

# DESIGNING MULTI-LEVEL MINI-PUBLICS:

## THE REGROUP EXPERIMENT ON KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION, AND TRUST

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**REGROUP**

REBUILDING GOVERNANCE AND  
RESILIENCE OUT OF THE PANDEMIC



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Culminating more than a decade of crisis in Europe, the Covid-19 pandemic has opened an important window of opportunity for institutional and policy change, not only at the “reactive” level of emergency responses, but also to tackle more broadly the many socio-political challenges caused or exacerbated by Covid-19. Building on this premise, the Horizon Europe project REGROUP (*Rebuilding governance and resilience out of the pandemic*) aims to: 1) provide the European Union with a body of actionable advice on how to rebuild post-pandemic governance and public policies in an effective and democratic way; anchored to 2) a map of the socio-political dynamics and consequences of Covid-19; and 3) an empirically-informed normative evaluation of the pandemic.



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## Introduction\*

Practices of citizen deliberation have become increasingly popular across Western democracies over the past couple of decades. These may take a wide range of forms, each serving different purposes and interests, and producing different outcomes. Mini-publics are among the most common and widely used deliberative democratic innovations: they can be defined as “independent and facilitated group discussions among a (near) random sample of citizens who take evidence from experts and interested parties” (Smith and Setälä 2019: 300). Different types of mini-publics coexist and imply variation in terms of the number of participants, the number of meetings, the planned output and material costs.

The main objective of this methods brief is to give a short explanation of what mini-publics effectively are, and to identify the challenges and opportunities they entail. While they should not be conceived as the solution to all policy problems and there are no ‘one-size-fits-all’ models of mini-publics, they offer innovative ways to investigate complex issues and how these are understood by citizens. The methods brief introduces a multi-level mini-public experiment (what we dub ‘the REGROUP model’), in which participants in citizens’ juries have the opportunity to formulate policy recommendations on knowledge communication, disinformation, the role of experts in policy-making and political trust at the domestic and European levels.

## What are mini-publics?

The notion of ‘democratic innovations’ has become increasingly popular within the European Union and beyond. Broadly speaking, the term can be defined as a new set of processes or institutions focusing on changing the role played by citizens in a given decision-making process through participation and deliberation.<sup>1</sup> This can be translated into a wide range of actions across different levels of governance, from street-level to transnational efforts.<sup>2</sup> One such mode of democratic innovations takes the form of

\* The author would like to thank Nicole Curato and Piero Tortola for providing thorough comments to earlier versions of this methods’ brief. Any errors or omissions remain the fault of the author alone.

1 Elstub and Escobar (2019: 11) offer an inclusive and holistic definition of the term: “Democratic innovations are processes or institutions that are new to a policy issue, policy role, or level of governance, and developed to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for participation, deliberation and influence”.

2 The Participedia website offers a valuable crowdsourced account of democratic innovations conducted around the world, and includes over 2,400 case studies: <https://participedia.net/>.

‘mini-publics’.

As suggested by their names, mini-publics constitute a group of randomly selected citizens who meet to discuss one or several societal issues and take evidence from experts and stakeholders. Mini-publics can take different forms based on the subject matter, the targeted outcome and output, the level of governance explored, the timeframe, and the financial and material constraints under which they operate. Some may take place over a very short period of time and involve a handful of citizens, especially when the issues to be discussed are very specific in space and function (e.g., deciding on what to do with a public space in a small district or village). Others can be part of over processes lasting over one year that aim at producing large-scale change, such as constitutional reforms (e.g., the Irish Constitutional Convention of 2012-14; Suiter *et al.* 2016).

Mini-publics are often used to inform policymaking by focusing on their outputs and recommendations. However, mini-publics also have another core function, which is to generate insight into people’s reasons, considerations, and judgments on a range of issues which can elucidate complex insight on what people think. This is particularly relevant for complex issues such as scientific information disorder or technocratic decision-making, which we explore in the context of the REGROUP project (see further Curato *et al.* 2021).

