



TRUEDEM

Trust in European Democracies

AUDIENCE-TARGETED RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS





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AUDIENCE-TARGETED RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS

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Purpose and scope of the deliverable:

This report provides evidence-informed policy recommendations to foster political trust and trustworthiness through democratic innovations, tailored to various governance levels and societal contexts. It targets a broad range of stakeholders—including policymakers, civil servants, civil society actors, and media professionals—across local, national, and European levels. Its findings draw on expert webinars, practitioner workshops, participatory events, and a multi-country expert survey conducted as part of the TRUEDEM program

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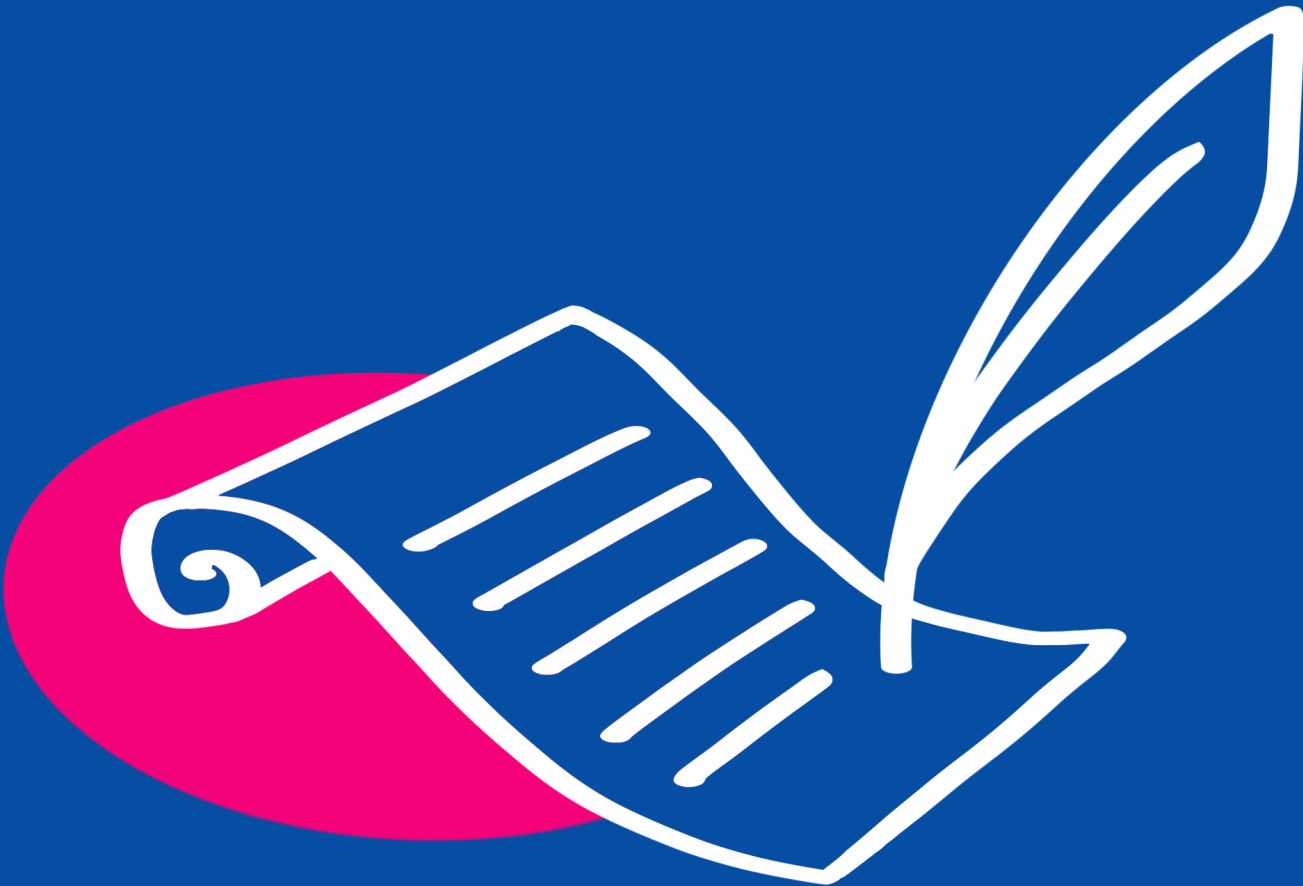
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PURPOSE AND SCOPE



PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This report contributes to the TRUEDEM project's ambition to **foster political trust in European democracies by providing a strategic and action-oriented toolkit for the institutionalization and routinization of democratic innovations**. It builds on previous work, particularly [Deliverable 9.1](#), which examined the conceptual and empirical relationship between political trust and democratic innovations, and [Deliverable 9.2](#), which catalogued a wide range of democratic innovations across Europe. As outlined in D9.1 and D9.2, democratic innovations are mechanisms that aim to revitalize democracy by expanding citizen participation in governance. They are typically categorized into two types:

- **Deliberative innovations** (e.g., citizens' assemblies, juries) promote collective reasoning and democratic capacities through dialogue and mutual listening.
- **Direct innovations** (e.g., participatory budgeting, referendums, petitions) empower citizens by enabling them to initiate or directly influence political decisions.

Earlier deliverables established that while democratic innovations can enhance political trust, this is not automatic; **impact depends on design, implementation, institutional support, and contextual conditions**. The report operationalizes these insights by **translating accumulated knowledge into targeted recommendations** tailored to different actor profiles involved in democratic governance and innovations. These audience-targeted recommendations address both the "how" and the "under what conditions" of successful policy implementation. They emphasize the importance of long-term commitment, legal anchoring, institutional coherence, and iterative evaluation. Moreover, they stress the need for hybrid forms of participation—combining deliberative, consultative, and decision-making elements—aligned with broader political and administrative processes.

To make the insights actionable and accessible, the report adopts an audience-centered structure organized around **five personas—fictional yet representative profiles that capture the key concerns, responsibilities, and motivations of different types of actors involved in democratic governance and innovation**:



Representative of citizens:

- **Representatives of Executive Bodies:** Representatives from local, national, and European executive bodies (local executives, government officials, members of the European Commission).
- **Party Officials:** Leaders and party officials, authors of party programs.
- **Civil Society Actors (CSOs)**



Law-maker:

- **Elected Representatives of Legislative Bodies:** Elected representatives from local, national, and European legislative bodies (members of municipal or regional councils, Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament).



