

# REPORT ON TESTING OF FORMATS AND TOOLS FOR CITIZENS DELIBERATION

*related to the  
European Semester*

Test Cases:  
Nyt Europa Policy Lab &  
ASviS Deliberative Assembly



REAL DEAL has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101037071. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

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## **1. Introduction**

This report is a walk-through of activities outlining potential approaches, formats and tools for citizen and civil society involvement in shaping economic policies related to the European Semester process, as part of the REAL DEAL project. In this case we have been testing how citizens and national stakeholders could be involved in a largely EU and national policy process. As the European Semester is a two-level economic governance cycle (EU level and Member States), we have been testing how these activities should be carried out along this cycle, to enable meaningful participation and involvement in the process.

The activities carried out have shown and reflected an interest among civil society in transparent and inclusive EU processes and showed the value of structured deliberation in engaging citizens meaningfully in policymaking. Further, the project highlighted challenges regarding limited entry points in the European Semester process.

Ultimately, the activities demonstrated the potential of deliberative formats in enhancing citizen involvement in also complex policy issues and processes like the European Semester process. Future initiatives should build on these findings to further integrate civil society stakeholder input into EU economic policymaking.

## **2. The European Green Deal, Economic policies and the European Semester**

The success of the European Green Deal (EGD) depends on the involvement and commitment of the whole spectrum of civil society actors and citizens. The comprehensive legislative framework for a green and just transition of the European economy will have a tremendous impact on local communities, small businesses, and life of citizens of all EU member states (and many non-EU countries).

There has been a proliferation of initiatives addressing the exacerbating climate and ecological crises. However, current models, policy goals and inherent processes in e.g. the existing economic structures has not yet been capable of delivering the required levels of climate mitigation and adaptation thus undermining the EU climate targets as formulated in the Green Deal and the legally binding Paris agreement, as well as the Kunming-Montreal international agreement on nature and biodiversity. Accordingly, new – and critical – economic thinking has mushroomed in among some civil society actors: from activist movements, academia to business and workers unions as a response to the increasing pressures for a (green and fair) economic and societal transformation.

Transformation of the current economic system entails innovative, bold, and new economic policymaking that has the wellbeing of citizens within the planetary boundaries at the center. Such holistic, innovative, and ambitious policymaking requires the involvement of citizens in new economic thinking beyond growth. Ultimately, “game-changing” reformist legislative processes and policymaking in the EU is dependent on democratization and the replacement of dated economic models and policy processes that center growth as the purpose of the economy using GDP<sup>1</sup> as polestar for policymaking.

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<sup>1</sup> Gross Domestic Product - (the common measure of economic activity)

As described in this report, the journey of democratization via engagement of stakeholders and citizens in complex economic policy processes at EU level like the European Semester is complicated but fruitful and full of potential.

To be successful in achieving goals for a sustainable future, like reducing emissions and improving eco-systems, the European Green Deal (and the economic policies behind it) must integrate the perspectives of civil society, businesses, and citizens in the implementation of policies.

There is not yet a blueprint developed for how citizen voices can be heard in the complex political processes developing and implementing the Green Deal, most notably not in the European Semester process. Therefore, the EU Horizon project REAL DEAL has set out to examine the processes of the European Semester policymaking process to identify gaps and possibilities for enhancing the involvement of civil society stakeholders and citizens in these processes. During the past years we have been testing various types and methods of stakeholder and citizen inclusion in these processes to empirically assess how European policy making can be enhanced so that legislative processes become more democratic and the implementation of the European Green Deal more robust, efficient and sustainable.

### **The European Semester**

The EU member states' financial and economic policy space is shaped by the European Semester, the EU's framework for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of economic and social policies. The framework consists of legislation, guidelines and coordination mechanisms to support aligned implementation of economic targets with a series of reports including so-called Annual Sustainable Growth Survey (ASGS), National Reform Programs (NRPs) and Country-specific recommendations (CSRs) that guide national policy making. This means that the European Semester is a key policy instrument for a lot of EU policy coordination.

Since its introduction in 2011, the European Semester has evolved beyond assessing compliance with the stability and growth pact, to also monitoring various agendas, including the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the pillar of social rights, and the European Green Deal. Beyond coordinating economic and social policies ensuring sustainable competitive growth the Semester also became an instrument for the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), as introduced in 2020 as answer to the Covid-19 crisis, to "implement ambitious reforms and investments" aimed at making member states' "economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and prepared for the green sustainability for green transformations".

While there are regular online public consultations in many areas of EU policy-making linked to the European Green Deal, for economic policies there is not yet an outline for how citizens voices or stakeholder involvement could be involved in these processes, where many decisions are taking place. The REAL DEAL project in this respect aligns with the European Economic and Social Committee's (EESC) position on the Semester process, which says: "*... that effective implementation of the European Semester recommendations requires reform of the Semester to strengthen its transparency and democracy as effective implementation of the country-specific recommendations is dependent on the involvement of organized civil society actors e.g., through structured formal consultation procedure.*"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> \*EESC (2024): The EESC's recommendations for a solid reform of the European Semester. [The EESC's recommendations for a solid reform of the European Semester | EESC \(europa.eu\)](#)

Recognizing both the need for broader citizen and stakeholder involvement for the success the European Semester, and the interconnectedness of economic governance and climate governance, the REAL DEAL European Semester case (Task 3.4.2) has sought to test the feasibility and different ways of incorporating deliberative methods into this framework.

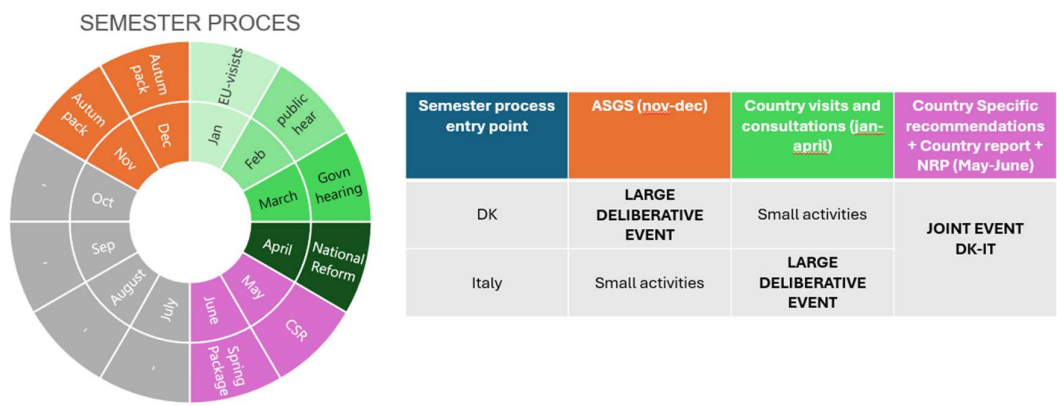
### 3. The European Semester test cases in Denmark and Italy

The goal of the European Semester case 3.4.2) was to test innovative participatory tools in Italy and Denmark, linked to an existing governance framework of the EU, the European Semester. It hence tested methods on how national CSOs and citizens can be involved in a complex EU and national policy process. This meant that the test case explored avenues for democratizing European economic policy through the use of deliberative methods within the framework of the European Semester, as the key policy framework on European economic governance.