While the features of mini-publics vary considerably from one instance to another, six broad categories can be identified: citizens’ juries, consensus conferences, deliberative polls, planning and infrastructure management, citizens’ assemblies, and what can refer to as ‘transnational agenda-setting conferences’, drawing on the recent Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). Drawing on existing typologies (Hendricks 2005; Goodin and Dryzek 2006; Smith 2009; Fournier *et al.* 2011; Ryan and Smith 2014; Chwalisz 2017; Escobar and Elstub 2017) and considering newer settings and experiments, Table 1 summarizes the core features of these different forms of mini-publics. This table comes with the caveat that multiple instances of mini-publics are sometimes mislabeled by the organizing parties, especially regarding the number of participants involved in the process and the planned number of meetings. This has sometimes led to deepening semantic confusion surrounding democratic processes and had a negative impact on how the public understands the specificity of mini-publics (Smith 2009). Each type of mini-public entail risks and opportunities. In practice, several instances have opted for a hybrid approach, taking elements of different models to craft a setting which aims at meeting specific objectives. Some of these types of mini-publics also evolved over time by learning from practice. As such, it is best to consider these models as flexible rather than rigid, given that some degree of variation, if well-justified beyond material constraints, can provide visible benefits in the quality of deliberation, legitimacy and/or output.

**Table 1: Models of mini-publics**

	Citizens' juries	Planning cells	Consensus conferences	Deliberative Polls	Citizens' assemblies / panels	Transnational agenda-setting conferences
<b>Origins</b>	United States, 1970s	Germany, 1970s	Denmark, 1987	United States, 1994	British Columbia, Canada, 2004	European Union, 2021-22
<b>Number of participants</b>	Low (usually between 12 and 24)	Approx. 25 per cell; 100 to 500 in total	10 to 25	250 to 500	100 to 160	Unlimited
<b>Number of meetings</b>	Up to 5	Series of up to 20	Up to 8	2 to 3	Up to 12	Unlimited (multi-level process)
<b>Selection of participants</b>	Random, stratified sampling	Random sampling	Random, stratified sampling	Random sampling	Random, stratified sampling (sometimes self-selection)	Random and self-selection
<b>Types of activities</b>	Information provided by experts, deliberation	Information provided by facilitators (acting as experts), deliberation	Information provided by experts, deliberation	Information provided by experts, deliberation	Information, consultation with stakeholders, deliberation	Information provided by experts, consultation with stakeholders, deliberation
<b>Output</b>	Policy recommendations	Report based on a series of recommendations	Report including policy recommendations	Before and after questionnaire	Detailed and justified policy recommendations	Detailed and justified policy recommendations
<b>Additional features</b>			Involves preparatory weekends ahead of the conference		Can involve 'maxi publics'; proposals can lead to referendums	Multi-layered process involving mini- and maxi-publics
<b>Approximate costs<sup>1</sup></b>	€20,000 - 30,000	€100,000 - 150,000	€100,000 - 125,000	€200,000 - 250,000		Over €1 million <sup>2</sup>
<b>Notable examples</b>	Juries on the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (2004)	18 planning cells on consumer protection in Bavaria (2001-02)	'Our Ocean', Danish Conference on marine environment protection (2002)	Europolis, the first transnational European mini-public (2009)	Irish Constitutional Convention (2012-14)	Conference on the Future of Europe (2021-22)

Table drawing on the works of Fournier *et al.* (2011), Chwalisz (2017), and Escobar and Elstub (2017), updated to refer to most recent occurrences.

<sup>1</sup> Costs vary from one country to another and are subject to variation in the costs of living. These figures draw on Smith (2009) and recent accounts.

<sup>2</sup> The Conference on the Future of Europe, as a complex process that took over one year, reportedly cost over €20 million. See <https://www.politico.eu/article/inside-the-eus-costly-all-inclusive-winter-breaks-to-discuss-the-future-of-europe/>.

Citizens' juries constitute one of the oldest and most popular instances of mini-publics. They were first developed by Ned Crosby in the Jefferson Centre. In citizens' juries, a small group of participants is tasked with producing a series of recommendations regarding one or several complex issues. These recommendations can be included in a comprehensive report that takes into consideration the arguments made by participants throughout the deliberative process. Compared to other forms of mini-publics, citizens' juries have fewer material constraints and can be relatively easy to organize, as they require fewer meetings.

While planning cells share similar features with citizens' juries such as small groups, random selection of participants, a deliberative approach, and the production of a report, they differ in terms of facilitation and structure. Firstly, planning cells often have facilitators who specialize in the topic being covered. Secondly, planning cells are typically organized concurrently and in series, unlike standalone citizen juries, which are more common. As a result, the number of participants in planning cells can potentially be significantly higher than in the case of citizens' juries.