Manager:

- **High-Level Civil Servants:** Senior administrative officials in public institutions.
- **Grassroot Organizations and Democracy Advocacy Organizations:** Associations and advocacy groups working to promote democracy, citizen participation, and civil rights.



Organizer and facilitator:

- **Civil Servants:** Officials in public institutions.
- **Grassroot Organizations and Democracy Advocacy Organizations:** Associations and advocacy groups working to promote democracy, citizen participation, and civil rights.



Communication Officer:

- Spindoctors, public or associative communication officer
- Traditional and digital media

This report is also informed by a series of events organized, co-organized, or attended as participants by the French team of the TRUEDEM program, including an online survey initiated among academic experts and practitioners from the partner countries:

- **Webinar** “Les innovations démocratiques peuvent-elles vraiment améliorer la confiance politique ?” [Can Democratic Innovations Really Enhance Political Trust?] (3rd, February 2025), with the contribution of: Alice Mazeaud (senior lecturer, La Rochelle University), Camille Bedock (CNRS research fellow, Sciences Po Bordeaux), Clément Mabi (professor, INSA Rennes), and Raul Magni-Berton (professor, Catholic University of Lille). Supported by French Institut de la concertation et de la participation citoyenne (ICPC).

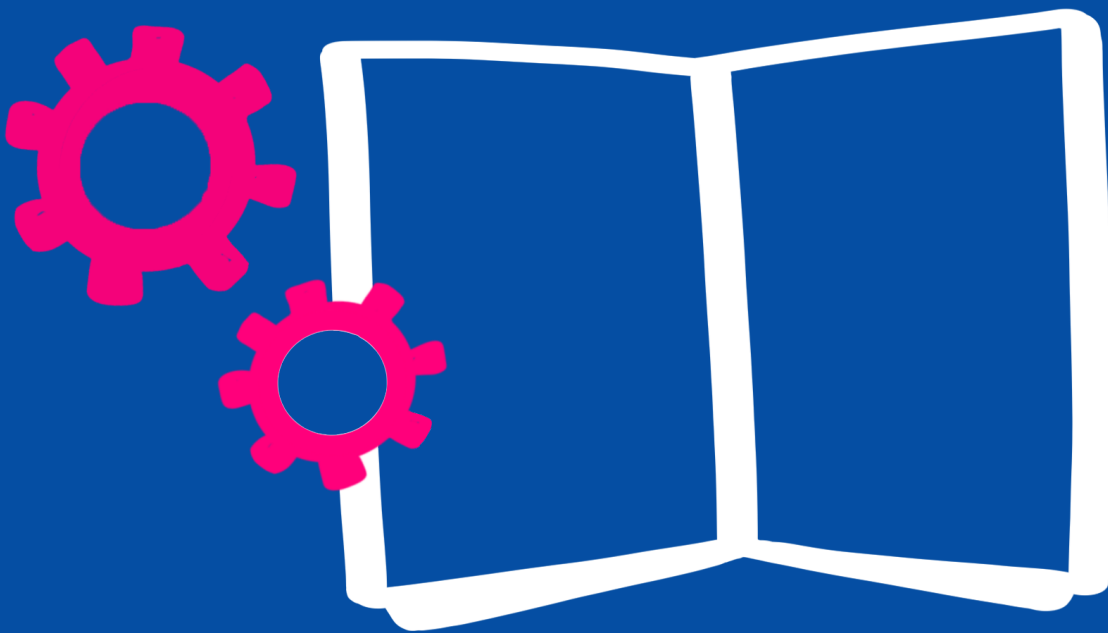
- **Webinar** “Strategies to Enhance Informed Trust and Institutional Trustworthiness” (2nd, April 2025), with the contribution of Judith Ferrando (co-director, Missions Publiques), Sarah Kups (senior economist, Public Governance Directorate, OECD), Mario Scharfbillig (science for policy analyst, European Commission) and Paschalia Spyridou assistant professor, Cyprus University of Technology). Supported by French Institut de la concertation et de la participation citoyenne (ICPC).

- **Conference** “Rencontres Européennes de la Participation” [European Meetings of Participation] (17-19, March 2025), offering around 70 presentations and workshops on democratic issues and projects in Europe. Organised by Decider Ensemble.

- **Workshop** “3 défis pour la participation citoyenne aujourd’hui et demain » [3 Challenges for the Today and Tomorrow Citizen Participation] (22, April 2025), bringing together experts around the following topics: use care approaches to build democracy, guarantee and evaluation, hybridization of democratic innovations. Co-organized with the French Institut de la concertation et de la participation citoyenne (ICPC).

- **Online expert survey** containing 4 major questions about trust and democratic innovations, and addressed to 58 academic and non-academic experts (**non-governmental organizations, think tanks, civil society organizations, advocacy groups, international organizations, public authorities, etc.**). It gathered answers from 12 respondents (5 academic respondents, 7 non-academic respondents) from 7 countries (Austria, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Ukraine).

INSTITUTIONALIZING DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS: STRATEGIES AND GOOD PRACTICES



Institutionalization refers to the process by which participatory practices become stable, structured, and integrated into existing governance systems. In the context of democratic innovations, it means **moving beyond isolated experiments toward recurring, supported mechanisms linked to decision-making. Routinization** of participatory practices goes further by highlighting the need to implement democratic innovations not only in governance systems, but also in **normal, regular, political life and culture**. Yet, institutionalization and routinization of democratic innovations can weaken democratic processes by turning them into symbolic exercises, depoliticizing the role of citizen involvement. Some guidelines have to be followed in order to prevent such **detrimental consequences for political trust between citizens and institutions**.