The test case and the related activities were built upon the policy cycle and outcomes of the European Semester process. Figure 1 illustrates the Semester process and the related testing events and activities as implemented in Denmark and Italy.

The initial phase of the project identified effective entry points and barriers for fostering deliberation and participation. Significant efforts were made to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the European Semester process which involved extensive research and analysis. Thorough assessment identified challenges and opportunities for increasing inclusivity.

The large deliberative event in Denmark was implemented with the focus of the yearly start of the European Semester process, which is the publication of the ASGS (Annual Sustainable Growth Survey) in November. This entry point may vary, depending on which outcome is sought from the European Semester process. The event in Italy was done after the European Semester consultation process, to reflect with the participants on implementation of the National Reform Programs (NRPs) and Country-Specific recommendations from the previous years.



 *Figure 1 Overview of activities*



Additionally, efforts were made to establish connections and build networks with stakeholders who were already actively involved in the Semester process in the two countries. Engagement with decision-makers and the national EU Commission office was a crucial aspect of the project's early activities. By establishing direct communication channels with these stakeholders,

the project aimed to facilitate meaningful dialogue and collaboration. All the preparation activities can be found in annex 1.

These interactions provided valuable insights into the inner workings of the process and helped identify key entry points for engagement. The learnings from these activities were important for designing the test cases.

Both the Danish case and Italian case demonstrated interest in transparent and inclusive EU policy-making processes and showed the value of structured deliberation for a meaningful engagement of citizens and civil society organizations. The cases highlighted challenges regarding limited entry points in the Semester process and the need for more extensive facilitation training. In the following chapters we will in-depth go into what was done in the two different cases in Denmark and in Italy.

Both test cases were developed in the context of the national realities and opportunities. The overall theme was to test deliberation and participation in relation to the European Semester. For the purpose of achieving strong engagement and outcome the topic framing needed to be adapted to the national situation, so people understood why participation in this process was important for them and why it had political relevance.

### **The Danish Case**

The 'Nyt Europa Europa-politisk Policy Lab' (Nyt Europa Policy Lab) was a "pragmatic citizen forum" comprising new economic thinking and the relationship between economic governance and green issues in the backdrop of the European Semester's Annual Sustainable Growth Survey, with the aim of deliberately producing progressive policy recommendations for advocacy while also producing empirics, experience and learnings for deliberation centered around the question:

*"How should we design the economic framework governing EU policy-making so that it enhances the wellbeing of humans and the planet?"*

This question was developed on beforehand to both enabling the participants to engage in developing recommendations for the ongoing Semester process, and also opening the discussion to the how to actually deal with complex economic policy cycles and provide for participation and deliberation, as this has not been done before.

Additionally, the aim was to formulate collective recommendations collaboratively with CSO actors to be provided later (1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the following year) as input to the European Commission's country reports (see Figure 1).

### **The Italian Case**

The Italian test case was built upon the Danish experience, adapting the process and the format to the features of Italy in terms of greater number of inhabitants, geographical dimension and diversity between regions in terms of cultural, economic development, social needs, as well as to the characteristics of ASviS as the project partner and organiser of the activities in Italy.

ASviS' mission is to raise awareness and mobilize all members of society, economic stakeholders and institutions for pursuing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs. In addition to its advocacy activities, ASviS carries out study and training activities on sustainable development policies, also on behalf of government and regional institutions. In the context of

the REAL DEAL test case for European Semester, ASviS provided the knowledge basis and a first set of proposals from civil society organizations in response to EU policies and country specific recommendations for Italy.

## **4. Preparation for the test cases**

### **4.1. *Deliberative expertise***

#### *Partnering with deliberation consultants*

Deliberation requires extensive facilitation and moderation for meaningful dialogue and collaboration among participants. To refine the project and elevate its impact, the facilitating organizations, Nyt Europa and ASviS, partnered with deliberation consultancies, namely *We Do Democracy* (Denmark), a renowned leader in organizing citizens' assemblies and facilitating deliberative events, and SCS consulting (Italy), an experienced management consulting firm supporting businesses and public organizations with innovative, inclusive decision-making processes.

The partnership with *We Do Democracy* and SCS illustrates the importance of capacity building for facilitating deliberation and the strength in bringing third party consultants on board for securing transparent, inclusive, and impactful deliberative processes. This is crucial for civil society organizations with limited resources and expertise in deliberation.

#### **The Danish Case**

We Do Democracy helped with the refinement of the Danish test case concept, further integrating deliberative elements and methods to foster meaningful engagement and dialogue among participants. Drawing on their experience and expertise in organizing citizens' assemblies, We Do Democracy played a crucial role in shaping the policy lab's format. The robust deliberative framework and ensuring that discussions were productive, respectful, and conducive to consensus-building to produce valid policy recommendations.

By utilizing We Do Democracy's expertise and resources, Nyt Europa were capable of creating an environment where all participants were heard, valued, and empowered to contribute to political change-making. Further, We Do Democracy helped upgrade the facilitating competences of Nyt Europa staff providing a train-the-trainer course elaborated on further below.

#### *Train the trainer*

To increase moderation capacity, Nyt Europa staff took on the roles of moderators and facilitators during these sessions. Recognizing the importance of skilled facilitation in guiding the Policy Lab sessions, Nyt Europa leveraged We Do Democracy's expertise conducting a "train-the-trainer" program for staff members focusing deliberative moderation techniques and power dynamics.

This course was supplemented with an online course on feminist moderation techniques, 'Feminist Moderation: How to Facilitate Safe and Inclusive Discussions', that had been developed by WECF, an international network of women's and civil society organizations, and partner of REALDEAL. Equipping staff with these skills fostered more productive and inclusive discussions.

## **The Italian Case**

In the Italian case, the citizen event was prepared with the assistance of SCS consulting, building on their experience with stakeholder engagement and managing decision-making processes. SCS provided support in identifying solutions in the recruitment phase as well as in the citizens involvement process. Further, SCS-consultancy provided facilitators for the assembly in the plenary sessions and in each working group.

### **4.2. Methods**

The test cases' format and methods draw on good practice of deliberations, pragmatically developed for 1) experimenting with the engagement of citizens in meaningful dialogue and co-creation of concrete policy recommendations and 2) learnings for the 'how to' of engaging citizens in complex European economic processes.

Nyt Europa opted for a condensed format, in which the large deliberative event (Policy Lab) was held over two days. The Policy Lab was preceded by three online knowledge-building sessions. The two-day in-person event aimed at developing concrete policy recommendations. The structure of the Policy Lab was developed by Nyt Europa based on deliberative principles, and was then finalized and improved by the partnering organization *We Do Democracy*.

Adapting the format of the Danish test case, and to make the Assembly most inclusive with respect to citizens from all different regions of Italy, it was decided to carry out the entire initiative online. ASviS then followed the same framework of the Danish case as consolidated in other citizen deliberation processes, with a recruitment phase, a knowledge input phase, and the deliberative assembly itself. While the advantage of an in-person assembly is that it enables direct social relationships between people, an online assembly gives the possibility to all citizens to participate on an equal footing, considering that lack of time is one of the main constraint for people who are interested to participate, with an unequal impact on citizens from the most distant regions, who aren't well connected by means of efficient and fast transport, and those who face work-life balance difficulties.

