



RESHAPING CITIZENS'
DELIBERATION FOR THE
EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

Policy Tool

The European Green Deal: Towards
new social and ecological narratives
for the European Elections 2024

by the Civil Society Forum for Sustainability



REAL DEAL is a community of people living in Europe who are taking action to build a new model of environmental citizenship for Europe; a model where people living in Europe are placed at the heart of the decision-making process, making a REAL DEAL for both people and the planet.

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Introduction

Our common future will soon be in the hands of a newly elected European Parliament (EP). In order to ensure the development of a comprehensive EU policy framework for a socio-ecological transition within the European Green Deal (EGD) that puts living species at its core, addresses the needs of disadvantaged groups, reduces inequalities and ensures a sustainable environment, we as civil society organisations have developed this Social-Ecological Transition Policy Tool for the European Green Deal in the context of the upcoming European Parliament elections. By providing examples of emerging issues, potential stakeholders for coalition building and key messages, this tool aims to inspire civil society organisations to develop narratives in line with their advocacy priorities and empower them to engage with policymakers involved in the upcoming EP elections. This policy tool also includes a structure for a campaign briefing to guide CSOs in developing their own campaigns. See Annex I - Campaign Briefing.

Background

The Civil Society Forum for Sustainability: Shaping the European Green Deal is co-organised by SOLIDAR, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and SDG Watch Europe in collaboration with CAN Europe within the framework of the REAL DEAL project. The Real Deal is a Horizon 2020 research project focused on reshaping citizens and stakeholders' participation and deliberative democracy in the framework of the European Green Deal.

Over two half days on 8 and 9 November, 2023, more than 50 civil society organisations (CSOs) from across Europe came together for the sixth edition of the Civil Society Forum for Sustainability: Shaping the European Green Deal. The forum focused on the importance of **a robust vision for the social-ecological transition**. This vision is essential for the European Union to ensure a safe future, protect the planet, and promote the well-being of people in the context of the upcoming European Parliament elections. To achieve these objectives, the participants identified the following themes around which stronger collective messaging is needed from civil society: civic space and democracy, the green and social deal, and the mobilisation of citizens.

A key objective of the forum was to **identify emerging issues, potential stakeholders** and **create narratives** in four steps: context, problem, solution and vision through discussions with CSOs, and other stakeholders under the abovementioned themes. To this end, this policy tool articulates a civil society vision and provides messages for each dimension assessed by participants at the forum, offering input for EU-level policymakers and different stakeholders to align with the aspirations of citizens, civil society, and stakeholders in the pursuit of a robust social-ecological European Green Deal.

Civic Space and Democracy

Particularly given the EU's current political landscape, the theme of "Civic Space and Democracy" is critical for the upcoming European Parliament (EP) elections. This idea stands at the intersection of democratic resilience and civil society advocacy, playing a pivotal role in shaping EU policies. Several key issues, such as AI's impact on democracy, the rise of the far-right, and the climate crisis, pose direct threats to civic space and our democracy. Left unaddressed, these challenges risk undermining democratic participation and the essential role of civil society in advocating for meaningful change.

The EP elections are pivotal in determining the EU's approach to such challenges. An open civic space is indispensable for fostering informed and engaged citizens and facilitating effective civil society representation in democratic processes. Engaging citizens in democratic processes is essential for conveying diverse community needs to policymakers at EU level.

During the civil society forum, discussions emphasised creating impactful narratives for the electorate, stressing the importance of maintaining civic space and democracy. These narratives are not merely ideals; they form foundations for upholding EU values and ensuring all voices in Europe contribute to shaping EU policies.

The "Civic Space and Democracy" theme is vital for the upcoming EP elections, addressing current democratic challenges and enabling an environment of informed and active participation within the EU.

The Emerging Issues

During the civil society forum, the Civic Space and Democracy working group participants identified the following pressing issues that should be addressed in the framework of the upcoming European Parliament elections.

1. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digitalisation:**

Participants expressed significant concern about AI's impact on democracy, given its role in misinformation campaigns that undermine democratic processes. The working group recognised AI's potential to either bolster or hinder civic engagement. Misuse of AI, particularly in misinformation and digital surveillance, poses significant risks to civic freedom, public participation, and informed decision-making. To that end, concerns were raised regarding the digital misinformation campaigns led by anti-gender and climate-denial actors. This included concerns about racial preferences and biases encoded into AI and a lack of safety, transparency and accountability from big tech corporations, and a digital divide. Conversely, participants acknowledged AI's benefits for civil society and democracy, such as improving transparency and

public participation, and highlighted that “AI can help politicians to better understand peoples’ needs”. The issue is seen as crucial for social and ecological transition, as AI can influence public opinion and policy-making on critical issues like climate action.

2. **Climate Crisis:**

The narratives surrounding climate action emerged as another key issue. Participants discussed how certain narratives could challenge progress on climate action and restrict public participation in environmental decision-making. Given the direct impact of the climate crisis on social and ecological fabric of societies, addressing the climate crisis requires truthful, inclusive, intersectional and accurate narratives to ensure broad public support for robust climate policies and actions.

3. **Right-Wing Populism and State-Authoritarianism:**

The increasing influence of right-wing populism and state-violence was highlighted as a critical issue. This trend threatens to shrink the space for civil society to nothing, impacting democratic discussion and civic participation. The group noted the role of non-state actors in this process and the use of narratives against civil society by states to repress democratic discussion. The impact of this issue is far-reaching, affecting the ability of civil society actors to advocate for social justice and ecological sustainability.

The Potential Stakeholders

The Civic Space and Democracy working group identified the key actors influencing the shrinking of space for civil society. Some of these actors include governments, poorly regulated social media platforms, large corporations (big pharma/oil/military/banking) and corporate lobbyists, right-wing political parties (with Qatargate mentioned explicitly), authoritarians and extremist groups, and mainstream media companies. In addition, the participants highlighted (see below) some of the potential stakeholders who could support narratives for open civic space and participatory democracy in the framework of the European Green Deal.

- **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):** CSOs were identified as key stakeholders due to their extensive field knowledge, diverse backgrounds, and instrumental role in advocating for democracy and civil liberties. Participants highlighted that CSOs’ ability to influence policy, mobilise public opinion, and hold governments accountable is crucial and should be structured and guaranteed in these processes. CSOs can be reached through collaborative networks, policy dialogues, and grassroots mobilisation, ensuring their active participation in shaping policies.
- **Local and Regional Authorities:** Recognised for their direct impact on communities, local and regional authorities are crucial in implementing and enforcing policies that affect civic space. These authorities act as a bridge between national governments and people, making them key stakeholders in promoting democratic values and civic participation. Engagement with these authorities can be facilitated through social and civil dialogues, public forums, local policy consultations and participatory governance models.
- **Journalists and Independent Media:** Given their powerful role in shaping public narratives and information dissemination, journalists and independent media were listed as vital stakeholders

by the participants. They can counteract misinformation and contribute to informed public discourse, crucial for a healthy civic space. Collaborations with independent media can be strengthened through joint initiatives, networks media training and support for journalistic independence.

- **Teachers and Educational Institutions:** The group highlighted the importance of education in fostering democratic values and civic awareness. Teachers and educational institutions play a key role in civic and citizenship education, equipping future generations with the knowledge and skills to participate actively in democratic processes. Fostering engagement with educational institutions and teachers involves integrating democratic and civic education into updated educational curricula and supporting educational programmes that emphasise civic participation. It was also highlighted that mainstreaming global citizenship education beyond formal school settings and informal education fosters participation in democratic processes.
- **Grassroots Movements:** Grassroots movements, often driven by marginalised communities, were identified as key stakeholders due to their ability to bring attention to the specific issues and needs of their communities and mobilise public support. Thus, grassroots movements are essential for inclusive and diverse civic engagement. Strengthening engagement with these movements can be achieved through direct collaboration, support for grassroots initiatives, and inclusive policy-making processes.