For democratic innovations to have beneficial effects on the relationship between citizens and institutions, their institutionalization must be guided by a set of **strategic orientations**. These include: **ensuring the permanence or routinization** of democratic innovations to enable their implementation and impact over the short, medium, and long term; **fostering the hybridization** and articulation of direct and indirect, deliberative, consultative, and decision-making democratic instruments; **mobilizing the necessary resources for the impact evaluation** of democratic innovations; **ensuring the transparency and openness** of democratic processes; and **embedding democratic innovations within stable political and economic environments**¹.

1. The political and socio-economic context has an influence on political trust and institutional trustworthiness. For more information, see: Addeo, Felice, et al. *Trust and Voter Turnout in Europe: Results from the Horizon TRUEDEM Research Project*. FrancoAngeli, 2025.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ROUTINIZATION

Adapt legal frameworks to support democratic innovations

- Define clear implementation modalities in laws or regulations while preserving flexibility.
- Balance institutional anchoring with the autonomy of citizens and local authorities to experiment and adapt to territorial specificities.
- Permit adjustments to duration, format, and selection criteria based on continuous feedback and evolving conditions.

Ensure stability across political cycles and budgets

- Safeguard the continuity of democratic innovations through political transitions and changes in leadership.
- Secure dedicated, multi-year budget allocations to prevent abrupt funding cuts and ensure sustained implementation.
- Mandate periodic statutory reviews and commission independent audits to evaluate effectiveness, relevance, and integrity over time—and adjust accordingly.

HYBRIDIZATION THROUGH ARTICULATED DEVICES

Coordinate democratic devices across levels and formats

- Align deliberative processes with consultative and decision-making mechanisms to create coherent democratic pathways.
- Design multi-level participation cycles that combine digital consultations, in-person deliberation, and implementation phases.
- Establish clear timelines and communication protocols to link democratic innovations with the ongoing work of political institutions.

Ensure communication flows with mini-publics and with the broader electorate

- Disseminate concise and accessible summaries of citizen recommendations to inform wider audiences.
- Frame communications to highlight shared values and social proximity between mini-public participants and the general public.
- Use storytelling and visual formats to humanize participants and foster identification with their work.
- Equip political actors with skills in active listening, negotiation, and conflict resolution to strengthen constructive engagement.

IMPACT EVALUATION

Make firm legal and political commitments

- Clearly define the decision-making authority associated with each participatory process. For non-decisional formats, indicate how outcomes will be integrated into the formal decision-making framework.
- Enshrine in law or regulation the obligation for institutions to debate every citizen report within a defined timeframe.
- Embed formal follow-up procedures, including mandatory joint meetings between citizens and institutions to explain and justify decisions.

Implement robust monitoring, feedback, and evaluation systems

- Publish regular progress updates, including status reports, satisfaction surveys, and measurable impact indicators.
- Establish permanent, mixed oversight bodies—composed of parliamentarians, experts, and citizen representatives—to steer and evaluate the process.

- Develop tailored, context-sensitive evaluation frameworks aligned with the specific objectives and implementation settings of each innovation.

Guarantee resource allocation and institutional alignment

- Allocate multi-year, dedicated budget lines for citizen-led projects, linked to periodic performance evaluations
- Integrate citizen initiatives into parliamentary inquiries and budget planning cycles, requiring elected officials to debate and account for their responses.

TRANSPARENCY AND OPENNESS

Legal and institutional safeguards

- Require the online publication of all administrative acts and other relevant materials as a condition for legal validity.
- Establish legal obligations for the respect of equality, impartiality and sincerity principles.
- Establish legal obligations for public justification when citizen proposals are rejected by institutions.
- Regulate campaign finance by setting clear caps, requiring disclosure, and publishing financial reports to prevent unequal influence and enhance transparency.

Digital tools and technological solutions

- Develop open data portals and integrated participatory platforms with multilingual interfaces, simplified navigation, and accessibility features for all users.
- Implement robust cybersecurity standards, including confidentiality safeguards and strong authentication protocols.

- Publish consultation data and reports in open, machine-readable formats to enable reuse by researchers, journalists, and civil society actors.

Processes and oversight mechanisms

- When possible, assign a neutral third party to organize and facilitate the process.
- Ensure balanced access to public media for all actors involved in consultations or referendums, and safeguard the neutrality of government communications during campaigns.
- Conduct post-process audits with independent observers to verify the fairness, transparency, and procedural integrity of democratic exercises.
- Launch clear, impartial, and accessible public information campaigns on the issues at stake, and allow sufficient time for the public to become informed.
- Monitor and publish participation and engagement metrics through annual reports or publicly accessible dashboards.

RECOMMENDATIONS



I WANT TO IMPLEMENT A DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION ON MY TERRITORY: WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER?

Whether you are an elected official, a public servant, or a member of a non-governmental organization, the fundamental question remains the same when considering the implementation of a democratic innovation: **Where should you begin, and what key factors should you take into account?**

A crucial point to keep in mind is that the same democratic device can lead to very different outcomes depending on the context in which it is applied, the objectives it aims to achieve, and the stakeholders involved.

- **Draw on knowledge and shared experience**

The first step is to learn from existing models and practical experiences. Go beyond promotional content—especially from private providers—or overly institutional messaging, which often lacks critical detail. Instead, consult diverse sources: reach out to practitioners at different levels who have implemented the device and can share lessons learned, both successes and failures; explore academic studies and evaluation reports; and examine public opinion data and satisfaction surveys linked to previous democratic initiatives.

- **Analyze your legal and socio-political context**

A thorough understanding of your own legal, institutional, and socio-political framework is essential. This diagnostic phase helps identify both enabling factors and potential obstacles. Consider the socio-demographic profile of your constituency, as well as local political dynamics and social challenges. Rather than replicate a model wholesale, aim for thoughtful adaptation that aligns with your specific context.

- **Mobilize material, human, and political resources**

Successful implementation depends on securing adequate resources and assembling the right coalition of actors. This includes not only engaging citizens, but also involving public administrations, elected officials, and intermediary bodies. Be realistic about the human and logistical demands of the process, and ensure early buy-in from decision-makers—especially to secure financial and institutional support.



I ACT AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF CITIZENS AND WANT TO ADVOCATE FOR DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS

Who is this for?