### **4.3. Topic**

The overarching topic of economics sets the stage of deliberation. Accordingly, with the aim of producing policy recommendations for the European Semester, we put effort in developing a topic that comprises relevant knowledge and perspectives effectively supporting the aim of the events in Denmark and in Italy.

The topic in the Danish case was developed based on analysis of the Semester and its Annual Sustainable Growth Survey (ASGS), the report which puts forward the economic agenda of the EU exhibiting the economic and social priorities for EU with the official aim of placing sustainability and social inclusion at the center of economic policymaking. Based on the preconditions for effective deliberation and insight from the analysis of the ASGS, the central topic of the Danish policy lab was dubbed 'economic thinking' denoting the focus on the ways in which economics and climate and biodiversity issues are interconnected.

According to deliberative principles, it is important that the hosting organizations, like here Nyt Europa and ASviS, do not control the topic framing process to such a degree that the feeling of the participants diminishes with respect to agency and autonomy to guide the deliberations. While the process requires a thematic structure, the topic should refrain from steering the direction of the deliberation and instead act as a signpost for deliberation.



Therefore, it is important when deciding on a topic, to reflect on how it allows for the development of subtopics through the deliberation itself and provide the participants with a compass but maintain the autonomy to decide on the direction. For providing the participants with the best possible tools for guidance, we organized a knowledge upgrade bundle of critical perspectives on economics, the EU, and envisioning utopias.

#### **4.4. Recruitment**

Both cases did not use random selection for the recruitment of participants, but different types of outreach and advertisement.

##### **The Danish Case**

The aim of the Danish case was to recruit 50 participants, encompassing both citizens and representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs). While CSOs hold pivotal roles in the Semester process, there are often, however, unclear selection criteria for participation. In response, the initiative has extended invitations to a broader spectrum of CSOs in order to enlarge the understanding of the Semester process and empower more civil society actors to provide substantive policy inputs.

For the recruitment of citizens, an open registration framework was adopted, inviting individuals to enroll for the event. Given the intricacy of the subject matter, a random selection for participants was considered as less feasible. Instead, after the closure of the registration period, participants were selected randomly from the registrant pool to uphold principles of equity and fairness. While acknowledging that the selected citizens may not fully mirror Danish society, priority was accorded to individuals demonstrating a robust interest and some prior understanding of the subject matter (“interested citizens”). This was meant to ensure active engagement in rigorous discussions. Factors such as gender, age, and existing familiarity with economic discourse were considered to foster diversity and enrich the deliberative process. These choices were considered as a first step in the process of getting to a participatory economic policy making (see also chapter 7).

##### **The Italian Case**

The Italian case aimed for recruiting about 100 participants. ASviS focused on citizens (who represent themselves and their ideas) rather than representatives of CSOs who are already normally involved in ASviS working groups on issues already related to the European Semester process. With this aim, a public Call to Action (CtA) was launched to allow interested citizens to apply to participate in the deliberative assembly. The CtA was disseminated on the ASviS social channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X), in two weekly newsletters and via email communication to the CSOs members and other institutions in the network of ASviS.

Overall, 50.000 people were reached via the ASviS social channels, with 4.800 clicks on the respective hyperlink on the ASviS website over a 17-day period. In the CtA the date of the Assembly was already communicated to citizens, to allow them to plan their commitments in advance. In total, 125 citizens expressed their willingness to participate. This sample had the gender, age, education, profession, motivation and territorial distribution as illustrated in the following Figure 2.

With the expectation of holding an Assembly of about 100 citizens, ASviS decided the final composition of the Assembly inviting all the 125 candidates.

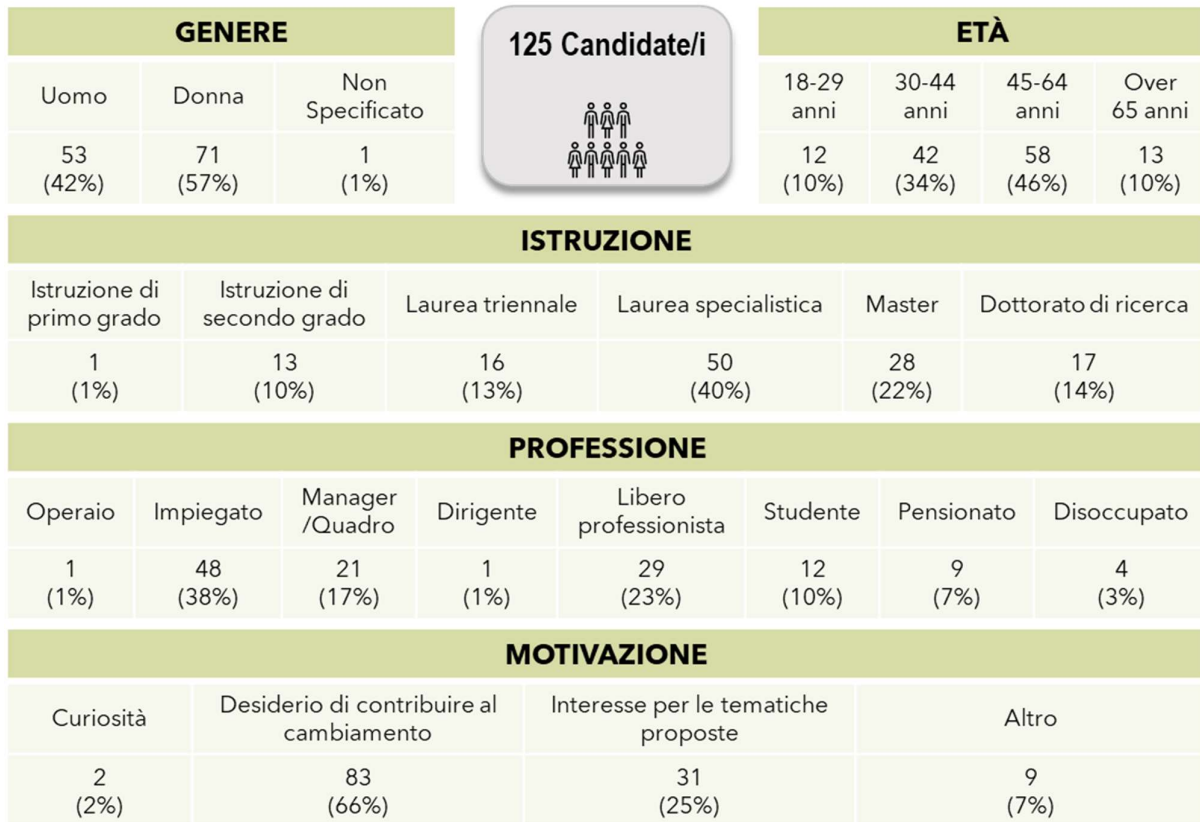


Figure 2: participants at the Italian event.

#### 4.5. Knowledge upgrade and input

In light of the policy area and topic that is more complex, more abstract and less tangible than what is typically chosen for citizen deliberations, the question on how to provide a knowledge basis and how to conduct this, was even more crucial than in other cases of REAL DEAL.