The Narratives for Civic Space and Democracy

The participants of the forum outlined three emerging issues to create narratives for addressing shrinking civic space, artificial intelligence and the climate crisis.

Protecting Civic Space and Upholding Democracy Narrative

Context: In the European landscape, civil society organisations are witnessing a shrinking of civic space and a backlash against democratic values. The rise of right-wing ideologies, the use of misinformation, and a growing sense of political apathy pose significant threats to civic space and our democratic systems.

Problem: The erosion of civic spaces in the decision-making processes and democratic values in the face of rising authoritarianism, misinformation, and political apathy.

Solution: Advocacy for stronger policies to protect civic freedoms, promote transparency, and enhance public participation in democratic processes. Learning from the opposition and using new techniques to reach citizens.

Civil Society's Vision: Civil society are watchdogs, holding decision-makers accountable. Preserving a healthy civic space is integral to an enabling environment for resilient democracy and ensuring that all voices are heard and valued in sustainable policy-making that reflect people's needs. The consultation process around [Belgium's Just Transition Strategy](#) can be shown as a good example of organised civil society's [contributions and recommendations](#) included in Belgium's Just Transition strategy.

Harnessing Technology for Democratic Empowerment Narrative

Context: The misuse of AI and other digital technologies poses significant threats to our democracy, fostering misinformation and undermining public trust. Addressing these challenges is crucial now as technology continues to influence our daily lives and our common future.

Problem: The misuse of AI and digital technologies for misinformation and surveillance, undermining public trust and democratic discourse, and furthering inequalities and harmful stereotypes.

Solution: Promoting techniques for making AI ethical and improving digital literacy, ensuring transparent and accountable use of technology in public life.

Civil Society's Vision: Technology should serve as a tool for enhancing democracy and civic participation while improving people's quality of life, not as a means of control or misinformation. It should connect citizens easily with each other to facilitate bottom-up initiatives, platforms, and the establishment of networks, and help citizens in their advocacy work demanding transparency and accountability from politicians. A good example of digital tools found in Barcelona, Spain, is [Decidim](#), a digital democratic platform where citizens can take part in debates, submit policy proposals and monitor the participatory process.

Climate Action as a Democratic Imperative Narrative

Context: Urgent action is needed to prevent the growing impact of climate change. Failure to address climate change poses imminent risks to the sustainability of our planet and to all living species. Acting now is essential to ensure a liveable planet, protect the environment and promote sustainability. To achieve these objectives, participation in the upcoming EP election is crucial.

Problem: Climate crisis narratives are being hijacked by vested interests, leading to misinformation and inaction. Vested interests are utilising false arguments to drop or delay crucial environmental legislation that counter the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, including microplastic pollution, acidification and eutrophication of ocean. Old narratives are not as effective anymore and the debate is increasingly polarised.

Solution: Developing truthful and inclusive, scientifically accurate narratives that emphasise urgent, collective action for climate justice, and make them relevant to people's everyday experiences. Instead of using the argument "Millions of species are dying", use the more tangible "Fish is getting more expensive". Show that progress is not that difficult. Be more dramatic and work more with emotions.

Civil Society's Vision: Effective climate action requires democratic engagement and informed public participation, ensuring policies reflect the needs and voices of all, especially the most affected. In addition, to tackle the climate crisis and change the discourse, local communities should be part of democratic policy making processes. Empowering people living in rural areas can lead more quickly to tangible results such as sustainable food production and security. Scaling up agroecology as key instrument to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals to recognise the potential of regenerative Agriculture to achieve healthy nutrition for all and to address social injustice, climate change, land degradation, erosion, desertification and biodiversity loss. In Germany, the [Arrenberg](#) neighbourhood in the city of Wuppertal holds weekly meetings with the motto "a good climate starts with the food," to discuss food sharing, as well as various urban community gardening projects and agricultural cooperatives.