Consensus conferences also include a small number of participants (10 to 25), but the number of meetings and the time commitment expected are more significant compared to citizens' juries and planning cells. They typically consist of two stages. In the first stage, participants attend preparatory meetings held over two weekends, during which they familiarize themselves with the subject covered in the conference. In the second stage, a four-day conference takes place, where participants engage with experts and take responsibility for drafting policy recommendations.

Deliberative Polls were developed by James Fishkin in the 1990s as an alternative to traditional polling methods. In contrast to other forms of mini-publics, deliberative polls do not require participants to draft specific recommendations. Instead, they are asked to complete the same questionnaire both before and after the deliberation takes place. These polls involve a large number of participants (up to 500), and their main distinctive feature is the absence of collective decisions or recommendations at the end of the process.

Citizens' assemblies are ambitious settings generally conducted at national or state level. They consist of over 100 participants who are selected to represent the broader population in terms of core socioeconomic characteristics such as age, gender, location, and, in many cases, education and income. Deliberation takes place over an extended period of time, with participants meeting over weekends. The themes discussed in citizens' assemblies tend to be broader compared to juries, planning cells, consensus conferences, and deliberative polls. These assemblies may also involve a 'maxi-public,' which includes the population not selected as participants but who wish to contribute as part of the process. Elected representatives can also be involved. Citizens'

assemblies have been used in several instances to reform constitutions or bring about significant societal changes, often following a referendum conducted with the wider population, as seen in cases such as Ireland and the first Citizens' Assembly in British Columbia in 2004.

## Mini-publics at the European level: An evolving process<sup>3</sup>

Mini-publics do not provide ready-made solutions to complex policy or democratic issues. They require significant engagement and involvement from all parties involved, including institutions, stakeholders, experts, and citizens throughout the process. Mini-publics often come with the expectation that citizens will have a substantial role in shaping public policy. Managing these expectations becomes an essential component in the design of mini-publics, particularly during times when trust in politics is low. Recent experiences at various levels of governance have shown that if not managed properly, mini-publics can fail to achieve their intended purpose. For instance, the ambitious Conference on the Future of Europe stands in contrast to the Citizens' Consultations held in 2018-19.

The Citizens' Consultations were conducted as a follow-up to the European Commission's (2017) White Paper on the Future of Europe but had limited deliberative features. They were organized in three stages. Firstly, a 'Citizens' Panel on the Future of Europe' took place in Brussels on May 4-6, 2018. In this deliberative effort, 96 participants from all 27 member states were selected and tasked with identifying 12 issues they collectively deemed most important for discussing the future of Europe. After a deliberative process involving polling experts who drafted questions, the panel approved 13 questions for the second stage, which involved an online survey as part of the broader consultation. The online survey, comprising both closed and open-ended questions, received responses from approximately 87,000 participants across Europe (European Commission 2019).

In the third stage, national governments were responsible for organizing a series of consultations and producing reports. The format of these consultations varied significantly from one member state to another, as there were no clear guidelines provided by the Council or the Commission. Some member states conducted genuine mini-publics, while others adopted the European Commission's 'Citizens' Dialogues' townhall-style format, which lacked a deliberative element (Stratulat and Butcher 2018). Although over 194,000 European citizens participated in these mostly open-ended consultations,

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<sup>3</sup> The Europolis project, the first transnational deliberative poll held ahead of the 2009 European Parliament elections in Brussels), could have been added in this section; however, as this was a research exercise contrasting with two institutional initiatives, we opted not to include it in this methods brief. More information on Europolis can be found in Isernia and Fishkin (2014).



the lack of coordination and, most importantly, the absence of meaningful follow-up from the European institutions led analysts to view this experiment as a missed opportunity for enhancing the role of citizens in shaping the future of European integration (Leruth *et al.* 2019).

The Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), held between 2021 and 2022, aimed to address some of the weaknesses observed in the Citizens' Consultations and can be considered as the first instance of transnational agenda-setting conference identified in Table 1. Led by the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Council, the CoFoE provided an opportunity for citizens from across the Union to engage in formal and informal debates about the future of Europe. The CoFoE consisted of five key components:

- (1) A multilingual digital platform that attracted over 52,000 participants.
- (2) A series of domestic events organized by various public and private organizations, all of which were listed on the CoFoE website.
- (3) In certain countries, a series of public consultations conducted at different levels of governance known as 'National Citizens' Panels'.
- (4) Four 'European Citizens' Panels', each comprising 200 participants (with a deliberate over-representation of young people aged 16-25), focused on four broad topics.<sup>4</sup>
- (5) A Conference Plenary that brought together representatives from European institutions, national parliaments, citizens engaged in national events and European Citizens' Panels, and the President of the European Youth Forum. The Conference Plenary conducted seven meetings to process and discuss the input received from components 1 to 4.

