



## The Peer Parliaments go local: How to adapt the format to cities

Guidance document

### What are Peer Parliaments?

“Peer Parliaments” are an innovative, decentralized, and deliberative element of citizen participation. They are formed by ordinary people who meet in small groups of five to ten people, e.g., with family, friends, or colleagues – online or face-to-face. Peer Parliaments are commissioned by a political authority (e.g., a city, municipality, or regional authority) who invites citizens to debate important political questions and commits itself to listen to the results and to act on them. Importantly, Peer Parliaments are hosted by individuals (i.e., “hosts”) willing to invite a group of peers to the discuss in a familiar environment.

In the self-organized, but moderated small-group discussions, people deliberate on different policy solutions to difficult political questions. Ideally, the groups are supported by a central web platform, where they can access a toolkit consisting of a facilitation guide (for the moderator) and learning materials on the topics of the discussion. Afterwards, the participants report their results back to the political authority via the same web platform. The purpose of the format is to receive informed feedback on important political questions – i.e., “informed” by learning materials and by the thoughtful deliberations among peers. The process can also be visualized as a triangle (see figure 1 below) including the three steps *invitation* (1), *self-organization* (2), and *reporting* (3).

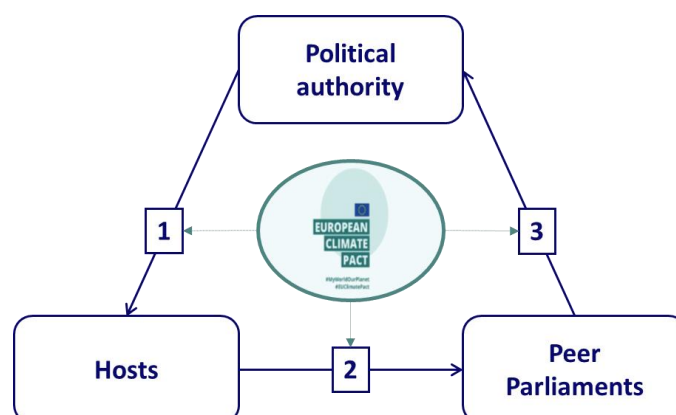


Figure 1: Three steps in a Peer Parliaments process



From November 2021 to March 2022, the [European Commission](#) (Directorate-General Climate Action, DG CLIMA) and Executive Vice-President (EVP) [Frans Timmermans](#) invited citizens from across Europe to form [Peer Parliaments](#) and to debate different ways on how to achieve climate-neutrality by 2050. Discussions focused on three topics: Sustainable Mobility, Sustainable Energy and Sustainable Food/Consumption. Hosts were supported by [toolkits](#) for each topic. The participants discussed and ranked different pre-defined policy options in these areas but were also able to develop own ideas and solutions. This process led to 461 submitted discussion results consisting of quantitative and qualitative data. Eventually, these data were analyzed and summarized in a [final report](#) and presented back to DG CLIMA and EVP Timmermans by three Peer Parliaments hosts at a [final event](#) in April 2022.

### How to adapt the format to the local level

Peer Parliaments can be adapted to any political context. The **key elements**, however, should stay the same, so that the format remains recognizable (see also figure 1):

1. A political authority invites small groups of people to discuss a political question or topic in a standardized approach.
2. Hosts are recruited who are willing to invite their peers and moderate the debate (principle of self-organization).
3. The groups report back their discussion outputs to the political authority.

Adapting the format to cities or municipalities means that local representatives or the mayor would commission the Peer Parliaments on a topic or **question that is relevant to the local context** (e.g., on urban mobility questions). It is crucial for the process that the debate question is chosen by political authorities with a willingness to learn about citizens' preferences on this issue. From the outset, there should be **transparency on what happens with the results**.

The necessary **support toolkits** including the facilitation guide and learning materials are already available in all EU languages and can be used and **adapted to the respective context**. However, it is recommended to also provide some further information on local particularities regarding the topic at hand, so that participants are even better informed before starting the discussions.

The **recruitment of hosts** needs to involve **local actors and intermediaries**, such as civil society or media at the local level, especially those with a vested interest in the topic. Hosts should be encouraged to invite peers with heterogeneous views on the issue, as this can lead to more fruitful and exciting discussions. A public event at the beginning (e.g., with one or more "model" Peer Parliaments held in public) could help with the mobilization process.

Due to the smaller population addressed at the local level, the number of Peer Parliaments to be expected is lower than at the European level. For a medium-sized city, a possible target

size might be 25 Peer Parliaments. One implication of this lower number is that **qualitative data** should be prioritized over quantitative data, and that the outputs can be summarized more concisely (e.g., in a brochure with a few pages). A **final “results submission” event** should be envisaged to conclude the process and allow political authorities to react to citizens’ demands.

### Success factors

To summarize the factors for a successful Peer Parliament campaign at the local level:

- A clear and transparent **commitment by the local political authority** to invite people for the debate as well as to listen and to act on citizens’ demands.
- A focus on a **specific topic or question** which is chosen by the respective political authority, relevant for citizens in the local context and supported by additional input materials.
- The **involvement of local civil society** organizations and multipliers to recruit hosts who self-organize the debates with their peers.
- **Public events** at the start and the end of the process which help the Peer Parliaments to gain transparency and visibility, thus contributing to citizens’ trust.

More information and resources in all EU languages can be found on the [Peer Parliaments subpage](#) and in the [resource section](#) of the [Climate Pact website](#).