

THE “ASSEMBLÉE CITOYENNE DE PARIS” AS AN INSTITUTIONALIZED MODEL OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AT THE CITY LEVEL.

———— FIDE POLICY NOTE 02



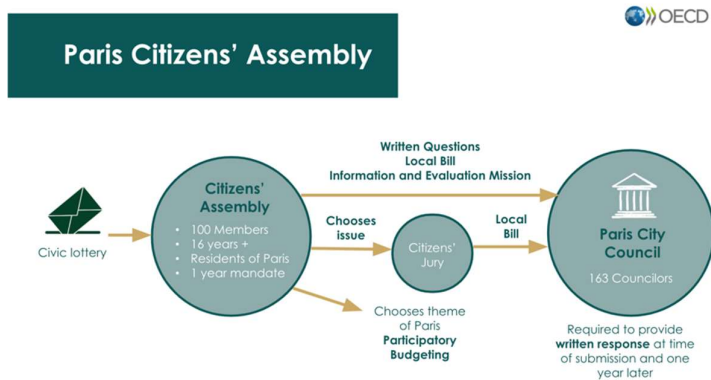
FIDE is an international non-profit organization dedicated to the participation of every day citizens in policy-making.

This paper describes the Paris Citizens’ Assembly that was put in place following the design proposal by FIDE.

·FIDE

Federation for Innovation in Democracy – Europe
www.fide.eu
info@fide.eu

The “Assemblée Citoyenne de Paris” as an institutionalized model of deliberative democracy at the city level.



EIGHT WAYS TO INSTITUTIONALISE DELIBERATIVE - OECD POLICY PAPERS, 2021

Paris became the first major European city to institutionalize a full-scale model of deliberative democracy on the 14th of October 2021. The city adopted an extended version of the so-called “Ostbelgien Model” of citizen participation. In such a model, a permanent assembly of citizens drawn by lot performs a central role for other ad-hoc civic participation processes, such as citizen assemblies. The model also implies that under given conditions, there is a follow-up to the citizen recommendations by the representative political institutions. Until now this model only existed in the small German-speaking region of Belgium which has less than 80.000 inhabitants. Paris is the first major city to adopt and develop it further.

What is the history of this decision?

When President Macron launched the “Great Debate” at the start of 2019, inviting neighbourhoods, villages and cities to set up citizens debates, these also took place across Paris. At the end of this vast citizen engagement process, an assembly of 30 citizens drawn by lot was brought together by the Paris city administration to look into the specific question of improving citizen participation in city policy. One of the proposals from this group was the creation of a permanent assembly representing day-to-day citizens in policy-making in the city, an “Assemblée des Parisiens”. In September 2019, the city council voted to implement this proposal. The city consulted experts, local politicians and other consultative instances of the city to prepare a draft

for the assembly. The vice-mayor responsible for citizen participation, Anouch Toranian, tasked the *Federation for Innovation in Democracy Europe* (FIDE) in the spring of 2021 to take these suggestions and make a proposal for a model. Using this input, the city negotiated with other parties and drafted a bill that was voted by a majority at the City Council on the 14th of October 2021.

What are the central ideas behind the model?

The City Council intended several tasks for the new institutional body: it had to relay the ‘voice’ of the Parisians, it had to be able to propose policy recommendations and it had to be able to control that the citizen input was being used by the city. For a unique citizen body, this would be a lot of work and would create a high threshold for participation. Splitting up tasks between **different bodies of citizens** seemed more adequate.

Although the city has many existing avenues of participation, and while these provide very valuable guidance for policy-makers, those who participate in them are often not representative of the overall population. This is not a problem specific to Paris and has been found in empirical research for decades. This assembly has the intention to **bring together a representative group of everyday citizens** of Paris and drawing members by lot seemed the best way to achieve this.

One of the tasks of the new instance is to produce high-quality recommendations for policy, to the extent that it can be turned into a text that is submitted to a vote. This requires that all sides of a problem have been studied and that the citizens have investigated together what solutions they propose. So-called **deliberative “mini-publics”** have shown to be a good method of citizen participation to achieve this goal.