Local, regional, national or European elected officials

Why engage in democratic innovations?

- To respond to growing societal expectations on complex, cross-cutting issues such as ecological transition, digital transformation, social justice, inclusion and transparency
- To introduce innovation in policy design and implementation
- To support decentralization and exercise strategic leadership

— At the national or European level, executives may promote participation to launch flagship initiatives (e.g., on energy transition or social cohesion) and generate a multiplier effect across decentralized administrations.

— At the local level, mayors or municipal executives may wish to test new governance models (e.g., neighborhood councils, citizens' workshops) to improve the responsiveness and efficiency of public action.

What are my key challenges in terms of political trust and trustworthiness?

- Reinforce political legitimacy and trustworthiness through more open, inclusive, and accountable governance
- Implement democratic innovations that genuinely respond to citizens' expectations and enable political actors to deliver on their commitments.

What strategic recommendations should I follow?

Embed democratic innovations into my political mandate:

- Incorporate democratic innovations into political programs to address voter concerns.
- Participate in training on facilitation, emotion management, and conflict resolution within participatory settings.

Collaborate effectively with relevant actors:

- Coordinate closely with administrative and political staff engaged in participatory processes.
- Engage with local networks of actors—notably civil society organizations—that have built or can build bridges with citizens and target audiences.
- Cooperate with legislative branches, particularly during the early stages of drafting legislation.

What key points of attention should I bear in mind?

- Ensure vertical coordination across levels of governance
- Acknowledge the complexity of policy issues and the fragmentation among actors and sectors (e.g., environment, digital)
- Navigate the mismatch between administrative timelines and citizens' expectations for responsiveness
- Maintain a clear separation between strategic political steering and operational execution



WHICH DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION, FOR WHAT PURPOSE, AND WITH WHAT RISKS?

Political trust refers to citizens' confidence in political actors and institutions, encompassing both political trust in the narrow sense (e.g., in elected representatives or parties) and institutional trust (e.g., in public authorities or procedures).

Trustworthiness, by contrast, refers to the qualities of institutions or processes that justify or invite trust. It includes both institutional features—such as legitimacy, integrity, and competence—and procedural attributes like transparency, inclusiveness, and responsiveness.

Democratic Innovation	Effects on Political Trust	Effects on Trustworthiness	Key Risks
Deliberative Mini-Publics	<p>Short: Public sees commitment to inclusion; initial boost in trust.</p> <p>Medium: Trust strengthens if recommendations influence decisions.</p> <p>Long: Regular use of signals respect for citizens' voice, fostering durable trust.</p>	<p>Short: Transparent selection and facilitation build procedural credibility.</p> <p>Medium: Responsiveness to recommendations evidence reliability.</p> <p>Long: Institutionalization fosters belief in a reliable system of engagement.</p>	Tokenism, elite capture, non-implementation of outputs
Participatory Budgets	<p>Short: Citizens feel heard in budgeting priorities.</p> <p>Medium: Successful project implementation increases satisfaction and communal trust.</p> <p>Long: Regular PB cycles normalize expectations of citizen input.</p>	<p>Short: Clear processes and accessible platforms enhance perceived competence.</p> <p>Medium: Timely delivery of selected projects demonstrates follow-through.</p> <p>Long: Embedded practices signal stable, responsive governance.</p>	Budget delays, overpromising, elite-driven agenda setting
Referendums	<p>Short: Boosts empowerment via direct say in decisions.</p> <p>Medium: Trust rises if outcomes are respected.</p> <p>Long: Repeated, fair referendums reinforce faith in responsiveness.</p>	<p>Short: Well-managed logistics and neutral framing build procedural trust.</p> <p>Medium: Institutional respect for outcomes evidence trustworthiness.</p> <p>Long: Clear legal rules prevent manipulation, maintaining institutional credibility.</p>	Polarization, low turnout, manipulation of wording or timing
Citizen-Initiated Referendums	<p>Short: Signals openness to grassroots ideas.</p> <p>Medium: Deliberation on citizen initiatives builds trust if taken seriously.</p> <p>Long: Codified initiative rights anchor citizens' role in law-making.</p>	<p>Short: Transparent threshold validation ensures fairness.</p> <p>Medium: Structured debate of proposals strengthens perceptions of neutrality.</p> <p>Long: Regular facilitation and support sustain institutional reliability.</p>	Non-debate of initiatives, shelving without explanation, legal obstructions
Petitions	<p>Short: Provides low-barrier access, creating entry trust.</p> <p>Medium: Trust builds with visible responsiveness.</p> <p>Long: Repeated, credible responses normalize civic input.</p>	<p>Short: Quick acknowledgment affirms administrative seriousness.</p> <p>Medium: Public hearings or written feedback increase credibility.</p> <p>Long: Institutionalizing petition channels signals dependable engagement.</p>	Ignoring petitions, lack of transparency in handling, unclear impacts
Online Proposal Tools	<p>Short: Encourages co-creation mindset; modern image appeals to youth.</p> <p>Medium: Inclusion of citizen ideas deepens trust.</p> <p>Long: Enduring participation builds civic pride.</p>	<p>Short: Transparent moderation enhances procedural trustworthiness.</p> <p>Medium: Implementation of proposals strengthens reputation.</p> <p>Long: Integrated systems foster expectations of reliability.</p>	Digital exclusion, opaque selection, lack of follow-up
Online Consultation Tools	<p>Short: Citizens feel immediately heard.</p> <p>Medium: Faith in institutions rises with visible response to input.</p> <p>Long: Routine use embeds belief in accessible governance.</p>	<p>Short: Clear information and inclusive formats foster legitimacy.</p> <p>Medium: Systematic feedback mechanisms build durable credibility.</p> <p>Long: Integration into policymaking workflows ensures consistency.</p>	Unused feedback, fatigue from repeated consultation, inaccessibility
Online Voting Tools	<p>Short: Innovation attracts tech-engaged groups; perceived openness increases trust.</p> <p>Medium: Real impact of votes fosters continued trust.</p> <p>Long: Normalization of digital voting entrenches trust in democratic accessibility.</p>	<p>Short: Secure and inclusive technology enhances credibility.</p> <p>Medium: Transparent vote results validate the system.</p> <p>Long: Legal guarantees of e-voting safeguard trustworthiness.</p>	Cybersecurity risks, digital divide, lack of legal backing

I TAKE PART IN THE LAW-MAKING PROCESS INVOLVING DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS

Who is this for?