#### **The Danish Case**

Three online training sessions (webinars) for participants were conducted prior to the policy lab to provide for a common knowledge basis and ensure effective engagement in the deliberative event. Besides upgrading the knowledge of the participants, the purpose of the webinars also was to begin relationship building. The participants were divided into breakout groups and were able to reflect on the knowledge provided and share their immediate reflections with each other. This is an important element, as deliberative processes are contingent on a good group dynamic and proper relationships between the participants.

Building relationships is strengthening deliberations as it makes the setting more comfortable and safer for the participants, as more equal space is ensured when discussing. Having the knowledge upgrade sessions online allowed more participants to take part. Furthermore, the online sessions could be recorded and hence participants who were unable to attend had still the opportunity to access the knowledge. While online sessions make the knowledge more accessible, thus more democratic, for the deliberative element, relationship building and the facilitation of safe space, online meetings are less ideal than in-person events. Meeting each other in

person and having a physical atmosphere enables stronger bonds. This trade-off is important to bear in mind.

The type of knowledge provided for the participants as a fundament for the deliberation had to be well scoped to do justice to the topic and to be digestible. Working with a quite complex topic and policy issues, that could feel rather far away from the everyday life of people, a knowledge upgrade was crucial for starting a deliberative conversation and get everyone on a common ground of knowledge.

While it is impossible to cover all aspects of the European Semester and related policy areas we had to bundle together the aspects that provided the participants with the most empowering capabilities to dive into the discussions. The three webinars covered the following perspectives: 1) utopian thinking, 2) new economic thinking and 3) technical understanding of EU economic and financial policies, including the European Semester itself:

- 1) Utopian thinking is an efficient tool for visionary policy development. The utopian perspective provided a backbone for the deliberative process as it gives a framework at hand for imagining policies that respond to current issues.
- 2) “New economic thinking” gives perspective and provides a glossary and toolbox for understanding economic policy differently and thereby empowering participants to dare engage in economic issues.
- 3) Although highly technical, the EU financial policy frameworks and processes were presented to the participants. This provided them with more concrete understanding on the issues related to the Semester process, so to apply the new perspectives and spark reflection prior to the deliberative event.

For proper deliberation, the complexity of the knowledge must be considered. Providing enough complexity to dive into the topics while avoiding discouraging (some of) the participants from taking part in the event, being intimidated or not able to engage with the subject. This may discourage participants from engaging in discussions and result in an uneven space for deliberation as some participants may have more courage. Knowledge must be empowering thus complex and embracing.

The knowledge upgrade webinars were centered around input from selected experts. They were selected based on their area of expertise. The three speakers gave a lecture on their specific topic, following by Q&A and discussion. For a deliberative concept dealing with complex political issues presenting the knowledge in an accessible and coherent manner is fundamental for a democratic knowledge dissemination to make sure that all participants can understand the knowledge input. The speakers were briefed about the importance of delivering the knowledge focusing on coherence and accessibility. All material and PPT produced by the speakers were available for the participants afterwards.

### **The Italian Case**

The knowledge input phase prior to the Assembly was constituted with a “welcome kit”, including an ASviS official video course on SDGs, ASviS reports on SDGs and related policies including statistical data at EU/national/regional levels, as well as an up-to-date specific ASviS Report on SDGs and EU policies. The welcome kit was shared with all participants via email and presented by an ASviS expert during a webinar 10 days prior to the event. The focus of the webinar was on presenting the mission of the REAL Deal project, the rationale of the Assembly process, as well as the features elements of the European Semester: the country specific recommendation for Italy, and the ASviS’s proposals as a suggested basis to build the citizen's debate. The webinar was open to an extensive Q&A part, where citizens had the chance to share their first ideas on

the issues, and it provided a first acquaintance between them. A facilitator from SCS consultants supported a fair participation of all the citizens in the debate.

Also during the webinar, according to deliberative principles as explained also in the Danish Test-case, the expert of ASviS presenting the themes was in charge to provide information on evidence based and not personal opinions, in a clear and objective way as possible, in order that the feeling of agency and the autonomy of the participants to guide the deliberation were respected. The webinar was attended by 65 citizens. It was recorded and sent to participants of the Assembly that couldn't follow it live. In the 10 days period from the webinar to the citizens assembly, a survey was launched among the participants, gathering initial ideas for discussion during the Assembly, linked to the country specific recommendations for Italy in the framework of European Semester.

## **5. Executing the test cases in Denmark and Italy**

### **5.1. *The Danish Case: Policy Lab***

As written before the Danish case was divided into different activities over some 6 weeks. Starting with three session webinars (the knowledge upgrade) and finishing with two days of in-person deliberative event, where the participants were leading the discussions and outputs. These different activities are described more in depth below:

#### *Online Session 1: Introduction and European Semester Process*

The first online session, lasting 1.5 hours, began with an introduction to the format and the importance of the European policy lab. Participants learned about the significance of economic policies and the need to democratize the European economy. This was followed by presentations and discussions in breakout rooms to set expectations. A critical thinking session was held to deepen understanding, followed by a presentation on the importance of working with utopias and visions. The session concluded with a Q&A segment and a checkout, where participants looked forward to the next session.

#### *Online Session 2: New Economic Trends*

The second online session, also 1.5 hours long, started with a recap of the previous session and a welcome to new activities. An economist gave a presentation on new economic trends, sparking reactions and discussions in breakout rooms. These discussions were followed by a Q&A in plenary to address any questions or insights. Participants then engaged in group work in breakout rooms to reflect on the key points of the day. The session ended with a checkout and an anticipation of the next meeting.

#### *Online Session 3: Importance of Utopias and Visions*

In the final 1.5-hour online session, participants began with a recap of the previous session and a welcome. An expert on EU economic policies presented on the European Semesters process and ways to influence it, which was followed by a Q&A segment. The session then moved into breakout groups, where participants discussed what was important to them. The session concluded with a checkout and a look forward to the upcoming physical conference.

### *Event Day 1: Development of the Shared Vision*

At the first day of the large deliberative event the focus was building relations between the participants and developing and agreeing on a shared vision. The event began at 13:00 with a welcome and onboarding session introducing the purpose and agenda. This session also included the establishment of deliberative principles and learning agreements. From 13:30 to 14:30, participants engaged in icebreaker activities to build relationships and discuss their expectations. This was followed by a discussion of the background report, covering policy processes, the concept of "beyond growth," and the significance of working with visions. After a coffee break from 14:30 to 14:45, the conference continued with expert "speed dating" sessions from 14:45 to 16:00. Experts discussed various themes, including consumption, energy, and biodiversity. After a coffee break the day concluded with a vision workshop from 16:30 to 18:00, where participants worked in groups to draft utopian visions and core ideas. A summary of the day's activities and an introduction to the next day's agenda were provided from 18:00 to 18:30, followed by drinks and mingling until 19:00.

### *Event Day 2: Development of the policy recommendations*

The focus of the second day was deliberation and producing the policy recommendations, based on themes and vision.