The CoFoE's final report includes 49 proposals presented to the three European Union institutions, categorized under nine themes identified by the organizing parties at the beginning of the event (European Union 2022).

While the CoFoE is a unique and innovative form of deliberation, it incorporates core components found in well-established types of mini-publics, particularly Citizens' Assemblies. The facilitation of multi-level events and the use of a multilingual digital platform have also enabled participation from a broader population, often referred to as the 'maxi-public', with over 650,000 participants engaging in CoFoE-related activities overall. As of May 2023, it is too early to determine the full impact of the CoFoE on the process of European integration. However, the organization of follow-up Citizens' Panels on three specific topics identified during the Conference, namely food waste,

<sup>4</sup> Panel 1: "Stronger economy, social justice, jobs, education, culture, sport, digital transformation"; Panel 2: "EU Democracy, values, rights, rule of law, security"; Panel 3: "Climate change, environment, health"; Panel 4: "EU in the world, migration".



virtual worlds, and learning mobility, suggests that this deliberative exercise may mark the emergence of a genuine ‘deliberative wave’. Such a wave has the potential to become institutionalized and extend beyond the first von der Leyen Commission.

There were, however, some caveats in its organization. For instance, only six National Citizens’ Panels took place (in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and the Netherlands), with other countries opting for different types of events. This means that the multi-level deliberative dimension of the CoFoE was only a partial success, as was the case in the Citizens’ Consultations.

## The REGROUP model: Multi-level citizens’ juries

Democratic innovations such as mini-publics are parts of a much deeper process driven by experimentation. As hinted above, there is no ‘one size fits all’ model to address policy and/or political issues, and there is no ideal *modus operandi*. The progress made from the Citizens’ Consultations to the organization of the CoFoE demonstrate that, as far as multi-level deliberation is concerned, European institutions learn from practice. As a project, REGROUP draws on these experiences to propose and test a new approach to multi-level deliberation.

As part of REGROUP’s Work Package 4, an innovative mini-public design is being used to examine public attitudes to scientific information disorder and knowledge circulation, and the impact these have on political trust. Following the citizens’ juries’ model, these mini-publics require participants to deliberate on these topics, identify urgent issues that need to be addressed by the authorities, and eventually formulate a series of policy recommendations which they are also required to self-evaluate. Our design takes into account different facets of the European public sphere: multilingualism; a diversity of views across countries; and a constructive contestation to offer a series of policy recommendations across different levels of governance. REGROUP partnered with two experienced agencies, *Missions Publiques* and the *Sortition Foundation*, to co-design the juries and recruit participants by using stratification. The approach also draws on the experience of different REGROUP partners in designing, managing and facilitating mini-publics of different kinds.

The sections below present the main features of the REGROUP model. Further details are presented in the appendices. Appendix 1 focuses on the process of organizing the citizens’ juries, while Appendix 2 focuses on their structure.

## Why citizens' juries?

As mentioned at the beginning of this brief, mini-publics can take various forms. We opted to follow the citizens' jury method, with some slight modifications, for three reasons. Firstly, to the best of our knowledge, multi-level citizens' juries have not been tested before as a type of mini-public, hence the experimental approach to determine their feasibility and viability. Secondly, if deemed successful, the model tested in REGROUP could be easily scaled up across all European Union member states without requiring significant material resources, as was the case for the CoFoE. In practice, citizens' juries are manageable forms of mini-publics because of their scale and the amount of time required for participation as other forms of mini-publics as they involve fewer participants and can take place over two meetings: as such, the model tested could prove to be useful by the European institutions should circumstances call for organizing mini-publics at short notice. Thirdly, for the topics selected and the context in which the mini-publics take place (i.e., learning from Covid-19 experiences), citizens' juries offer an explicit focus and design that will facilitate direct and immediate discussion between participants, with the aim of producing sharp policy recommendations in contrast with broader reports produced as a result of, for instance, consensus conferences.