Regional, national and European legislators

Why engage in democratic innovations?

- To enhance the quality of laws and public policies by drawing on citizen knowledge and lived experience (e.g., service users, residents, randomly selected panels)
- To respond to societal demands on complex issues such as the ecological transition, digital transformation, and social justice.

What are my key challenges in terms of political trust and trustworthiness?

- Ensure the credibility of participatory initiatives—avoiding tokenism or symbolic exercises.
- Balance representativeness (inclusion of diverse citizen voices) with expertise (relevance and feasibility of proposals).

What strategic recommendations should I follow?

Ensure a stable and transparent legal framework

- Embed democratic procedures in the Constitution or organic laws, clearly defining their status (consultative or binding), follow-up obligations (e.g., committee reports, public debates), and scope.
- Promote legal harmonization or interoperability across national and European levels to facilitate transnational collaboration and comparability.

Strengthen active participation in legislative processes

- Systematically integrate phases of online consultation and deliberation into the legislative cycle.
- Provide educational and informational resources—such as multidisciplinary expert groups—free of charge to support meaningful citizen engagement across regions and levels.

Institutionalize and scale up democratic innovations

- Encourage the hybridization of deliberative and direct mechanisms, embedding them in formal legislative practices.
- Establish dedicated funding, training, and support programs to sustain and expand democratic innovations
- Develop and implement robust evaluation systems for participatory processes, with results made publicly accessible to foster transparency, mutual learning, and credibility.

What key points of attention should I bear in mind?

- Respect legal frameworks and legislative timelines.
- Ensure compliance with the principle of separation of powers.
- Be prepared to navigate political tensions: when citizen input contradicts party or coalition stances, unaddressed expectations may lead to public backlash, reform abandonment, or erosion of trust.



WHICH DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION, FOR WHAT PURPOSE, AND WITH WHAT RISKS?

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Democratic Innovation	Effects on Political Trust	Effects on Trustworthiness	Key Risks
Deliberative Mini-Publics	<p>Short: Citizens see willingness to include ordinary voices.</p> <p>Medium: Trust strengthens if parliamentary debates reference mini-public reports.</p> <p>Long: Legal requirement for mini-publics fosters enduring belief in democratic responsiveness.</p>	<p>Short: Transparent use demonstrates procedural integrity.</p> <p>Medium: Institutional credibility grows if recommendations are used.</p> <p>Long: Statutory embedding signals commitment to inclusive, deliberative policymaking.</p>	Marginalization of outputs, lack of feedback loops, risk of symbolic use.
Participatory Budgets	<p>Short: Signals openness to fiscal inclusion.</p> <p>Medium: Trust rises when proposals shape debates.</p> <p>Long: Budget law codification sustains belief in co-governance.</p>	<p>Short: Demonstrates fair allocation practices. Medium: Reinforces rule-based engagement when PB shapes budget coalitions. Long: Formalized PB frameworks support predictable, legitimate fiscal participation.</p>	Elite capture, funding volatility, withdrawal under partisan pressure.
Referendums	<p>Short: Demonstrates democratic openness.</p> <p>Medium: Trust grows when referendum outcomes are respected.</p> <p>Long: Trust is consolidated when direct vote procedures are legally safeguarded.</p>	<p>Short: Shows neutral procedural capacity.</p> <p>Medium: Enacting results shows institutional responsiveness.</p> <p>Long: Repeated fair referendums solidify credibility.</p>	Populist overuse, low turnout, post-vote manipulation.
Citizen-Initiated Referendums	<p>Short: Signals responsiveness to grassroots.</p> <p>Medium: Trust grows when initiatives prompt hearings or debates.</p> <p>Long: Institutionalized rights ensure consistent public engagement.</p>	<p>Short: Transparent validation of initiatives reflects procedural fairness.</p> <p>Medium: Engagement with citizen proposals strengthens legislative legitimacy.</p> <p>Long: Codified follow-up mechanisms secure enduring reliability.</p>	Gatekeeping tactics, non-response, procedural complexity.
Petitions	<p>Short: Indicates openness to public concerns.</p> <p>Medium: Trust grows when petitions receive public hearings.</p> <p>Long: Legal reply obligations sustain political trust in representative responsiveness.</p>	<p>Short: Quick acknowledgments increase institutional credibility.</p> <p>Medium: Public tracking of outcomes reinforces administrative trust.</p> <p>Long: Legalized response deadlines uphold accountability.</p>	Administrative inertia, politicized handling, lack of visible impact.
Online Proposal Tools	<p>Short: Builds quick trust among digitally engaged publics.</p> <p>Medium: Trust grows if citizen proposals are debated or cited.</p> <p>Long: Standing platforms foster continuous collaboration.</p>	<p>Short: Signifies modernization and accessibility.</p> <p>Medium: Transparent moderation and structured evaluation processes build procedural trust.</p> <p>Long: Integration into lawmaking processes ensures system credibility.</p>	Platform neglect, limited uptake, lack of legislative impact.
Online Consultation Tools	<p>Short: Immediate trust in legislative openness.</p> <p>Medium: Referencing inputs in reports boosts belief in genuine consultation.</p> <p>Long: Routine use in legislative procedures sustains transparency trust.</p>	<p>Short: Signals institutional inclusiveness.</p> <p>Medium: Publishing consultation outcomes strengthens accountability.</p> <p>Long: Legal requirement embeds enduring transparency and procedural rigor.</p>	Consultations ignored, perception of tokenism, digital inaccessibility.
Online Voting Tools	<p>Short: Trust grows with early digital voting experiments.</p> <p>Medium: Trust rises when results affect policy.</p> <p>Long: Legally recognized e-voting embeds confidence in accessible decision-making.</p>	<p>Short: Visible infrastructure boosts procedural legitimacy.</p> <p>Medium: Transparent tallying and safeguards validate reliability.</p> <p>Long: Institutionalization signals long-term commitment to digital inclusion.</p>	Cybersecurity risks, lack of auditability, non-binding or symbolic uses.