After breakfast from 9:00 to 9:30, Day 2 started with an opening session from 9:30 to 9:45, where the goals for the day were outlined. The group work from the previous day continued, focusing on thematic problem-solving and idea generation from 11:00 to 12:30. After lunch from 12:30 to 13:15, there was a plenary announcement from 13:15 to 13:30 to prepare participants for policy recommendation work. From 13:30 to 15:30, groups engaged in generating and revising recommendations, with a coffee break and preliminary voting from 14:45 to 15:00. The final decision-making session took place from 15:30 to 16:45, where recommendations were discussed and finalized. The day concluded with a summary and wrap-up session from 16:45 to 18:00, including a panel debate, closing remarks, and celebration of the deliberatively produced recommendations and process. Networking with snacks was held from 17:30 to 18:00.

With a quite short period of time the participants were able to make a set of very important policy recommendations, which can be found in Annex 2.

## **5.2. The Italian Case: Deliberative assembly**

The online Deliberative Assembly was held on 18 April 2024 from 15.30 to 18.30. The choice of this duration of about 3 hours, was decided considering work-life balance concerns, to occupy part of the afternoon with closing time at 6.30 p.m., a time that allowed people to use part of their working time and part of their personal time, protecting evening hours in favor of private activities and family care.

At the Deliberative Assembly, 63 people attended, which means around 50% "dropout" compared to the 125 people who had enrolled and were admitted. The 63 participants covering 16 out of a total of 20 regions of Italy, of which 60% were women and 40% men. The demographic breakdown by age saw a prevalence of participants in the two age groups 30-44 years (33%) and 45-64 years (40%); the under-30 and over-65 age groups accounted for a total of 20% of participants. The level of education records that 89% of participants have at least a three-year degree and the remaining 11% have a second degree. Finally, 59% of the participants were employed in

various roles (clerk 38%, manager 19% and executive 2%), freelancers accounted for 24% of participants, followed by 8% of students and pensioners and 2% unemployed.

The three-hour assembly was divided into three phases as follows:

#### *Phase 1: Introductory Plenary*

The assembly began with an introductory briefing addressed to all participants, conducted by the main SCS facilitator and the ASviS main expert. The assembly process, the division into working groups (WGs) and the expected output were explained, together with a brief recall of the Real Deal project and of the European Semester. The facilitator also described in more detail the assembly's micro-planning, the methods of interaction and the methodology of deliberation and final vote.

At the end of this first phase, the participants were automatically sorted into WGs according to the subdivision defined following the in-depth survey mentioned in the previous chapter.

#### *Phase 2: WGs activities in drafting of proposals*

The second phase took place entirely in the WGs. It was decided to organise six WGs for the 63 participants, so that an average of 10 to 11 people per group could be distributed and give participants enough time for a meaningful dialogue.

The six WGs, organised on the basis of main themes addressed in the European Semester, were: energy transition, environmental protection, productivity, skills and employment, social rights, macro-economic stability. Each participant had the possibility to express one or more preferences on which WG to belong.

Each WG saw an initial introductory phase, led by an ASviS expert, during which the contents and specific themes under analysis within the table were contextualised. A SCS facilitator illustrated the methods of engagement, discussion and voting on the proposals.

The discussion phase then followed. On the basis of the country-specific recommendations, the ASviS proposals and the proposals already collected from citizens through the webinar and the in-depth survey, the participants intervened and debated in order to integrate existing proposals or suggest new ones.

During the debate, the ASviS expert had the task of answering the technical/specialist questions that emerged, in order to make the issues clear to all the participants at the WG, while the facilitator had the task of synthesizing the contents exposed, in agreement with the exponent, and then collecting the outputs produced within a summary document.

Finally, the prioritization of recommendations was done. In this phase, participants were asked to vote on each proposal identified during the discussion phase.

This prioritisation/voting was conducted using the 'raise your hand' functionality of the Zoom platform. For each proposal, participants were asked to raise their hand, using the relevant button, if they considered a proposal as a priority over the others. This methodology made it possible to collect voters' preferences in terms of the importance and relevance of the proposal.

Through this phase, three priority proposals for each WG were selected to be presented in the following plenary session for the final vote.

#### *Phase 3: Final voting on the proposals*

Once prioritisation in the WGs was done, the participants were brought back to the plenary for the final vote on the proposals.

Before starting the process, the facilitator presented the proposal submission and voting process. The voting flow consisted of three stages:

- Proposal submission: the ASviS expert and/or facilitator, from each WG, presented the three proposals that received the most votes.
- Final voting on the proposals: voting was addressed at the bottom of each table's presentation, for a total of six rounds. This vote was conducted by means of a zoom poll and included the following degrees of agreement/disagreement. Abstentions were considered by counting participants who did not respond to the poll but were present in the room. When the 50% +1 of votes in favor was exceeded, compared to the total number of voters, the vote was considered successful.
- Sharing of the voting results: the results, were shared live with the participants, thanks to the functionalities of the online platform. Hence all participants were able to know the results immediately

The three phases were replicated for each WG proposals, resulting in a total of six voting rounds and 18 evaluated proposals. All proposals were approved, with the lowest degree of approval at 79% and the highest at 100%.

The policy recommendations from the Italian test case can be found in Annex 3.

### **5.3. *The joint case: Italians and Danish together***

In the design of the test cases it was considered from the onset as optional to do a joint event with participants from Denmark and Italy, as they will have gone through similar events in two different European countries with different political realities. Both countries are part of the European Semester process but have different set-ups for involvement or dialogue with citizens and stakeholders.

#### **Theme**

The purpose of the joint case was twofold, first it has to compare the outcome and the policy recommendations made by citizens and CSOs in the two different deliberative citizens engagements and secondly was to compare and evaluate how the methods had been developed, and how it can strengthen stakeholder and citizens involvement in EU economic policy making process.

Firstly, it was interesting to understand if the political recommendations from the events in two different EU member states were similar or differentiated. Furthermore, as we are testing formats and tools for deliberation, the second part was a meta-level exercise, where we ask the participants about their experience with being part of a deliberative process and how for them a perfect and inclusive design would look like.

#### **Recruitment**

The recruitment was done within the group of participants in Italy and Denmark. Here the participants had to write a motivational letter or at least to express their willingness (for the selected participants from Italy) to be able to participate in the physical event in Rome and be able to talk on behalf of the rest of the participants at the previous Italian and Danish events. Six people from Denmark and five people from Italy were as chosen to participate in the two-day event. The participants were a mix of young people, employed people, are working employed, as well as retired and people. A mix of genders was also represented. The selection of the Italian sample was representative of North, Center, South and Islands regions.

## **Execution**

The test case was a two-days in-person event in Rome. As both ASviS and Nyt Europa had undertaken deliberative facilitator trainings doing the preparations for the country events, they were able to do an interactive and deliberative event for the participants. The purpose of the days was aimed at creating a joint output. During the first day mainly group work took place. One part was to agree on the policy recommendations and the second part aimed at coming up with a set of criteria for meaningful participation.

The second day was a public event at the ASviS SDG Festival (Festival dello Sviluppo Sostenibile 2024<sup>3</sup>), taking place at Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome. The event was called *The SDGs, the European Green Deal and Citizen participation*.

The first part of the debate was centered around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the European Green Deal, and the reform of our economic system, including which kind of ambition the new European Parliament will have to really transform the societies as it is so needed.