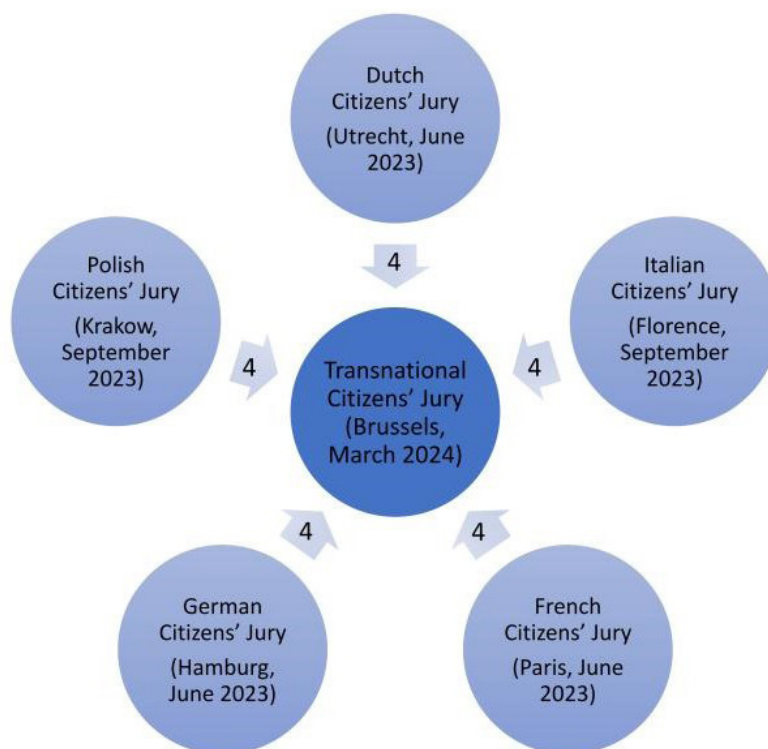
While citizens' juries are often praised for giving more leeway to participants to express their views and, to a certain extent, frame the discussion (under parameters that ought to be defined by the organizing team given the short timeframe) they also face a series of challenges. Firstly, some participants may be reluctant to contribute to the discussion despite agreeing to be part of the experiment. Our research and proposed model are aware of how inequalities in the public sphere map on the dynamics of citizens' juries. Cognitive biases, inequalities in education, and other forms of structural inequalities cannot be totally eradicated in such a forum. What citizens' juries offer, however, are design features that seek to mitigate these distortions in public communication. For instance, inequality in education is addressed via expert evidence, while trained moderators and facilitators enforce norms of respect, turn-taking, and reflection. Finally, the main risk is related to the transnational jury's dynamics as small-size, multilingual mini-publics have not been taking place before (in contrast to larger mini-publics, as the ones organized within the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe). They will require significantly more cognitive effort from participants and more framing from the research team. Yet, compared with larger and longer mini-publics, citizens' juries are less costly, more dynamic and demand less organizational capabilities.

### Formal multi-level approach

Our approach finds its roots in the multi-level governance traditions and practices within the European Union. In contrast with the Conference on the Future of Europe and the

Citizens' Consultations, the REGROUP model includes a formal and complete two-stage, multi-level dimension.

**Figure 1: Structure of the REGROUP citizens' juries**



In Stage 1, five citizens' juries are held in five European Union member states (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland) between June and September 2023. These citizens' juries each include 18 participants, selected to offer a broadly representative sample of the local population. Our selection criteria focus on gender (parity across all juries, without excluding non-binary participants), age, education and geography (i.e., to ensure good rural and urban representation). Participants are not required to be proficient in another language than the official language of their country of residence. Given the subjects to be discussed in our setting, we also selected participants who keep themselves informed through different channels (traditional media, the internet, social media, and family/friends). These citizens' juries take place over two Saturdays spread over two weeks' time, to allow participants to think about the topics and inform themselves ahead of the second day of discussion.

In Stage 2, four participants of each of these domestic citizens' juries are randomly selected to take part in a transnational citizens' jury taking place over one weekend, in which they discuss national recommendations and formulate a joint European policy agenda.