I MANAGE PUBLIC SERVICES AND TEAMS RESPONSIBLE FOR ORGANIZING DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS

Who is this for?

High-level public servants and administrative executives

Why engage in democratic innovations?

- To contribute to the modernization of public administration
- To improve policy design, steering, and evaluation through citizen input
- To comply with participatory governance mandates and enhance institutional responsiveness

What are my key challenges in terms of political trust and trustworthiness?

- Safeguard the neutrality and impartiality of the public administration
- Ensure coherence between the administration's values and the everyday actions of civil servants

What strategic recommendations should I follow?

Team Management

- Assign clear mandates and roles (e.g., facilitation, data analysis, stakeholder outreach) to each team member and document decision-making authority to avoid overlap and ensure accountability.
- Provide targeted training on facilitation, deliberative methods, and conflict resolution to build internal capacity.

Engagement with Elected Officials and Decision-Makers

- Align each democratic innovation with the strategic goals of the administration.

- Involve elected representatives in steering committees or advisory councils, giving them a formal role in setting objectives and reviewing interim results.
- Identify and brief a small group of supportive officials across different levels who can advocate for the initiative internally and publicly, helping to overcome resistance and build momentum.

Resource Identification and Management

- Conduct an early audit of internal expertise, digital platforms, and available budget lines.
- Diversify funding: combine core administrative budgets with external grants (e.g., EU programs, philanthropic partnerships) and in-kind contributions (e.g., venues, volunteer time) to reduce financial vulnerability.
- Formalize partnerships with universities, civic tech firms, and NGOs to access specialized expertise (e.g., data visualization, community outreach) on a flexible, just-in-time basis.
- Use a simple dashboard to track time, costs, and resources by project; share synthesized summaries with stakeholders to demonstrate transparency and support evidence-based budgeting.

What key points of attention should I bear in mind?

- Avoid procedural rigidity and excessive bureaucratic constraints that hinder democratic innovation.
- Ensure effective coordination across administrative layers and with external partners, to promote coherence and implementation efficiency.



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Participatory Budgets	<p>Short: Citizens perceive transparency in budget allocation.</p> <p>Medium: Trust grows when projects are funded and visible.</p> <p>Long: Routinized PB fosters sustained public trust.</p>	<p>Short: Credibility from clear rules and outreach.</p> <p>Medium: Reliability improves with co-management.</p> <p>Long: Embedded culture signals procedural integrity.</p>	Underfunded proposals, elite capture, cycle discontinuity.
Referendums	<p>Short: Trust in fair and accessible setup.</p> <p>Medium: Transparent logistics reinforce legitimacy.</p> <p>Long: Trust grows with permanent referendum structures.</p>	<p>Short: Neutral administration is visible.</p> <p>Medium: Competence builds trust via clear results.</p> <p>Long: Formal procedures enhance reliability.</p>	Technical flaws, low turnout, perceived manipulation.
Citizen-Initiated Referendums	<p>Short: Fair signature verification builds trust.</p> <p>Medium: Inclusive support increases trust in intent.</p> <p>Long: Support units institutionalize trust mechanisms.</p>	<p>Short: Transparency boosts legitimacy.</p> <p>Medium: Expert help deepens neutrality.</p> <p>Long: Memory of fair treatment maintains trust.</p>	Opaque rules, high thresholds, disregarded outcomes.
Petitions	<p>Short: Prompt acknowledgment builds citizen confidence.</p> <p>Medium: Visible outcomes strengthen belief in voice impact.</p> <p>Long: Dedicated units foster sustained trust.</p>	<p>Short: Clear handling enhances credibility.</p> <p>Medium: Balanced responses build reliability.</p> <p>Long: Response guarantees legitimacy.</p>	No response, politicization, poor communication.
Online Proposal Tools	<p>Short: Openness to innovation gains early trust.</p> <p>Medium: Trust grows with feedback or pilots.</p> <p>Long: Long-term trust depends on quality and continuity.</p>	<p>Short: Modern tools signal accessibility.</p> <p>Medium: Moderation and feedback improve reliability.</p> <p>Long: Embedded usage institutionalizes legitimacy.</p>	Drop-off in use, poor experience, lack of integration.
Online Consultation Tools	<p>Short: Signals willingness to listen.</p> <p>Medium: Feedback-based decisions build trust.</p> <p>Long: Routine integration reinforces participatory trust.</p>	<p>Short: Process transparency improves credibility.</p> <p>Medium: Input use demonstrates responsiveness.</p> <p>Long: Regular consultations establish trustworthiness.</p>	Consultation fatigue, no impact, digital exclusion.
Online Voting Tools	<p>Short: Accessibility fosters initial trust.</p> <p>Medium: Decisions aligned with votes increase confidence.</p> <p>Long: Secure digital voting institutionalizes trust.</p>	<p>Short: Administrative capability on display.</p> <p>Medium: Transparent outcomes build reliability.</p> <p>Long: E-governance use strengthens systemic trust.</p>	Glitches, low legitimacy, cybersecurity breaches.



I ORGANIZE OR CO-ORGANIZE, AND FACILITATE OR CO-FACILITATE DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS

Who is this for?

Public servants, civil society actors, associations, and NGO staff

Why engage in democratic innovations?

- To consolidate local mobilization capacities and engage communities in public life.
- To influencing local public policies through collective intelligence and grassroots expertise.
- To strengthen social cohesion by creating inclusive and empowering participatory spaces.

What are my key challenges in terms of political trust and trustworthiness?

- Ensure transparent and democratic internal governance.
- Earn an maintaining legitimacy and reliability in the eyes of public authorities
- Uphold independence and trustworthiness in the eyes of citizens and participants.

What strategic recommendations should I follow?

Facilitate mobilization and training

- Co-facilitate awareness-raising activities to explain civic rights and participatory mechanisms.
- Offer training to target publics on mediation, deliberative skills, and critical analysis of political information.
- Train elected officials and relevant public servants to better understand democratic innovations, including their implementation, evaluation, and potential.