The Green and Social Deal

The European Green Deal is the key piece of legislation for achieving a climate-neutral and sustainable EU. Despite current efforts with the FitFor55 Package, reaching the objectives of the Paris Agreement requires higher climate ambition in Europe. However, the context of multiple crises in the last couple of years has been exploited to promote narratives that feed a backlash against climate action and pit climate policy against social protections and viable cost-of-living. These narratives are often driven and supported by the right wing.¹ They also jeopardise the fight against climate action; science and the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report show us that delaying climate action is simply not an option if we want to protect the life-supporting system of our planet and avoid climate change related catastrophes and impacts.

The benefits of climate and social policies go hand in hand and more attention should be brought to these co-benefits and building narratives around them. This approach should be adopted by policy makers in order to propose just, equitable, and cost-effective climate and energy transition measures.² The design of policies plays a fundamental role in ensuring that the positive effects of climate action (e.g. jobs, biodiversity, air quality, water management, human health, emissions reductions), as well as the costs to finance climate action are fairly distributed (and not only benefiting the wealthiest portions of society). In order to achieve climate progress, the positive co-benefit policies need to be more accessible and developed in collaboration with citizens' input.

The Emerging Issues

1. Advance of far-right agendas erode climate action:

2023 has been seen by some as *the year* of environmental policy backlash in Europe. As the rise of energy and food prices put economic pressure on citizens and governments, the populist and far-right movement leveraged the public's dissatisfaction and misconceptions about environmental regulation in order to advance far-right agendas. Climate-minded governments were also spending their money on their most acute needs first, leaving the climate agenda on hold. This climate of anti-environmental narratives is concerning and contributes to slower progress in achieving climate ambition goals.

2. The social-climate-democracy 'trilemma':

In the context explained above, the need of reconciling climate action, social justice, and democratic engagement is becoming even more evident. While there have been efforts

¹ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-nexus-between-green-backlash-and-democratic-backsliding-in-europe/>

² https://caneurope.org/content/uploads/2024/01/CAN-Europe-co-benefits-of-climate-action_REPORT.pdf

within the EU to reconcile climate and social justice agendas, there is still a lot to be done to keep away the reappearance of the trade-offs narrative.³ Instead, there needs to be a nexus narrative that will enable a socially just green transition, informed by citizen participation and is thus based on equity and inclusion. This includes the need for a redistributive agenda where the costs and benefits of the transition are borne and shared equitably across society, not benefiting the wealthiest parts of society.⁴

3. Global climate justice and the responsibility of the EU

With the goal of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent on the planet by 2050, the EU has taken the role as a global climate action leader. However, there is still more to be done on climate leadership and the EU needs to take bigger steps towards owning its historic responsibility towards climate change and aiding the Global South and other most climate affected regions of the world. Moreover, the carbon footprint of EU's consumption and production beyond EU's borders remains high. Economic activities should be reoriented in a manner that is cognisant of planetary boundaries.⁵

The Potential Stakeholders

- **Voters:** Citizens need to be encouraged to vote and push for higher climate and social action. Important sub-groups identified are younger and older generations of voters. Outreach towards younger generations is needed to ensure they do not fall into political engagement apathy and to enable their meaningful and critical involvement in shaping their future and pushing for more progressive agendas. On the other hand, older generations need to be reached through narratives that remind them of their responsibility to leave a liveable world to their descendants. Older generations are important as they comprise a big portion of voters, never more so than within ageing European societies. An effort also needs to be made to ensure that voters with vulnerabilities are able to cast their votes, many of the political parties are not focusing enough on those with disabilities and enabling them.
- **Trade unions, social partners:** The fair and green transition can be only achieved with cooperation between social partners. The social dialogue between workers and their trade unions, and consultation with communities and civil society, are drivers for change in a manner that will ensure a well-being and a green economy where no one is left behind.
- **Private sector (businesses, small and medium enterprises (SMEs)):** Turning the private sector towards green practices is key to enabling a transition that is meaningful and has a systemic effect. A narrative that needs to be developed is that from a pure business perspective, climate action is better for business. Low-carbon and efficient supply chains ensure that environmental sustainability is upheld along the value chain of the business and its partnerships means stability and resilience and hence more prosperous markets, economics and societies.