## Specialists as resource persons, online and in-person

As is common practice in deliberative settings, specialists in the subjects covered in the citizens' juries are invited to contextualize the discussion. Rather than being presented as 'experts' or authoritative figures, they are presented as 'resource persons' who are at the disposal of participants to help them formulate their statements and proposals. In line with the multi-level dimension of the REGROUP model, different specialists are invited to intervene in one of two modes of intervention. The first one is by recording a two-minutes long video of themselves offering a broad definition of the subjects covered in the discussion (for instance: what is disinformation?). These short contributions are then collated, transcribed and translated to be shown to participants across all five citizens' juries on the first morning. The second mode of intervention consists of attending one or both days of discussion, contextualizing the topics in a national context (for instance: how political trust evolved in the Netherlands since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic) and answering questions for the participants. These interventions were limited in time, in order to empower participants. Throughout the first day of discussion, participants were also asked to identify questions or information they would require from the resource persons to help them formulate recommendations at the end of the second day of discussion.

## Multilingualism

One of the most significant challenges for effective transnational dialogue between citizens is the multilingual and multicultural character of the European public sphere. Although almost 65 per cent of Europeans report knowing one or more foreign languages, only a quarter argue they are proficient in another language, and this figure significantly varies depending on the level of education (Eurostat 2019). How can one ensure effective participation in deliberative settings such as mini-publics and communication between citizens whose linguistic knowledge may vary, without requiring proficiency in a common/foreign language as this may cause a selection bias?

The Europolis deliberative poll, which took place in Brussels in the run-up of the 2009 European Parliament elections, demonstrated that simultaneous translation is relatively effective to overcome this challenge, as over 80 per cent of all participants in this experiment stated they had little to no problems to follow the debate as if it were in their native language (Fiket *et al.* 2011). While this requires significant resources (the Europolis experiment included 150 interpreters), simultaneous translation is an essential condition of effective transnational dialogue and mirrors the conditions under which elected representatives and bureaucrats communicate at the European level. REGROUP uses similar techniques to ensure a cohesive participation from all members.

## Issue salience

In practice, the REGROUP model we propose focuses on complex societal issues that require increasingly urgent action from public authorities: knowledge circulation; disinformation; the role of non-elected experts in the public policy process; and trust in political institutions. None of these issues are specific to the Covid-19 pandemic, as they have increasingly been subject to major public discussions for over a decade. Yet, the pandemic has exacerbated some of these matters, as illustrated with the emergence of new cleavages across societies, the growing popularity of conspiracy movements and growing tensions between technocracy and representative democracy as models of governance, especially in times of crisis. Most of these issues are covered throughout the diagnosis part of the REGROUP project (Work Packages 1 to 4).

## Before and after surveys

The REGROUP approach also borrows some elements of other forms of mini-publics by asking participants to fill in before and after surveys. These surveys include attitudinal questions on the subjects explored within the framework of the citizens' juries (trust, knowledge circulation, disinformation, the role of experts in policy-making) and test their basic policy preferences, especially with regards to the most appropriate level of action to address these complex matters (domestically or at the European level). These before and after surveys will enable the REGROUP team to test whether deliberation produces attitudinal changes.

## A pilot, experimental approach

Our approach, which should be understood as a pilot to test the viability and usefulness of multi-level mini-public processes, does not aim at being representative of the domestic views on the issues covered in this experiment. Under ideal conditions, our model could cover additional levels of governance, either at the local and/or regional levels. Communication between the regional and national levels should be relatively straightforward due to the limited cultural and linguistic differences this would entail; hence, in our experiment, we focus on the most challenging and barely explored dimension of multi-level deliberation, namely how domestic recommendations can be translated and reconciled at the European level.

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# Appendix 1: Timeframe to organize multi-level citizens' juries, based on the REGROUP model

*Note: the table below draws on discussions with partners and external stakeholders, and lessons learned throughout the process of organizing domestic citizens' juries within the framework of the REGROUP project. It reflects an ideal-typical scenario in which citizens' juries could be deployed in a timely manner and with substantial structural capabilities (the REGROUP experiment involved over 50 staff members and contractors throughout different stages of the project). The timeframe presented broadly reflects the one used in the context of the project. Further details on the actual REGROUP experiences will be included in the national reports.*