Serve as a trusted intermediary

- Guarantee the impartiality and technical reliability of the processes you help organize.
- Establish citizens' observatories or similar mechanisms to monitor implementation and follow-up of recommendations and outcomes.
- Ensure inclusive representation, particularly of minorities and vulnerable groups, at every stage
- Co-design communication strategies with participants, using appropriate channels and inclusive language to foster engagement and ownership.

Contribute to policy co-creation

- Participate in or propose mixed working groups that enrich steering committees with diverse voices.
- Lead or support advocacy coalitions (e.g., citizen lobbies, civil society alliances) to help ensure the effective uptake of citizens' recommendations.

What key points of attention I should bear in mind?

- Guard against the risk of political instrumentalization, whether real or perceived.
- Navigate power dynamics and facilitate access to decision-makers.
- Address the challenge of sustainability and scaling to avoid participatory fatigue or one-off initiatives without long-term impact



WHICH DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION, FOR WHAT PURPOSE, AND WITH WHAT RISKS?

Political trust refers to citizens' confidence in political actors and institutions, encompassing both political trust in the narrow sense (e.g., in elected representatives or parties) and institutional trust (e.g., in public authorities or procedures).

Trustworthiness, by contrast, refers to the qualities of institutions or processes that justify or invite trust. It includes both institutional features—such as legitimacy, integrity, and competence—and procedural attributes like transparency, inclusiveness, and responsiveness.

Democratic Innovation	Effects on Political Trust	Effects on Trustworthiness	Key Risks
Deliberative Mini-Publics	<p>Short: Facilitators gain credibility via inclusive events; participants trust their voices are heard.</p> <p>Medium: Trust deepens if authorities adopt recommendations.</p> <p>Long: Regular use builds lasting participatory infrastructure and trust.</p>	<p>Short: Quality facilitation signals professionalism.</p> <p>Medium: Transparency and inclusivity build facilitator legitimacy.</p> <p>Long: Civic calendar integration institutionalizes trusted roles.</p>	Perceived bias, unbalanced discussions, facilitator dependence.
Participatory Budgets	<p>Short: Mobilizes communities; facilitators seen as enabling agency.</p> <p>Medium: Visible delivery of projects builds trust.</p> <p>Long: Institutionalization strengthens trust in facilitators.</p>	<p>Short: Efficient process design signals reliability.</p> <p>Medium: Regular reporting boosts transparency.</p> <p>Long: Repeated cycles embed facilitator credibility.</p>	Tokenistic outreach, unclear priorities, facilitation burnout.
Referendums	<p>Short: Neutral facilitation of debates earns trust.</p> <p>Medium: Balanced coverage and fairness reinforce legitimacy.</p> <p>Long: Local referenda led by facilitators become trusted institutions.</p>	<p>Short: Impartiality is critical for perceived trustworthiness.</p> <p>Medium: Consistent standards validate facilitator role.</p> <p>Long: Institutional memory builds confidence in neutrality.</p>	Perceived partiality, weak outreach, procedural irregularities.
Citizen-Initiated Referendums	<p>Short: Guidance through signature and drafting builds immediate trust.</p> <p>Medium: Inclusive drafting reinforces legitimacy.</p> <p>Long: Local support hubs strengthen sustained empowerment.</p>	<p>Short: Transparent support builds trustworthiness.</p> <p>Medium: Quality assistance signals procedural expertise.</p> <p>Long: Embedded local teams sustain legitimacy.</p>	Threshold confusion, access inequality, weak follow-through.
Petitions	<p>Short: Transparent campaign support boosts trust.</p> <p>Medium: Policy follow-up reinforces facilitator credibility.</p> <p>Long: Sustained petition culture enhances long-term trust.</p>	<p>Short: Clarity in process builds credibility.</p> <p>Medium: Effective link to decision-makers reinforces reliability.</p> <p>Long: Standardized tools institutionalize accountability.</p>	Lost petitions, limited responsiveness, opaque outcomes.
Online Proposal Tools	<p>Short: User-friendly support generates quick trust.</p> <p>Medium: Piloting builds legitimacy.</p> <p>Long: Innovation pipelines cement facilitator trust.</p>	<p>Short: Support mechanisms signal trustworthiness.</p> <p>Medium: Clear selection boosts legitimacy.</p> <p>Long: Longitudinal reports ensure continuity.</p>	Platform abandonment, unclear moderation, disconnection from decision-making.
Online Consultation Tools	<p>Short: Rapid engagement fosters early trust.</p> <p>Medium: Outputs used in decision-making strengthen facilitator reputation.</p> <p>Long: Integration into civic tech maintains facilitator legitimacy.</p>	<p>Short: Interactive design signals openness.</p> <p>Medium: Feedback loops build reliability.</p> <p>Long: Ecosystem integration ensures institutional trust.</p>	Participation fatigue, tech barriers, feedback opacity.
Online Voting Tools	<p>Short: Safe platforms enhance initial trust.</p> <p>Medium: Tangible outcomes validate process.</p> <p>Long: Regularized use secures long-term trust.</p>	<p>Short: Security measures signal competence.</p> <p>Medium: Trusted results bolster legitimacy.</p> <p>Long: Institutional e-voting reinforces facilitator credibility.</p>	Glitches, unequal access, low uptake.



I AM INVOLVED IN COVERING OR COMMUNICATING ABOUT DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS

Who is this for?

Communication officers, journalists, editors, spindoctors, and professionals from both traditional and digital media

Why engage in democratic innovations?

- To inform the public about democratic experiments, processes, and transformations.
- To contribute to media pluralism by amplifying a diversity of voices, perspectives, and democratic practices.
- To help bridge the trust gap between citizens and institutions through transparent communication on democratic innovations.

What are my key challenges in terms of political trust and trustworthiness?

- Ensure credibility and perceived independence in media coverage.
- Avoid the tendency to over-amplify positive narratives while marginalizing critical feedback, thereby undermining balanced discourse.
- Navigate the tension between journalistic impartiality and advocacy for democratic renewal.