³ <https://feeps-europe.eu/audiovisual/fair-share-of-benefits-but-also-fair-say-namita-kambli/>

⁴ <https://caneurope.org/can-europe-manifesto-for-a-fossil-free-socially-just-and-climate-neutral-union>

⁵ <https://caneurope.org/can-europe-manifesto-for-a-fossil-free-socially-just-and-climate-neutral-union>

The Narratives for the Green and Social Deal

The Green Transition holds Socio-Economic Benefits

Problem: There are misconceptions that climate action is costly, responsible for loss of jobs especially in highly emitting sectors and taking away from social protections for the most vulnerable portions of society.

Solution(s): a) Build a positive narrative that highlights the social benefits of climate action to citizens and stakeholders. This can be done through disseminating and replicating concrete examples of just transition successes, coupled with making visible the benefits of climate action such as: access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy; having sustainable and affordable housing especially for more marginalised people; contributions to increase of our standards of living; redistribution of the benefits of climate action; creation of green jobs, and protection of biodiversity and the ecosystems that our society depends on the long run.

b) Build a narrative of trust toward the just transition as a prerequisite of safety, peace, stability, and resilience that includes messages like: “renewables are the key to energy security”, “end fossil fuels”, “stop funding authoritarian regimes through fossil fuel dependence.”

Civil Society’s Vision: Make the European Green Deal an engine for new jobs and support coal communities with funds and know-how to become climate-neutrality oriented and socio-economically resilient. This needs to be coupled with a redistributive social agenda based on the polluter pays principle and a greener fiscal system that aligns financial flows with the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss (e.g. cutting funds for new fossil fuel investments).⁶

Reorient Financial Flows Towards a Well-being Society and Funding of The Green Transformation Informed by Meaningful Citizen Engagement

Problem: Financial flows are “wasted” in subsidising fossil fuels and other polluting activities. There is a lack of taxes on wealth and resource extraction, while the most vulnerable groups are left even more exposed to adversity. Citizen inclusion in decision making is limited and policies often do not take into account the needs and views of people towards the green transition and sustainable lifestyle behaviours.

Solution(s): (a) Establish a greener fiscal system that will tax emitting activities (e.g. aviation) and big corporations (based on the polluter pays principle) and thus enable a redistributive agenda (e.g. establish a minimum income policy) to finance the green and just transition. (b) A well-being economy should also be built on the basis of intersectional inclusion and enabling meaningful citizen participation through innovative deliberation tools and bottom-up initiatives. To have inclusion in the heart of the transition, it also means redirecting financial flows and public investment in education and training (e.g. reskilling and upskilling learners from all age groups with relevant occupational as

⁶ [CAN Europe Manifesto for a Fossil-Free, Socially Just, and Climate-Neutral Union - CAN Europe](#)

well as transversal competences) which will especially benefit all groups at risk of exclusion to increase their engagement capabilities.

Civil Society's Vision: Create narratives towards the value of rethinking our fiscal systems to benefit the people and invest in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss (e.g. move the money by taxing the rich and taxing the polluters to equalise power and use financial flows to fund the fair green transition instead of to benefit the wealthy (and most polluting) portion of society). People's power and ownership in the transition towards a new economic system is enabled with well-established mechanisms (e.g. formalised citizen assemblies) for their participation in policy making. Trust in the EU's democratic system is restored by allowing young people to design their own future through ensuring their participation in formal policy processes and putting their visions for the future of Europe in the forefront of the transition pathways.

