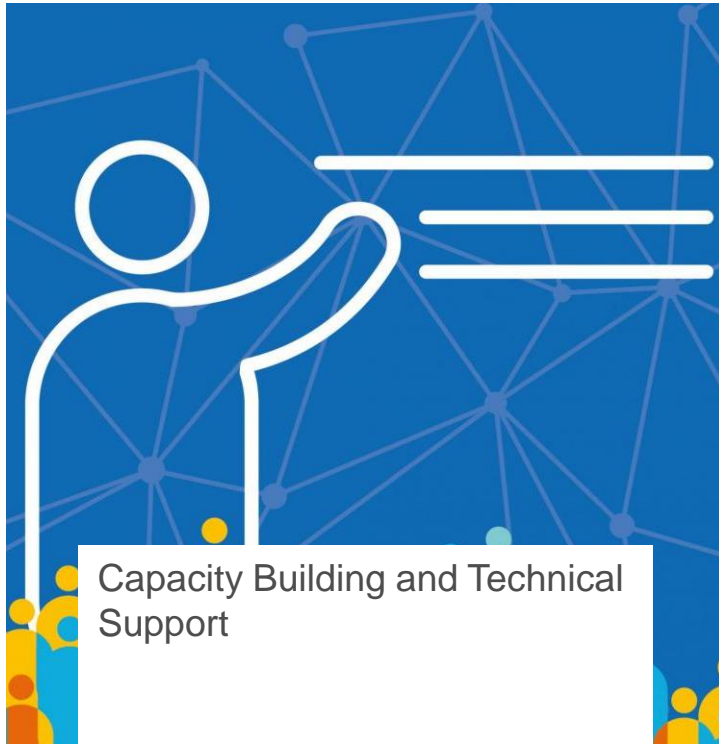
Brussels, 25.10.2023  
COM(2023) 667 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

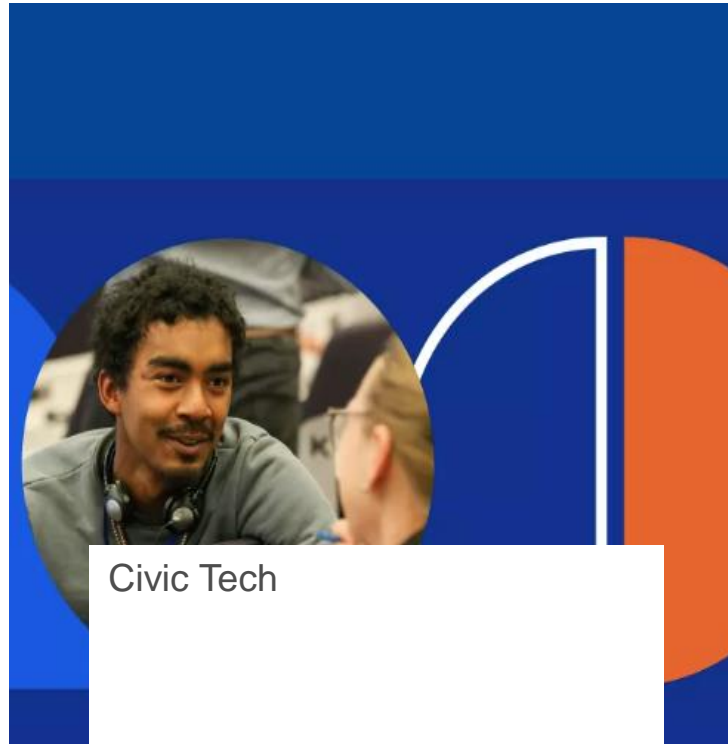
**Enhancing the European Administrative Space (ComPAct)**



# Implementation



Capacity Building and Technical Support



Civic Tech



Research on:

- Impacts on policymaking a politics
- Connecting bottom-up and institutionally led citizen participation
- Institutionalization and embedment of citizen participation



# Citizen engagement as a normal way of working...

“There are conditions to success. The first condition is that **you must be really allowed to realize a participative process.** The second condition is that **you must really want to do it [...]** and the third and perhaps the most complicated condition, is that **you must really be able to do it**”

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, ex-CoR President

# Thank you



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