How is the model structured?

Given the three conditions mentioned above, the answer was to install a central body of citizens that has a central role for the different tasks given to this institution. It can delegate some of the more time-intensive ones to other assemblies of citizens. This central body is the '**Assemblée Citoyenne de Paris**'. Composed of 100 citizens drawn by lot, the *Assemblée* performs the following tasks:

- ° **It is a 'voice of Parisians' towards the representative institutions.** It can propose current affairs questions to the city council or pose a "wish" ("un vœux") based on citizen input, which formulates a request but has no legal consequences.
- ° **It can, once a year, call for an evaluation of a specific policy area.**
- ° **It decides on the topic of the participatory budget program for the next year.** This program distributes about 100 million Euros to different projects around the city. Every year the call for projects focuses on a specific topic which is now decided by the *Assemblée Citoyenne*.
- ° **It can submit a legal text once a year that needs to be put to a vote at the city council.** The basis for the document needs to be the work of a separate "Citizen Jury" ("*Jury Citoyen*") that investigates a specific topic. It is also the *Assemblée Citoyenne* that calls for the implementation of such a Jury and picks the topic it will work on.

Members of the *Assemblée* have a mandate of a year, but it can be extended by six months. Any Parisian older than 16 years can be a member, also if one is a resident and not a French Citizen. Members of the assembly receive a stipend of 44€ for every half-day of work.

Most of the time the 100 members of the *Assemblée Citoyenne* will be active in working groups on the different tasks it has, but at least twice a year it meets in a plenary session. The basis of the decision-making in the assembly is to find consensus, but if needed, the decisions can be taken by a majority vote.

The **Jury Citoyen** is the ad-hoc part of the model. It can be installed once¹ a year by the *Assemblée Citoyenne* to study a policy question using a diverse range of information sources. After this information round, they deliberate and propose recommendations regarding that policy question. The *Jury Citoyen* is a smaller group of 17 citizens drawn by lot from the population. Their work can last up to three months. The report they produce and the recommendations they put forward are handed over to the *Assemblée Citoyenne*. The *Assemblée* reworks those into a local bill (called *deliberation*), which is brought to a vote in the City Council. The *Assemblée* will also keep observing over time what is done as a follow-up to the decisions.

A **Secretariat** will support the *Assemblée* in its work and is staffed by one full-time employee. The city will also provide all types of logistical support needed for the work of the *Assemblée* and *Juries*. The secretariat can also call on the administration of the city for information to help them in their work.

Finally, a **Comité de garant.es** (English: Committee of guarantee) will be put in place to be the point of reference should any problem arise. The *Comité* will then see if the rules and regulations have been followed in the underlying case. It is composed of representatives of the *Assemblée*, a representative from each political group in the city council and 4 experts in citizen participation.

What will be done with the output of the *Assemblée* and *Juries*?

The City of Paris engages itself in the bill to give a written response to every piece of work that is produced by the *Assemblée* and from the *Juries* that take place. They do this as soon as a document is presented and then again one year later. The political groups in the city council can also write a separate response and be published alongside that of the City administration.

The *Assemblée* has the right once a year to write a bill and propose it to a vote in the City Council. If voted, that becomes part of the law and should be implemented as such.

¹ This is a minimal choice set by the current administration for the first year of this institution. After the first year, an evaluation can be made of how many resources were needed and how many juries can be managed over the span of a year.

The *Assemblée* will also produce an activity report each year that summarizes its work. This is handed over to all the members of the City Council and is published on the website of the city of Paris.

What is currently happening?

The citizens that were drawn for the *Assemblée Citoyenne* were invited to the Paris City Hall on the 27th of November 2021 for an information session about their upcoming task. The first official session of the *Assemblée* took place in January 2022. The *Assemblée* decided to work in three separate working groups this year on the following topics: “Public Spaces”, “Environment” and “Social and Education issues”. From February to May they will meet separately and a plenary session of the whole *Assemblée* will take place on the 14th of May 2022. The city plans a first evaluation after the first iteration of the *Assemblée*.