The second part explored the crucial question of inclusivity in decision-making. How can we enhance the involvement of citizens and stakeholders in shaping the future of the European Union? The conversation embraced innovative approaches to foster meaningful participation, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and valued in EU governance.

At the event participants from the assemblies in Italy and Denmark participated in the panel discussions on equal terms with researchers and politicians.

The policy recommendations from the joint Danish-Italian event can be found in Annex 4 and 5.

## **6. Outcome**

The purpose of the test cases was to test the potential of deliberative formats in enhancing citizen involvement in complex policy issues and processes like the European Semester process.

Throughout the testcases we have witnessed that it is possible to secure participation in complex politics. This means that we can democratize large part of the difficult decision-making process. But it is important to invest in these kinds of processes, which requires to first realise how important it is to democratize also such complex policy process, and particularly economics, which is crucial to everybody's life and livelihood (see chapter 7.).

A key part of a deliberative process is to develop concrete recommendations for the policy process and the political level. The policy recommendations from the two cases (three events) can be found in Annex 2-4. Unfortunately, we were not able to work with the political level within this project as the recommendation would have a larger outcome and impact if there was a political recipient.

What we however have been able to do, is that the policy output generated at the events in Italy and in Denmark was integrated in different advocacy activities through events and discussions:

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<sup>3</sup> Festival dello Sviluppo Sostenibile ([festivalsviluppосostenibile.it](https://festivalsviluppосostenibile.it))



- **European Commission Stakeholder Meeting in Denmark, January 2024:** The policy recommendations were included in the European Commission stakeholder meeting in January 2024 as part of the fact-finding missions for the country-specific recommendations for Denmark.
- **EESC Civil Society Week, March 2024/2023:** Findings and experiences were discussed in a REAL DEAL/SDG Watch Europe session on the democratization of economic policy-making, as well as the conceptualization already in a session in the previous year (March 2023).
- **ASviS SDG festival in Rome:** The insights were presented at the SDG festival in Italy, in May 2024.
- **Wellbeing Economy Conference, May 2024:** The Policy lab in Denmark provided a point of departure for a session on democratization of the economy at a Wellbeing Economy Conference in Copenhagen in May 2024.
- **'Folkemødet (Political Festival of Denmark):** Concept and findings of the Danish case were discussed at this significant political festival in June 2023 and in 2024.

## 7. Conclusion

This project has successfully tested the deliberate tools and methods related to the European Semester. Through this, we have explored how a European Semester cycle could be designed with participation and deliberation of CSOs and citizens. The Policy Lab revealed several key insights into issues and opportunities related to democratizing the policy process:

### Complexity and the Need for Technical Expertise

**Issue:** Policymakers rely on specific technical and economic expert knowledge and data for complex economic governance processes like the European Semester. The highly technical nature of the Annual Sustainable Growth Survey and Country-Specific Recommendations limits direct integration of citizen contributions.

**Potential/Solution:** Deliberative methods can incorporate expert facilitation or partnerships with CSOs to translate broad citizen insights into robust policy recommendations, including principles, guidelines, and societal goals for European economic governance. Pairing citizens with policy experts in deliberative formats like the Delphi Panel can co-create solutions that balance accessibility and technical depth. Comprehensive, resource-intensive designs are needed to produce directly applicable policy inputs.

Incorporating perspectives from the wellbeing economy and new economic thinking frameworks make abstract concepts tangible and relatable, enabling participants to visualize sustainable futures. Demonstrating how these ideas apply to specific issues like climate action, housing, or healthcare can enhance engagement in economic governance and policy relevance.

### Knowledge Upgrade

**Issue:** Complex policy discussions require participants to engage with technical and complex economic issues. Striking the right balance between accessibility and technical depth is challenging, especially when engaging in economic governance. Providing information that is both

understandable and sufficiently detailed for informed contributions is a critical barrier to meaningful deliberation and policy output.

Potential/Solution: Knowledge input is critical for leveling the playing field and enabling meaningful participation. Providing foundational knowledge through pre-event webinars, expert presentations, and accessible materials equips participants with the tools needed to engage effectively. Knowledge-building also fosters informed discussions, ensuring that outputs are both visionary and grounded in practical realities. Integrating expert insights into deliberative processes helps bridge the gap between citizen priorities and the technical requirements of policy frameworks, enhancing the relevance and credibility of recommendations.

#### Finance

Issue: Deliberative processes require significant resources to ensure inclusiveness and diversity, proper knowledge-building and time allocated for deliberation.

Potential/Solution: Increased funding is essential for engaging representative groups and equipping facilitators with tools and training. Investing in deliberative processes builds better policies, strengthens democratic trust, and fosters consensus across divides, ultimately contributing to more resilient democratic policy processes.

#### Entry Points

Issue: The European Semester lacks concrete mechanisms or hooks for integrating citizen and CSO contributions into its policy cycle. Without formal entry points, deliberative outputs face limited influence.

Potential/Solution: Structural changes to the policy process are necessary to enable civic engagement. Outputs from deliberative processes provide visions and principles that can be utilized in discussions with NGOs, national stakeholder hearings, and advocacy activities. Presenting these findings directly to policymakers can foster greater alignment and impact.

#### Civil Society Competency Building

Issue: Many CSOs lack experience with deliberative processes and struggle to see the value in engaging with EU policy mechanisms like the European Semester.

Potential/Solution: Building CSO competency involves raising awareness of the impact of participatory policymaking and highlighting success stories. Cross-sector partnerships and collaborative approaches can dismantle silos between academia, policymakers, industry, and civil society. Innovative, inclusive, and deliberative methods can foster shared learning and unlock new ways to address complex policy challenges.

### **Reflections**

#### Civil society as organizers and facilitators of deliberation

##### *Role of CSOs*

CSOs play a vital role in bridging the gap between citizens and policymakers. By facilitating deliberative processes, they can amplify citizen voices and translate collective insights into actionable recommendations. CSOs also contribute thematic expertise, ensuring that policy discussions address pressing societal needs like sustainability, equity, and economic resilience. Strengthening partnerships between CSOs and policymakers, alongside capacity-building initiatives, can enhance their ability to impact policy frameworks like the European Semester.

##### *Role of External Consultants*

Effective facilitation and process design are crucial for ensuring productive deliberations, yet many organizations lack the in-house expertise to achieve this. For this project "We Do Democracy," an external consultant, provided specialized expertise in designing and facilitating the de-

liberative process. Their use of advanced moderation techniques fostered inclusivity and equitable participation, enabling a diverse group of participants to contribute meaningfully. By managing the logistical and relational dynamics of the deliberations, they ensured that discussions remained focused and productive. External consultants like We Do Democracy bring valuable methodological knowledge, enhancing the overall quality and impact of deliberative initiatives.

### Structural reform

Structural changes might be enabling the integration of deliberative outputs. Structural reforms proposed by the EESC emphasize meaningful involvement of CSOs and social partners through permanent, transparent, and representative consultation procedures. These changes would make policy recommendations from deliberative processes more valuable and actionable.

By establishing a permanent, transparent, and representative consultation procedure, the reform would potentially create formal entry points for CSOs and deliberative outputs, ensuring that their recommendations are not sidelined but become an integral part of the policymaking process and have a tangible pathway to influence policy. This structured inclusion would enhance the legitimacy of the recommendations by embedding them within the decision-making framework at both European and national levels.

