

Reader's guide

This brief guide is intended to help readers understand key terms, concepts, and the research methodology used to produce this first OECD report on deliberative processes and institutions. A detailed methodology description is presented in Annex B.

In this report, representative deliberative processes are often referred to in shorthand as deliberative processes, and the term is used interchangeably with deliberative mini-public. It refers to a randomly selected group of people who are broadly representative of a community spending significant time learning and collaborating through facilitated deliberation to form collective recommendations for policy makers.

Deliberative institutions refer to forms of citizen deliberation that have been embedded in public decision-making procedures through legal mechanisms.

Defining recurring key terms

Stakeholder and citizen participation

The OECD Recommendation on Open Government (2017) defines the following terms:

- **“The policy cycle:** includes 1) identifying policy priorities 2) drafting the actual policy document, 3) policy implementation; and 4) monitoring implementation and evaluation of the policy’s impacts;
- **Stakeholders:** any interested and/or affected party, including: individuals, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religious and political affiliations; and institutions and organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, from civil society, academia, the media or the private sector;
- **Stakeholder participation:** all the ways in which stakeholders can be involved in the policy cycle and in service design and delivery, including:
 - **Information:** an initial level of participation characterised by a one-way relationship in which the government produces and delivers information to stakeholders. It covers both on-demand provision of information and “proactive” measures by the government to disseminate information.
 - **Consultation:** a more advanced level of participation that entails a two-way relationship in which stakeholders provide feedback to the government and vice-versa. It is based on the prior definition of the issue for which views are being sought and requires the provision of relevant information, in addition to feedback on the outcomes of the process.
 - **Engagement:** when stakeholders are given the opportunity and the necessary resources (e.g. information, data and digital tools) to collaborate during all phases of the policy-cycle and in the service design and delivery.”

Representative deliberative processes can be categorised as consultation or engagement depending on how they are designed. They are considered as a form of citizen participation, which can be seen as a

sub-category of stakeholder participation, as in these cases citizens are empowered in the process: they take evidence from and question stakeholders, who are not the primary actors.

Debate, dialogue, and deliberation

Deliberation in this report refers to public deliberation (as opposed to internal deliberation) and to group deliberation (as opposed to individual deliberation), which emphasises the need to find common ground. First, to understand what it is, it is important to distinguish deliberation from debate and dialogue (Table 1).

- In a **debate**, the aim is to persuade others, and ultimately the majority, to one’s own position. It is a win/lose situation, where the incentives are such that they encourage participants to maintain their original view rather than be open to changing one’s mind.
- **Dialogue** helps to overcome some of the weaknesses of debate, through “slower civil exchange, sharing understandings by listening well, and building relationships” (Carson, 2017). With dialogue, the emphasis is on respectful exchange rather than on decision making (Bone *et al.*, 2006).
- **Deliberation** involves both dialogue and debate and it has four key characteristics.
 - First, it means to “weigh carefully both the consequences of various options for action and the views of others” (Matthews, 1999).
 - Second, deliberation requires accurate and relevant information, which reflects diverse perspectives. It might involve debate when there are invited experts arguing different positions.
 - Third, “there is a broadly-shared evaluative criteria for considering solutions and reaching decisions, which takes into account the views of others regardless of how divergent” (Bone *et al.*, 2006).
 - Finally, deliberation requires participants to apply these evaluative criteria to proposed solutions, to weigh trade-offs, and find common ground to reach a group decision (Carson, 2017; Bone *et al.*, 2006).

The fundamental distinction between deliberation and debate is in relation to the objective, whether it is consensus-seeking as in the former, or zero-sum as in the latter. For this reason, dialogue is an essential element of deliberation (Yankelovitch, 2001). Successful deliberation requires skilful facilitation – “just enough to allow the group to make its own decisions and find its own way when the going gets rough but to keep the group working well” (Carson, 2017).