Equity is a Key Principle for the EU's Action and Leadership on Global Climate Justice

Problem: Overproduction and overconsumption in the EU have a disproportionate global material footprint. Critical material supply is not in line with planetary boundaries. In 2023, the EU's Overshoot Day (the date when countries have exhausted nature's budget for the year) was as early as May 2nd. Moreover, the EU demand for critical minerals has social, environmental and human rights impacts, particularly in Global South countries. The Global South is moreover more vulnerable to climate change impacts, even though their contribution to global emissions is much lower compared to industrialised countries and this historical global carbon inequality needs to be addressed. Resource extraction and processing are at the root of the greatest crises of our generation: global warming, biodiversity loss, water stress, pollution, and social injustices. [The evidence is clear](#): 90% of global biodiversity loss and water stress, 50% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and over 30% of air pollution health impacts are caused by resource extraction and processing

Solution: Set ambitious and binding targets for the EU to reduce its material footprint and orient to a fully circular economic model. Ensure that the EU leads by example for climate justice globally by providing more international climate finance for mitigation and adaptation. An EU legislation on Sustainable Resource Management would help transform Europe into a fair, autonomous, resilient and sustainable economy.

Civil Society's Vision: The EU has a sustainable and fair natural resources management and use, narratives like sufficiency and circularity are the cornerstones of the EU's economic functioning. The EU is contributing to global climate justice with a new Loss and Damage Fund and from equitable EU and national taxes which make polluters pay for climate change damages. The narrative that the EU endorses is that "No one is safe unless everyone, everywhere is safe". The EU also endorses an inclusive and feminist climate policy, and protecting human rights and rule-based multilateralism are a pillar for its external diplomatic action.

The Mobilisation of Citizens

The prevailing sense of disempowerment and mistrust in formal democratic structures among citizens serves as a significant impediment to robust democratic engagement. This sentiment has been further exacerbated by the influence wielded by vested interests in polluting industries, contributing to the climate emergency. The lack of corresponding citizen mobilisation has allowed these powerful entities to sway policy decisions without facing sufficient opposition.

Despite variations in the manifestation of issues such as living costs, housing, and social services, the underlying concerns resonate across European countries. This underscores the need for a collective, transnational approach to address shared challenges and foster a sense of unity among citizens.

The rise of online resources has played a pivotal role in shaping citizen mobilisation, providing a platform for expression and organisation. However, the relative absence of effective regulations has created an environment that is conducive to the spread of hatred and disinformation. The misuse of online spaces by political actors and agencies further undermines trust towards European institutions. Consequently, citizens may feel undervalued and underrepresented in decisions that impact their daily lives.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted strategy. Strengthening democratic structures, fostering transparency, ensuring access to deliberative processes, and implementing regulations to curb the misuse of online platforms are essential steps. Simultaneously, initiatives that encourage citizen participation and facilitate dialogue on a pan-European level can contribute to rebuilding trust and empowering citizens to actively engage in shaping their collective future.

The Emerging Issues

Exploring citizen mobilisation reveals a set of pressing concerns reflecting the intricacies of social and ecological transitions. Participants identified key issues that not only captured collective attention but also held profound implications for societal dynamics.

1. **The rise of the far right:** A paramount concern is the *'lure'* and rise of far-right political ideologies, notably influenced by social media and online platforms. This ideological surge extends beyond politics, impacting climate activism with hate speech targeting activists advocating for climate change, discrimination against migrants and minorities, and gender inequality.
2. **Socio-economic deprivations:** Socio-economic deprivations emerged as another critical issue during the forum, casting a shadow over democratic engagement. People facing food insecurity, inadequate housing, social income or basic necessities, struggle to participate

meaningfully in democratic processes, highlighting the intricate link between socio-economic stability and democratic involvement.