Month(s)	Task	Details and remarks
1-3	<b>Defining the scope, design, structure and strategy</b>	This includes: formulating a plain question which encompasses all the elements to be covered in the jury; identifying the rationale and objectives of the juries; extensive consultation with stakeholders and inviting resource persons; identifying and securing suitable venues; and deciding on the range of deliberative activities to be included in the design.
3-4	<b>Recruitment of participants</b>	Recruitment is generally done by contacting a large pool of participants by mail. In the case of the REGROUP project, due to the short timeframe, participants were recruited through door-knocking and on-street strategies. It is customary to provide participants with an incentive for their time. This incentive can be symbolic (€90 in the case of REGROUP) or more significant in order to increase the pool of potential participants. This is particularly important to recruit participants from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The recruitment of participants also requires significant effort to keep in contact with the selected participants and reduce the dropout rate (which, in the case of REGROUP, was expected to be of about 20 per cent).
	<b>Moderators and facilitators' training/pilot jury</b>	Even in cases where moderators and facilitators have experience in running mini-publics, organizing an internal 'pilot jury' or extended training session to make sure each activity is well-constructed and that different scenarios of engagement are covered.
5-6	<b>Organization of the domestic citizens' juries</b>	The number of meetings can vary from 1 to 5 (see Table 1) and tend to take place in the weekends. In some cases, a gap of one to two weeks can be included between meetings in order to give participants enough time to reflect on initial discussions.
7-8	<b>Production of the domestic reports</b>	These reports should include a reflection on the recruitment, design, content and outcome of each citizens' jury. A common template should be used to ensure comparability between countries.
9	<b>Organization of the transnational citizens' jury</b>	Practical matters (i.e., contact with the selected participants, travel and accommodation booking, venue hire, contact with translators) require some intensive effort and consultation: it is recommended that each national team has at least one staff member in charge of maintaining regular contact with the participants throughout the duration of the project. Note: in the context of REGROUP, there was a gap of 6-7 months between the domestic and transnational citizens' juries to learn lessons from the model and hold the transnational jury in the context of the 2024 European Parliament elections campaign.
10-12	<b>Production of the final report(s)</b>	The final reports should build on findings from the domestic and transnational juries and offer an executive summary that can be submitted for consideration by the core stakeholders. As deliberative practices are in constant evolution, a critical reflection on how procedures can be improved should also be included to 'learn from practice'.

## Appendix 2: Domestic citizens' juries: further practical considerations and structure

*Note: the aim of this Appendix is to give further details on the parameters used within the framework of the REGROUP project, in order to meet our core objectives. The range and scope of activities used in our settings were designed based on the subjects covered; these can be amended or replaced depending on the purposes of organizing citizens' juries, which stakeholders are involved and what is the expected output.*

### Staffing modalities

Each partner institution can decide the staffing modalities which seems feasible and convenient in the framework of the available capacities. Each citizens' jury included:

- At least 2 main moderators and facilitators: moderating the plenary sessions and facilitating the sub-group sessions.
- At least 2 liaison officers: taking care of the registration processes and signing forms, guiding citizens with a delay in arriving, being the main contact points for citizen throughout the process, helping on logistical modalities, overseeing and the availability of needed materials throughout the process.
- Observers: staff members involved in the organization of the citizens' juries, taking notes and playing a passive role (no involvement in the discussions).

### Logistics

All local partners provided a room with the capacity of about 30 people for the plenary setting and at least an additional other working room with the capacity of at least 12 people for sub-group sessions. The plenary room provided a stable Wi-Fi connection possibility, a projector, and the possibility of installing digital voice recorders. Logistical matters should anticipate designing a jury from the perspective of disadvantage.

The following materials were suggested:

- 30 nametags for each session,
- 22 pens,
- 44 paper sheets to take notes,
- 44 post-its blocks.

Participants received a modest incentive (90 euros) for their participation.

## Resource persons

In addition to the production of a joint video to define the core concepts investigated in the juries (see page 8), resource persons with expertise in some of the topics covered were invited to present/contextualise the topics and answer questions from the jurors. They were contacted and invited by the research teams involved in REGROUP. The intervention of resource persons related to the pandemic and the country's experience between 2020 and 2023. All research teams aimed at getting two to three resource persons for each day. They had complementing profiles (e.g., an academic working on trust; and a practitioner/fact-checker/analyst working on disinformation). Ideally, the same resource persons were to be available for both days of discussion. They only attended the juries for two hours, from 11:00 to 13:00. Lunch was offered to them, as well as a small gift as a token of appreciation (book, voucher,...). Diversity, equity and inclusion principles were applied when recruiting them.