Table 1. Characteristics of Debate, Dialogue, and Deliberation

Debate	Dialogue	Deliberation
Compete	Exchange	Weigh
Argue	Discuss	Choose
Promote opinion	Build relationships	Make choices
Seek majority	Understand	Seek overlap
Persuade	Seek understanding	Seek common ground
Dig in	Reach across	Framed to make choices
Tight structure	Loose structure	Flexible structure
Express	Listen	Learn
Usually fast	Usually slow	Usually slow
Clarifies	Clarifies	Clarifies
Win/lose	No decision	Common ground
Most useful when: A position or course of action is being advocated; winning is the goal	Most useful when: People want to talk together about something without desiring a particular outcome from the conversation	Most useful when: A decision or criteria for a decision, about the best way(s) to approach an issue or problem is needed.

Source: Bone *et al.*, 2006.

Deliberative and participatory democracy

The terms *deliberative democracy* and *participatory democracy* are sometimes used interchangeably, which can be confusing for policy makers and those not steeped in the academic debates of the field. Here we briefly identify some similarities and differences for the sake of clarity in this report. For further reading, see Carson and Elstub's (2019) research note.

- **Deliberative democracy** is the wider political theory that claims that political decisions should be a result of fair and reasonable discussion among citizens. Gastil and Levine's *Deliberative Democracy Handbook* (2005) argues that "deliberative democracy strengthens citizen voices in governance by including people of all races, classes, ages and geographies in deliberations that directly affect public decisions". The theory gained traction in academic literature in the 1980s (e.g. Mansbridge, 1980; Habermas, 1981).
- **Participatory democracy** has a slightly longer history, gaining ground with the activist movements of the 1960s that demanded greater participation in government decision making (e.g. civil rights, women's liberation movements, see Pateman, 1970). A central tenet to later work on participatory democracy is that it must increase the capacities of citizens to participate, which necessitates reform of democratic institutions to make participation more meaningful (Pateman, 2012).

The main similarity between deliberative and participatory democracy is that both "refer to the direct involvement of citizens in political decision making, beyond choosing representatives through elections. Both approaches to democracy, therefore, critique the current democratic system and seek to reform it by strengthening it" (Carson and Elstub, 2019). The key differences between deliberative and participatory democracy are in terms of: the number of participants; the type of participation, and how participants are selected. A brief summary of these differences is in Table 2.

Some scholars have suggested ways to combine deliberative and participatory democracy (Elstub, 2018; Bouricius, 2013; Schechter and Sullivan, 2018), such as the use of open and widespread participation at a first stage to develop proposals, followed by focused deliberation among a smaller, representative group of the public to review them, find consensus on final proposals, and decide.

Table 2. Key differences between deliberative and participatory democracy

	Number of participants	Type of participation	Participant selection method
Deliberative democracy	Relatively small (but representative) groups of people, as it is difficult to have deep deliberation among large numbers.	Deliberation , which requires that participants are well-informed about a topic and consider different perspectives in order to arrive at a public judgement (not opinion) about "what can we strongly agree on?"	Typically, a civic lottery , which combines random selection with stratification , to assemble a public body that is: representative of the public; able to consider perspectives, and not vulnerable to being stacked by representatives of powerful interest groups.
Participatory democracy	Large numbers of people, ideally everyone affected by a particular decision. The aim is to achieve breadth.	More participation , in all aspects of politics, from all citizens who choose to be involved; an embrace and encouragement of a diversity of opportunities for political engagement	Self-selected participation in order to enable as many people as possible to share the experience

Source: Table is author's own creation, based on descriptions in Carson and Elstub (2019).

Other key definitions

- **Random selection:** Throughout this report, random selection is used as a shorthand to refer to recruitment processes that involve random sampling from which a representative selection is made to ensure that the group broadly matches the demographic profile of the community (based on census or other similar data).
- **Citizen:** This report makes frequent references to citizens. The term is meant in the larger sense of ‘an inhabitant of a particular place’, which can be in reference to a village, town, city, region, state, or country depending on the context. When the word citizen is employed, it is not meant in the more restrictive sense of ‘a legally recognised national of a state’, and is thus used interchangeably with ‘people’ in this report.
- **Institutionalisation:** Institutionalising deliberation means incorporating deliberative activities into the rules of public decision-making structures and processes of a community, in a way that is legally-constituted. It entails establishing a basic legal or regulatory framework to ensure continuity regardless of political change. Institutionalisation is explored in detail in Chapter 6.

