



PRESS INFORMATION



VOICES OF THE PEOPLE – CAN CITIZENS SAVE DEMOCRACY?

GOETHE-INSTITUT BRUSSELS, G1000 AND FLAGEY ARE PLEASED TO INVITE YOU TO A PUBLIC EVENT ON CITIZEN COUNCILS AND THEIR POTENTIAL TO UNITE COMMUNITIES AROUND SHARED SOLUTIONS.

13 April 2024, 14:00 to 16:30h
Studio 1, Flagey, Place Sainte-Croix, 1050 Brussels

Brussels, 12 March 2024 – Democracy is under pressure – and with several important elections on the horizon, 2024 may see a strong shift in political landscapes in Belgium and Europe, and around the world. It is thus a perfect year to take a closer look at new ways to re-vitalise democratic processes. With renowned speakers such as David Van Reybrouck, Béatrice Delvaux, Eva Kraus and Paul Verhaeghe, this event will investigate how citizen assemblies can empower communities to shape new solutions to political challenges – overcoming the limitations of current democratic systems.

Present-day democracies are in crisis, as citizens identify less and less with the proposals offered by their representatives. Decreasing participation in elections, and, on the other hand, increasing support for populism and extremist positions, are a well-documented result of this development, leading to societal division and fragmentation.

A possible way out of this situation could be citizen assemblies. In a deliberative process, randomly selected participants from diverse social groups develop new policy recommendations, often in exchange with experts or political stakeholders. Since the visionary Citizen Summit, organised in 2011, Belgium has become a living laboratory for these participatory methods, followed with great interest by countries across the world, including neighbouring Germany.

Goethe-Institut

Rue Belliard 58
Belliardstraat 58
1040 Brussels, Belgium

Press Contact

Magdalena Rausch
magdalena.rausch@goethe.de
+32 2 5858532

www.goethe.de/brussels

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The public event “Voices of the People – Can Citizens Save Democracy?” is curated by G1000, the organisation born out of the Belgian Citizen Summit. It will start with an opening provocation by founder David Van Reybrouck, followed by a presentation of different cases where deliberative processes have been implemented across Europe. We will learn about their specific objectives and methodologies, as well as their outcomes and important takeaways.

In the second part of the event, a panel discussion will explore the potential of citizen assemblies to unite people from different parts of society, developing shared solutions that build on the everyday expertise of each participant. We will evaluate how deliberative processes enable individuals – who often have never been active in politics before – to bring their unique perspectives, possibly re-engaging disillusioned voters in political decision-making. The event will close with a keynote address from Belgian psychoanalyst and author Paul Verhaeghe.

“Voices of the People” is organised by the Goethe-Institut Brussels in collaboration with G1000 and Flagey.

PROGRAMME

Welcome

Opening provocation **David Van Reybrouck (G1000):** Is there still a democracy to believe in?

Cases **Ben Eersels (G1000):** Introduction

The Role of Citizens’ Assemblies

- [Democracy Next](#) - Democratising the museum (Germany)
- [We need to talk](#) - Citizens’ assembly on party financing (Belgium)
- [Citizen Dialogue Ostbelgien](#) (Belgium)
- Citizens’ assemblies in Ireland (tbc)

Q&A

Short break

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Debate

Voices of the people

- **Béatrice Delvaux**, Editor in chief of Le Soir
- **Tanné Bogaerts**, G1000 & author of “Kind van Extreemrechts”
- **Naomi Izabela**, Youth advocate & former president of Antwerp Youth Council
- Member of Citizen Dialogue Ostbelgien

Moderation: Ben Eersels

Q&A

Wrap up

Keynote

Paul Verhaeghe, psychoanalyst and author

Free of charge - registration required.

More information: www.goethe.de/belgium/voicesofthepeople

For press enquiries, please contact:

Magdalena Rausch

Press and Public Relations

E-mail: magdalena.rausch@goethe.de

Telephone: +32 2 5858532

<http://www.goethe.de/belgium/media>

The Goethe-Institut Brussels

The Goethe-Institut Brussels is the regional institute for the south-western region of Europe which features 21 institutes. From its head office in Brussels, it contributes to strengthening the European integration process and convey European cultural diversity at a political and strategic level. Its cultural, educational and information programmes in Belgium promote exchange and cultural engagement, as well as interest in the German language, Belgium's third national language.

G1000

G1000 is the Belgian platform for democratic innovation. We develop and support new forms of citizen participation. We are active in municipalities, cities, regions and on national level. We are also involved in various international networks.

Flagey

Flagey is a culture house in Brussels devoted to music and the moving image. Located on the edge of the Flagey square and next to the Ixelles ponds, this building - formerly the headquarters of the national radio and television institution - has now more than ever become a crossroad where artistic disciplines can meet and exchange ideas.

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