The resource persons were asked to give a short presentation of 15 minutes each on their topic of expertise. Their presentations had a clear local angle: for instance, it introduced the state of play regarding legislation to tackle disinformation in the specific country, or explain the role played by non-elected experts in making decisions during the Covid-19 pandemic. As the REGROUP project focuses on drawing lessons from the pandemic, the presentations were therefore only related to what happened in that specific context between 2020 and 2023. Explicit references to the four thematic main themes to be explored were encouraged: 1. Knowledge circulation (also framed as 'Scientific communication'), 2. Disinformation, 3. The role of non-elected experts in making decisions, 4. Trust in political institutions.

The role these resource persons were expected to play was clearly communicated to them as well as to the participants. They introduced the subject matter and answered questions from participants. Should questions from participants relate to the experts' own opinions ("Do you think that XXX is a good thing?"), then they were asked to nuance their response ("I personally believe that... but others would say that ...).

## Output

Each research partner was in charge of producing a 5,000 words long report on the findings of their respective citizens' jury. A common template (with sections and sub-sections) was circulated by the coordinating team. In terms of content, the 'jurors' decided on the following:

- Identify four broad issues (or 'ideas) at the end of day 1 (one for each theme);
- Prepare a minimum of four (ideally eight) policy recommendations at the end of at the end of day 2;

- Rank and evaluate each recommendation individually at the end of day 2.

To determine whether participation in the CJs produce attitudinal changes, each participant was asked to fill the same survey before and after the event. The survey consisted of attitudes towards (dis)information, the role of experts in the decision-making process, and trust broadly defined. These questions drew as much as possible on existing surveys to allow for comparison. The general findings of these surveys will be included in each country report.

### **Activities on Day 1: Contextualisation, vision building and agenda**

The first day focuses on past and present attitudes towards the subjects covered in the juries, and progressively focusing on a vision building logic which was completed by an agenda setting of prioritized themes to make the collective vision a reality. Jurors shared their personal experiences during the Covid-19 crises and developed a collective vision on how trust in governance should look like after the pandemic. They collectively identified priority themes to realize their vision by fictional agenda setting on policy issues. An introduction of the setting and contextualisation of the research project was first given to all participants. Ice-breaking activities were subsequently used to allow participants to get to know each other. The following activities followed:

1. Walking debate, with participants being asked to move around the room and visualise their attitudes by asking them questions related to their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g., “did you feel competent to understand and process the information you received about Covid-19 throughout the height of the pandemic?”);
2. Presentation of the resource persons: broadcasting a 10-minutes introductory video, followed by short presentations by resource persons present in the room to offer a domestic context, followed by questions asked by participants;
3. Word cloud to focus on the following question: “which words would you pick to describe the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on political trust?” (followed by a lunch break of one hour);
4. Vision building exercise, in which participants are tasked to project themselves in an ideal scenario in the future (“Imagine we are in 2040 and our societies live in a perfect state of political trust. We are all very confident in science and politics. A new pandemic hits us but we are completely prepared. We know what to do, we know how to do it. And citizens have high trust that this is the right thing to do. How does this society look like?”);
5. Agenda-setting: building on the vision-building exercise, participants are asked in

two sub-groups to identify concrete steps that would need to be taken to reach this ideal-typical scenario;

6. Plenary session where the concrete steps developed in the agenda-setting exercise are presented and justified; and vote to establish which of these issues are to be discussed further in Day 2.

### **Activities on Day 2: formulating policy recommendations**

The second day builds upon the identified priority themes from the agenda-setting based on their individual attitudes. The second session dives into concrete policy improvement actions. This process is enriched by resource persons' input and ends with drafting concrete policy recommendations. The following activities took place:

1. Breakout discussions to start drafting recommendations. The group splits in the same two sub-groups as in Day 1 and each start working on two themes (scientific communication and disinformation for Group 1, and the role of non-elected experts and political trust for Group 2);
2. Involvement of resource persons to identify whether the recommendations considered by participants would be actionable, and discuss additional considerations;
3. Improvement loops within breakout sessions to incorporate new considerations;
4. Exchange between sub-groups through spokespersons moving from one group to another, before resuming to improve the wording and justification of policy recommendations;
5. Plenary session to evaluate the risks and opportunities that each policy recommendation would entail, followed by a secret ranking vote.