### **Summing-up**

The test cases aimed to foster meaningful engagement and deliberation and of citizens and civil society organizations, providing input for policymakers, and shaping EU economic policies within the European Semester framework. By exploring alternative economic frameworks and prioritizing sustainability, the events aimed to contribute to a more inclusive and environmentally conscious approach to economic governance.

The European Semester cases of REAL DEAL demonstrate the potential of deliberative methods in democratizing European economic policy. By fostering broad involvement, these methods ensure more robust and representative policy outcomes. Co-organizing efforts with national governments and the European Commission can ensure sufficient buy-in and continuity. Additionally, adapting new economic frameworks and prioritizing social indicators can enhance civic engagement.

The project demonstrated that the engagement of CSOs and citizens in the Semester process can be increased, and that deliberative formats and methods are useful to enhance the knowledge basis and broaden economic policy recommendations. One thing became very apparent: While time is always too short in deliberative processes, in the case of economics, this aspect has turned out to be even more severe and needs to be considered in the design of future processes and events.

### Future projects should:

- Test deliberative principles in diverse policy contexts.
  - Inclusive EU policymaking should test deliberative principles in other contexts and in different policy processes by deploying similar frameworks. More data and experience are needed for the continuous development of enhanced stakeholder and citizen engagement.
- Focus on competency-building of deliberative capabilities among stakeholders, policymakers, civil society organizations and citizens-
  - Increased knowledge and experience among stakeholders will lead to more impactful deliberative policymaking.

## **8. Annex**

### **8.1. Annex 1. Overview of REAL DEAL 3.4.2 test case activities and preparation**

#### **2022 – 2023**

- Research and analysis of the European Semester process.
- Participate in the European Commission’s national visits related to the Semester process and the Recovery & Resilience Fund.
- Building networks and engaging with stakeholders.
- Several meetings with Commission representatives in Denmark on how to test deliberation.
- Meetings with European Commissioner for Economy, Paolo Gentiloni, cabinet on the Semester and SDG’s.
- Monitoring issues related to climate change, nature and biodiversity, the green transition and circular economy in Denmark as well as the Danish energy market and the Danish government’s plans on recovery.
- Beginning the development of the deliberative activities.
- Meeting with national civil society organizations on how to improve their involvement in Semester process.
- Starting up a civil society organization alliance on “new economics and the beyond growth agenda” in Denmark and exploring different economic approaches to economic policymaking.
- Stakeholder alliance building through Participation in a Democracy Festival in Bornholm on “beyond growth”, the European Green Deal and European Economic Governance with 24 events in 3 days.
- March 2023: Co-organising and contributing to a EESC session on the Semester European economics governance reform semester at Civil Society Week.

#### **August 2023 – September 2023**

- Concretizing theme, format, and content.
- Writing up process plans and concepts for developing a test-environment for the application of deliberative tools.

#### **October 2023**

- Prepare the Danish test case.
- Partnering with third-party experts: We Do Democracy.<sup>4</sup>
- Finalizing the planning of activities.
- Sending out invitations to interested citizens and stakeholders.

#### **November 2023**

- Knowledge building (for participants).
- Competency building (for facilitating team).
- Capacity building / knowledge input for Danish stakeholders (in person or online).

#### **December 2023**

- Denmark: Deliberative event related to the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy.

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<sup>4</sup> Forside - We Do Democracy

### **January 2023**

- Denmark: Participate in country visit related to the Semester from European Commission (entry point for political participation).

### **March 2024**

- Participating and contributing to a panel/workshop on the democratization of economic policy making at EESC Civil Society Days.

### **April 2024**

- Italy: Deliberative conference related to the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy.

### **May 2024**

- Italy: Joint DK-IT deliberative event in Rome as a part of the ASviS SDG festival.
- Denmark: Hosting a large-scale Wellbeing Economy conference on the topics from the European Semester report.
- Advocacy based on policy output.

### **June 2024**

- Denmark: Participating in Festival in Bornholm with talk and debate on democratization of the economy and economic processes.

## **8.2. Annex 2: Policy recommendation from the Danish Test Case**

### **1. Citizen Involvement for Better Health and Well-being**

The recommendations focus on integrating citizens into policy decision-making processes to promote health and well-being. The primary school system should be restructured to enhance well-being through principles such as inclusion and collaboration, and local citizens' assemblies are proposed as a solution to alienation and polarization in society. The recommendations emphasize the connection between nature and citizens' well-being, advocating for nature to be granted fundamental rights and for political decisions to consider both human and environmental health. Finally, a rethink of the labor market is recommended with a focus on preventing dissatisfaction. Overall, the recommendations aim to create a society based on inclusion, well-being, and sustainability.

- Recommendation 1.2: Rethinking the framework of primary schools for better involvement and well-being.
- Recommendation 1.2: Establishment of local citizen assemblies.
- Recommendation 1.3: Granting fundamental rights to nature.
- Recommendation 1.4: Rethinking the labor market and action plan for well-being.

### **2. Climate and Biodiversity**

The recommendations aim to reduce agriculture's high greenhouse gas emissions and negative impacts on biodiversity, as well as Denmark's high consumption-based climate footprint. Denmark should become a leader in the green transition and increase biodiversity through sustainable land use in agriculture. The recommendations encourage a new approach to agricultural support and a rethink of EU frameworks, along with structural changes in Danish agriculture, the introduction of greenhouse gas taxes for agriculture, and a benchmark for consumption-

based climate footprints. The goal is to reduce Denmark's climate impact and promote sustainable agriculture and consumption, motivating other EU countries to transition to green practices.

- Recommendation 2.1: New Danish approach to agricultural support and rethinking EU frameworks.
- Recommendation 2.2: Benchmark for consumption-based climate footprint in Denmark (and in the EU).
- Recommendation 2.3: Introduction of greenhouse gas tax for agriculture.
- Recommendation 2.4: Structural change in Danish agriculture.

### **3. Value and Consumption**

The vision for these recommendations is a regenerative and sustainable society focused on quality of life and care. The recommendations address the issue of the current narrow view of value, based on GDP and limited economic models dominating political decisions. Recommendations include the establishment of a research unit for quality of life, a focus on economic equity, the development of sustainable business models and financing systems, and an interdisciplinary approach to solutions. The aim is to redefine value, reduce the power of economists, and create a society based on care and sustainability, prioritizing the well-being of people and the planet over economic growth.

- Recommendation 3.1: Establishment of a research unit in JRC focusing on quality of life as a guiding priority for EU policy formulation.
- Recommendation 3.2: Focus on equality.
- Recommendation 3.3: Development of genuinely sustainable business models and financing systems.
- Recommendation 4: Focus on Interdisciplinarity.

### **4. EU's Global Responsibility and Role in the World**

Decisions made within the EU's borders benefit people and the planet globally. The issue lies in the EU's consumption, which exploits people and the planet, especially in countries outside the EU. Recommendations include the establishment of a global forum for citizen engagement, fair resource distribution, reduction of Denmark's global land footprint, and compliance with international agreements. The goal is to make the EU an inclusive and democratic role model, especially in climate and inequality, and to address historical injustices in relation to the Global South. The aim is to create a more responsible, fair, and sustainable global influence for the EU and Denmark.