3. **Youth involvement in democratic processes:** Simultaneously, a palpable disconnect between youth generations and European political representation has surfaced, leading to disinterest, lack of self-information, and apathy towards EU elections. Bridging this gap is crucial for an informed and engaged citizenry, particularly to motivate the youth who will shape the future of European democracy.
4. **Inclusivity of minority groups:** Safety for minority groups was identified as another emerging issue within this working group. These minor groups included women, LGBTQI communities, disabled individuals, older people, refugees, and migrants that became a critical concern and systematically excluded from the democratic processes. Members of these groups face online and physical violence, are seen as a burden, and unfairly blamed for socio-economic challenges while experiencing disproportionate poverty, crippling their abilities to engage with democratic platforms. Despite citizen mobilisation initiatives, inclusivity of minority groups remains a challenge, resulting in policies that inadequately address diverse needs.

These emerging issues are tightly interwoven with the upcoming European elections, emphasising the urgency of addressing them for a more inclusive democracy and a political landscape meeting the diverse needs of the populace.

The Potential Stakeholders

The working group identified some of the following key actors influencing the mobilisation of citizens and their involvement in democratic processes.

1. **Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)/candidates:** MEPs and candidates are in influential positions within the European political landscape and due to their position they play a vital role in mobilising people for democratic processes. As representatives who have been elected by the people of Europe, MEPs represent the voice of people in the European Parliament, contributing to the legislative processes and making decisions that directly impact people's lives.
2. **Members of the public:** Members of the public play a central role in participatory processes by exercising their voting power, contributing to public opinion and political processes, representing diverse opinions, advocating for transparency and accountability. They also interact in online spaces where far right rhetoric is spreading and need to recognise bias and how it influences their thinking. Therefore, members' active involvement is crucial to the success and vitality of democratic societies.
3. **Members of marginalised groups:** The marginalised groups are excluded from many citizen mobilisation efforts and are disproportionately experiencing socio-economic hardship and may not be empowered to engage in voting, protesting etc. Therefore, the involvement of marginalised groups in democratic processes is crucial in addressing inequalities, influencing policies, raising awareness and building supportive communities. Fostering engagement of these groups is essential for creating more inclusive and democratic societies.

4. **Civil Society Organisations:** Similar to the civic space and democracy working group, CSOs were also identified as key stakeholders for mobilising people and ensuring their involvement in deliberative processes. CSOs can use their work and networks to promote certain narratives and interact more directly with citizens in cooperation with local and national level authorities and European institutions. Fostering collaboration between CSOs and local authorities, they can promote initiatives and increase participation of people in policy making processes.
5. **Local authorities:** Local authorities are pivotal pillars in the local democratic systems. The local authorities are closest to the everyday lives of people and should be able to perceive the issues facing their communities, identify their needs, and develop appropriate strategic ways to answer these needs. In addition, the local authorities have a crucial role in trust and community building by involving its residents in shaping local policies. They contribute to the overall well-being of the community, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for progress.

The Narratives For the Mobilisation of Citizens

In the realm of citizen mobilisation, two overarching and crucial narratives have emerged for addressing pertinent issues, namely, social injustice and voter apathy.

Social Injustice Narrative

Context: Social injustice acts as a formidable barrier to citizen mobilisation, exploiting noble causes and creating hurdles for specific groups (non-men, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic minorities, and the economically disadvantaged) to engage with political issues. Additionally, the absence of representation in political leadership and legal protection exacerbates this challenge.

Problem: Issues such as poverty, high living costs, inequitable access to services, and a lack of legal and social protection framework create a landscape where individuals find it challenging to allocate time, energy, or resources to mobilisation efforts, as these concerns are often perceived as less urgent.