Methodology

The data collection for this report was through desk research, a targeted call for submissions to the international Democracy R&D Network of deliberative practitioners, and an open call through the OECD Toolkit and Case Navigator for Open Government platform¹.

The case collection was not limited to OECD Member countries, however, only seven examples were found in non-OECD Member countries. They are acknowledged at the outset of Chapter 3 about key trends, but the rest of the empirical analysis is based on data from the 282 cases from OECD Member countries for comparability reasons. More details about the methodology can be found in Annex B.

In analysing the evidence collected on representative deliberative processes across countries, three core defining features were revealed as being of key importance, a fact also reflected in the work of a number of scholars in the field. These were thus the three criteria required to be included in this study:

1. **Deliberation**, which involves: weighing carefully different options, which requires accurate and relevant information and a diversity of perspectives; a shared evaluative framework for reaching decisions, and a requirement for participants to apply these shared criteria to weigh trade-offs and find common ground to reach a group decision (see, for example, Matthew, 1999; Carson, 2017; Bone *et al.*, 2006);
2. **Representativeness**, achieved through random sampling from which a representative selection is made to ensure the group broadly matches the demographic profile of the community against census or other similar data, and
3. **Impact**, meaning decision makers agree to respond to and act on recommendations (see, for example, Farrell *et al.*, 2019; Carson and Elstub, 2019).

Deliberation refers to long and careful consideration and facilitated discussion, based on weighing evidence. The criteria of one full day of meetings was established to operationalise the fact that deliberation requires time. This threshold was decided after deliberation with the OECD Innovative Citizen Participation Network².

Random selection (technically called ‘sortition’) with demographic stratification is also a shared thread between cases since the overarching aim of the research is to explore innovative forms of participation. While not new in itself, as the practice of sortition dates back to Ancient Athens and has been used in many places around the world at various times throughout history, its modern incarnation is novel. It helps to

overcome some of the key challenges involved in designing stakeholder participation, notably those related to the representativeness, diversity, and inclusiveness of participants.

Finally, the report excludes deliberative processes conducted purely for academic or experimental purposes without a direct link to public decisions. The link to an authority that will eventually decide on a policy issue has an impact on numerous factors, such as who decides to participate, the response rate, and the dropout rate. The first of these knock-on effects is particularly important, as one of the main benefits of deliberative processes for public decision making over other forms of citizen participation is that it helps overcome the self-selection bias of certain demographics disproportionately taking part. Removing the link to power makes participation less meaningful and makes it more likely that only those with a strong interest in the topic will choose to participate. It is also likely why experiments have lower response rates and higher dropout rates than the average. That does not mean that experiments are not useful for other purposes, such as research. However, including such cases in this study would skew the analysis and conclusions about their use for governance.

The case needed to have been completed by the end of October 2019 in order to be included. Cases that were in progress at that time were omitted for comparability reasons. For each case, the OECD analysed 60 criteria (see Annex B).

Limitations of the data

The data in this report is a repository of as many cases as could be possibly identified by the OECD Secretariat and that fit the minimum criteria of inclusion during the data collection period of March-October 2019. It is possible, and even likely, that the database is missing some valid cases that had taken place before the cut-off date. This is due to ignorance rather than a desire to exclude any particular example. It is recognised that there is some bias towards cases in Anglophone and Francophone countries, although efforts have been made to increase the reach of our research beyond them. Omissions due to language barriers are possible. The OECD is expanding the membership of the Innovative Citizen Participation Network to help address these imbalances in future work.

Notes

¹ The OECD Toolkit and Case Navigator for Open Government platform is available here: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government-toolkit-navigator.htm>.

² As part of the area of work on innovative citizen participation, the OECD has been engaging with an international network of practitioners, designers, academics, researchers, civil servants, and curators to frame the topics and scope of research, to gather feedback and inputs to the research in an ongoing manner, and to strengthen the ties between these important groups of actors.

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