- Recommendation 4.1: Global citizen involvement.
- Recommendation 4.2: Fair distribution of human time and the Earth's resources.
- Recommendation 4.3: Reduction of Denmark's global land use.
- Recommendation 4.4: Compliance with international agreements.

### **8.3. Annex 3: Policy Recommendations from the Italian Test case**

### **Working Group 1 - energy transition**

- Adopt an Italian climate law defining sectoral targets, an appropriate governance system and the establishment of a scientific committee to support choices. Promote a bottom-up approach (citizens, municipalities, regions) to collect best practices and achieve targets. Use social indicators/needs in the drafting of environmental laws. Independent governance promoting incentives and/or control systems.
- Accelerate all policies to reduce GHG emissions with benefits for air quality as well. Envisage a plan to reduce plastic production/consumption. Promote coherence in public procurement
- Provide for measures to build an industrial supply chain to support the energy transition and to enhance the circular economy. Introduce Digital product passport to other sectors. Promote the application of the LCA (with particular attention to the agri-food sector). Evaluate a remodulation of VAT according to e.g. pollution. Standardise the concept of circular economy

### **Working Group 2 - environmental protection**

- Soil law that pays attention to the quantitative and qualitative aspects of land use, including: Protection of traditional crops and historical land artefacts; extending the benefits of the CAP regardless of farmers' status; making urban green areas productive and providing integrated planning for better management of green areas also through taxation and incentive systems; discouraging intensive livestock farming and encouraging food transition.
- Strengthen and make green culture transversal: centrality within public administration (within planning); adoption of the JRC Green Comp framework as a bottom-up culture building tool (in schools); promote climate pacts; stimulating research.
- Create coordination within the authorities at the various levels of the Public Administration, making environmental development plans (regional planning) compulsory, adapt legislation where necessary.

### **Working Group 3 - productivity**

- Encourage integration between local authorities, communities and enterprises (with a focus on SMEs) through the identification of the roles of the various stakeholders in the decision-making processes by acting on simplification and training of the various actors so as to enable a more effective path of change by monitoring the progress of initiatives to recalibrate paths; promote the facilitating role of local authorities.
- Disseminate digital education, transparency and accessibility to Public Administration information by adapting communication tools to the target audience in order to increase the participation of all in democratic life: from young people, to the over 65s, to people with disabilities.
- Strengthen research and innovation through greater drive and incentives towards the implementation of measures to support the transition to, for example, Next Gen Material.

### **Working Group 4 - skills and employment**

- Reduce the vulnerabilities in the labour market of women, young people and immigrants, including through a national youth strategy and an integrated and systemic plan to strengthen active policies on women, and combating precarious work. Enabling proposal vis-à-vis other priorities, as it would allow individuals to have generative power and harness the potential of all.
- Provide structural interventions aimed at launching wide-ranging policies for the creation of 'decent' job, reduction of precariousness, poor work and undeclared work.
- Encourage collective bargaining, strengthen proximity welfare, develop family/work reconciliation and online working. Provide for governance choices that put workers, the environment

and the common good at the centre of decision-making processes and strategic choices, resulting in healthy and safe workplaces to increase workers' well-being and decrease accidents at work.

#### **Working Group 5 - social rights**

- Right to health: promote co-programming, co-planning actions in order to enhance the needs of civil society that can optimise resources and implement policies to finance and reorganise facilities on the territory in order to act effectively towards people's needs; mitigate the impact of the climate crisis on health, combat mental distress, addictions and family and social violence; Integrate the right to health with the right to access to food and food security; progressively relaunch public financing of the National Health System (NHS); implement the reform of care for people with disabilities.
- Migrants' rights: overcome the logic of emergency and promote a widespread system of reception that favours the social integration of immigrants, especially of unaccompanied foreign minors. Also by supporting access to education, training and employment.
- Right to decent housing: promote micro-scale policies to redesign disused spaces, consider the redistributive effects of allocation in the relevant social context and protect people without housing. Guarantee constant allocations to rent support funds; consider housing services for citizens in a situation of economic hardship as part of the Essential Levels of Services; plan a certain, multi-year funding stream for the housing sector; Building public residences for students attending universities as part of the right to study; passing a law to regulate the short-term rental sector

#### **Working Group 6 - macro-economic stability**

- Tax reform: ensure the principle of progressiveness in tax policies and the fight against evasion, including specific measures on the management of extra-profits work on literacy on the issue, including in schools, and encourage citizen participation with communication and transparency campaigns that give a sense of citizens' participation in State spending demand level of perception on spending satisfaction
- Issuance of public bonds linked to medium to long-term sustainability goals and the green transition (e.g. SDGs Bond), with lower interest rates than the interest rate on public debt. In addition, budgetary stability should be preserved by expanding the insurance obligation for climate risks/damage, to be tax-free for the insured. The higher profits of insurance companies would ensure higher tax revenues.
- Structural incentives for companies to use ESG ratings to reduce red tape in order to accelerate private and public investments (e.g. National Recovery and Resilience Plans). Measures could be provide as tax credits, favouring SMEs.

### **8.4. *Annex 4: Collective recommendations Denmark & Italy***

#### **Collective policy recommendations:**

##### **Climate and environment**

1. Give legal rights to nature and climate.
2. Support a culture for nature and conservation at all levels, including citizens and stakeholders.
3. Rethink agriculture and EU agricultural subsidies.



## Social and justice

1. Equal and inclusive labour market: rethink our workplace and create an action plan for well-being.
2. Equal rights to everyone: rights to resources (redistribution), rights to health and housing. Now less people have more than the majority. The SDGs should be introduced into international law.
3. Leave no one and nothing behind. Develop well-being within the limits of the earth and research on how it is possible.

## Macro economy and economy governance

1. **Important to make a constitutional economic charter: where well-being is more important than profit.** A European constitutional charter. In this constitution: human well-being is more important than profit. We have to promote citizens involvement to participation, to more citizen association and educational problems about the financial aspect.
2. **Make up a European balance.** A public European bond linked to sustainability targets. The involvement of a citizenship where everyone is obliged to have an insurance for climate calamities.

### 8.5. Annex 5: Criteria for meaningful participation:

1. **Design neutral spaces** for civic and diverse representation and participation.
2. **Design equal access for public participation:** handicap and online access, toilets, food, and water available, moderators, translators, time of day, breaks, alternative/creative recruitment, inclusive/diverse language/questions, visuals and train people to design these spaces.
3. **Meet fellow citizens** especially pan-Europeans in EU-level process: find EU funds and methods to connect European people in both national and local levels, in horizontal and vertical levels between countries, through civil societies.
4. **Citizen participation at all levels:** local, national, global. It is important to build and shape common values and rights. More often it is easier to participate at the local level as we are more informed and aware. But it is growing increasing at national and EU levels too. It is crucial to educate to democracy since school age.
5. **NGOs as intermedia for our voices**
6. **Freedom:** discussion in the assembly should be free and not manipulated
7. **Time:** accept that things take time, but participation as a tool to speed up processes.
8. **Knowledge:** equal educational access to knowledge through different ways of communication: statistics, lectures, visuals, online and physical participation, inclusive language, videos, pictures, podcasts.