Solution: Addressing social injustice requires the implementation of social welfare, protection, and public services to combat poverty. Equitable economic policies, affordable housing initiatives, and access to essential services should be prioritised. Promoting employment, sustainable green jobs, capacity building, and ensuring diverse representation in politics are the key components of the solution.

Civil Society's Vision: As the middle- and low-income groups suffer the most from climate change, EU policies should proactively tackle the root causes and barriers of poverty, intersectionality, and the cost of living crisis. Establishing a robust legal framework, advocacy initiatives, and societal awareness campaigns are essential for fostering equality, justice and participation in democratic decision-making mechanisms for all. In France, The [Banlieue Climat association](#) is addressing ecological issues in working-class neighbourhoods. They connect environmental and climate awareness with actions to promote social justice, equality, and opportunities for young people, by working with residents and empowering local organisations.

Lack of Voter Mobilisation Narrative

Context: Citizen mobilisation, a vital tool in democracy, has faced recent ineffectiveness, attributed to the prevalence of far-right ideologies, a lack of safety, misinformation, and growing distrust in institutions.

Problem: The hindrances to citizen participation in democratic processes include the influence of far-right ideologies particularly around the climate crisis, a pervasive sense of insecurity, rampant misinformation, and a general distrust in institutions.

Solution: Mitigating voter apathy involves educating the public on the decision-making processes related to green issues at local, national and EU level. Emphasising the importance of individual voices and implementing a more transparent and accurate structure in the EU political system are crucial. Media literacy promotion is essential, alongside the creation of safe spaces, both physical and online, for open political discussions.

Civil Society's Vision: The fight to protect our planet brings people together for a common goal and encourages everyone to take actions in the decisions that affect our lives. To this end, fostering an informed electorate, establishing secure online and physical spaces for political discourse, and enhancing transparency and accuracy within EU institutions collectively contribute to increased citizen participation, particularly in the upcoming European Parliament Elections.

Annex I - Campaign Briefing

Campaign Briefing template

Title: [Your Campaign Title Here]

Objective: The goal of this campaign is to engage, inform, and mobilise our target audience around the green and just transition, leveraging the unique perspectives of our stakeholders and the creative power of our community. We aim to inspire action and raise awareness on this issue, contributing to a broader civil society vision.

Emerging Topic: [Choose one from the list]

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digitalisation
- Climate Crisis
- Right-Wing Populism and State-Authoritarianism

Stakeholder to be engaged: [Choose one from the list]

- Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)
- Local and Regional Authorities
- Journalists and Independent Media
- Teachers and Educational Institutions
- Grassroots Movements

Target Audience: [e.g. Young women in Italy]

Narrative Structure:

Context: Begin by setting the stage for [Emerging Topic Chosen], explaining its relevance to our target audience and society at large. Highlight recent events or findings that underscore its importance.

Problem: Dive into the specific challenges or issues associated with [Emerging Topic], detailing how it affects our target audience and broader communities. Use data, stories, or testimonials to illustrate the impact.

Solution: Outline our proposed solutions or actions to address the problem. This could involve technology, community engagement, policy changes, or other innovative approaches.

Civil Society Vision: Paint a picture of what the future could look like if our solutions are implemented. Describe the positive changes and benefits for individuals and communities.

Materials Requested:

- Static Images
- Videos
- Interactive Websites
- Podcasts
- Infographics
- Social Media Content

Timeline and Key Dates:

- Campaign Launch: [Insert Date]
- Pitch Submission Deadline: [Insert Date]
- Selection Announcement: [Insert Date]
- Material Development Period: [Start Date] to [End Date]
- Campaign Roll-Out: [Start Date] to [End Date]

Budget: [Include amount]

Additional Considerations:

- **Inclusivity:** Campaigns should aim to be inclusive and accessible to a diverse audience.
- **Sustainability:** Materials produced should consider environmental impact and promote sustainable practices.

- Innovation: Innovative approaches should be sought to leverage new media, technology, and storytelling methods.

Contact Information:



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