What strategic recommendations should I follow?

Inform meaningfully, not superficially

- Go beyond press releases: investigate the design, process, and impacts of democratic innovations.
- Clarify whether the initiative is binding or consultative, and what follow-up mechanisms exist.
- Report failures and tensions (e.g. low turnout, power asymmetries) as essential parts of the democratic story—not as discrediting anomalies.

Adapt the message to diverse audiences

- Use accessible, multilingual, and inclusive language.
- Highlight citizen stories and testimonies, especially from underrepresented groups.
- Communicate clearly how inputs are used, and whether public decisions reflect participatory outcomes.

Strengthen the feedback loop

- Push public authorities to publish responses to citizen proposals.
- Regularly follow-up on the implementation and outcomes of participatory decisions.
- Create visual or narrative formats that track policy changes resulting from participation

Support democratic literacy and monitoring

- Partner with CSOs or educational institutions to explain participation rights, deliberative procedures, and budgetary issues.
- Train local media actors and communication officers to facilitate engagement and counter misinformation.
- Collaborate with observatories or researchers to publish independent evaluations of democratic innovations.

Balance objectivity with democratic advocacy

- Recognize the value of a critical-professional role that informs while also promoting civic engagement.
- Ensure pluralism by integrating multiple perspectives—citizens, officials, facilitators, and critics.
- Avoid romanticizing participation or using only feel-good stories; show complexity, contestation, and institutional stakes.

What key points of attention I should bear in mind?

- Be aware of commercial pressures to sensationalize or oversimplify democratic expectations and innovations.
- Avoid tokenistic portrayals that reduce democratic innovations to mere spectacle.
- Do not assume public familiarity: regularly explain the format, purpose, and impact of participatory processes.
- Clearly explain and communicate the process through which the outcome was reached to be perceived as legitimate even by those who did not directly participate in the process.
- Ensure editorial independence while maintaining open collaboration with democratic innovation organizers.



WHICH COVERAGE PRACTICE, FOR WHAT PURPOSE, AND WITH WHAT RISKS?

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Media Role/ Practice	Effects on Political Trust	Effects on Trustworthiness	Key Risks
Investigative Reporting on Democratic Innovations	<p>Short: Citizens perceive transparency and relevance; trust builds when media highlight authentic voices and processes.</p> <p>Medium: Trust grows as coverage reveals both strengths and shortcomings of democratic innovations.</p> <p>Long: Institutional trust is supported when media help public track participation outcomes.</p>	<p>Short: Institutions appear more open when processes are publicly scrutinized.</p> <p>Medium: Credibility increases when reporting pressures institutions to respond or improve.</p> <p>Long: Encourages durable accountability culture.</p>	One-sided reporting, hype around novelty without scrutiny, loss of credibility if tied too closely to institutional messaging.
Highlighting Diverse Voices and Testimonials	<p>Short: Human-centered stories increase emotional resonance and accessibility.</p> <p>Medium: Fosters empathy and bridges trust gaps across social divides.</p> <p>Long: Builds a sense of collective ownership of democratic reforms.</p>	<p>Short: Public authorities are seen as more inclusive.</p> <p>Medium: Strengthens legitimacy when institutions respond to voices amplified in the media.</p> <p>Long: Reinforces perception of a responsive public sphere.</p>	Overrepresenting certain groups or omitting critics; failing to follow up on individuals' experiences.
Follow-up and Feedback Coverage	<p>Short: Boosts citizen confidence in media as watchdogs.</p> <p>Medium: Builds trust through continuity and attention to outcomes.</p> <p>Long: Cultivates a culture of expectations around responsiveness and implementation.</p>	<p>Short: Institutions seen as more transparent when media demand follow-up.</p> <p>Medium: Builds institutional accountability norms.</p> <p>Long: Enhances perceived institutional learning and integrity.</p>	Disappointment if processes are shown to fail but no constructive critique offered; potential loss of public engagement.
Civic Education and Democratic Literacy	<p>Short: Clarifies citizen rights and mechanisms, reducing entry barriers.</p> <p>Medium: Fosters informed participation and critical engagement.</p> <p>Long: Contributes to long-term civic competence and trust resilience.</p>	<p>Short: Authorities perceived as more legitimate when procedural clarity is communicated.</p> <p>Medium: Trustworthiness improves with better understanding of constraints and trade-offs.</p> <p>Long: Sustains informed scrutiny of institutional performance.</p>	Risk of being perceived as institutional mouthpiece if not independent; oversimplification of complex processes.
Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting	<p>Short: Communicates seriousness and rigor of participatory experiments.</p> <p>Medium: Enhances political trust through transparency about successes and limitations.</p> <p>Long: Positions democratic innovation as part of governance evolution.</p>	<p>Short: Independent assessments bolster credibility.</p> <p>Medium: Institutional trust grows when evaluations lead to improvements.</p> <p>Long: Strengthens long-term legitimacy via adaptive learning.</p>	Cherry-picking data; lack of access to critical information; failure to link evaluations with citizen experience.
Balancing Critical and Constructive Narratives	<p>Short: Builds trust by avoiding sensationalism or blind promotion.</p> <p>Medium: Encourages nuanced public debate about democratic renewal.</p> <p>Long: Reinforces norms of pluralism and deliberation.</p>	<p>Short: Signals independence and professionalism.</p> <p>Medium: Enhances institutional learning when criticism is fair and actionable.</p> <p>Long: Promotes institutional humility and responsiveness.</p>	Risk of false balance that undermines legitimate innovations; disengagement if coverage is too negative or abstract.
Collaboration with CSOs, Facilitators, and Observatories	<p>Short: Shows media's civic engagement role; fosters immediate trust.</p> <p>Medium: Builds mutual trust through transparency and shared goals.</p> <p>Long: Enhances ecosystem resilience through co-production of public understanding.</p>	<p>Short: Increases perceived trustworthiness through cross-sector transparency.</p> <p>Medium: Institutional trust rises when media echo citizen concerns backed by data.</p> <p>Long: Fosters institutional reflexivity.</p>	Risk of co-optation or perceived bias; blurred roles between media and advocacy actors.