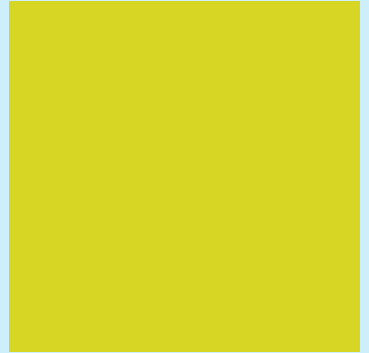
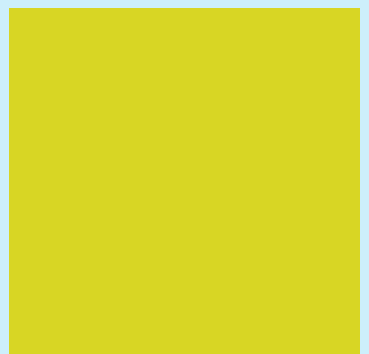


G1000

FINAL REPORT



DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION IN PRACTICE



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The logo features the text "G100" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The three zeros are stylized as overlapping speech bubbles, each with a small tail pointing downwards.

G100

FINAL REPORT

**DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION
IN PRACTICE**

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■ INTRODUCTION

■ A CITIZEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FUTURE OF OUR DEMOCRACY



SO HERE IT IS, THE REPORT OF THE **G1000**, THE INDEPENDENT CITIZENS' PROJECT AIMED AT REVITALIZING OUR DEMOCRACY. IT STARTED AS AN IDEA, BUT OVER A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME HAS GROWN TO BE THE BIGGEST CITIZENS' INITIATIVE FOR DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION IN EUROPE. EURONEWS CALLED THE **11 NOVEMBER 2011 CITIZENS' SUMMIT** A "NEVER-WITNESSED EXPERIMENT, AN IMMENSE CITIZENS' MEETING; THE **G1000** IS PART OF A VERY PROMINENT EUROPEAN MOVEMENT: THE DESIRE FOR DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL."

But this report is much more than a checklist of the Tour & Taxis citizens' summit. The whole G1000 lasted for more than a year. We took our time; it was an exercise in slow politics. From the outset the G1000 was conceived as a three-stage plan, with separate phases before and after the citizens' summit. And as such, this report provides an overview of the entire process, of the findings, but also of the methods used.

Each stage of the G1000 confirmed our suspicion: ordinary citizens are not only willing to think about political issues; they are also capable of doing so. If they are given enough space, information and a rigorous methodology to work with, ordinary citizens can come up with constructive solutions; even for complex or emo-

tionally charged issues. If one is taken seriously, one will respond to that seriously. The G1000 has thus confirmed prior findings from abroad: deliberative democracy works.

It is clear that our society would benefit from the use of more forms of citizens' participation. A healthy democracy has to be earned anew every day; this responsibility is shared between citizens and their political representatives. Both sides have to make an effort to create new spaces for democratic debate. This is a dual learning process: politicians have to listen to the citizenry, and absorb them into democratic (co-)creation processes; on the other hand, citizens will have to (re-) learn to process different ideas and reach a consensus. Which is no easy task for either party!

The relationship between citizens and their government becomes ever more horizontal. How should states come to terms with their vocal, but often suspicious, citizens? The answer is, strangely, by learning to let go. The critical citizen is not a nuisance but an opportunity. By involving them in governance, when possible through random selection. By asking for their opinion. By letting them think along. This does not only create new ideas and ways of thinking, but also greater trust in a renewed democratic system. On both sides.

FOR THIS REASON WE WANT TO CONTINUE WITH OUR PROJECT. OVER THE COMING YEARS, WITH THE ONGOING SUPPORT OF THE FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, THE G1000 WANTS TO EVOLVE INTO A PERMANENT PLATFORM FOR DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION IN BELGIUM. THE SUPPORT OF MORE THAN 800 VOLUNTEERS, 3000 SPONSORS AND 12000 SYMPATHISERS IS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH FOR US, AS IS THE KEEN FOREIGN INTEREST IN OUR PROJECT. BUT NOTHING CAN TRUMP THE ENERGY OF THE G1000 PARTICIPANTS. THE DEVOTION OF ORDINARY CITIZENS, CHOSEN THROUGH RANDOM SELECTION PROCEDURES, PROVES THAT A BETTER DEMOCRACY IS POSSIBLE - AND NECESSARY FOR US TO CONFRONT THE CHALLENGES OF THIS CENTURY. TO ALL! OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE.



*Benoît Derenne (Director, Foundation for Future Generations)
and David Van Reybrouck (writer),
co-founders of the G1000*



Douchka & Ruth,
volunteers during the citizen panel

"As an interpreter you have to translate everything: content and emotions. It was an intense, touching and sometimes fierce experience. A citizen panel like that is actually a mini-society with everything that comes with it included."

De Standaard

"A pioneering laboratory."



Simon, who was interpreter last year on the citizens' summit, is now a voluntary translator... from Singapore

"Having read Lijphart, I knew something about deliberative democracy... At least I thought I did. Seeing these principles in action at the G1000, with real people debating, disagreeing, finding a consensus, was enough reason for me to tear up in the interpreters' cabin during the closing ceremony. The G1000 proved that "all of us, together" is not just an empty slogan, and we can be part of something larger than ourselves if we try."



Pierre, member of the citizen panel

"If we were following the logic of Koh-Lanta or Big Brother, we would first of all eliminate the people who got on our nerves. But here, we don't. We have to stick together and we are only expected to show our communal work, it works! That is the whole challenge, the whole richness of the process and it is what kept me motivated!"



Willem Schinkel, sociologist

"The project is innovative, based on recent experiences in Iceland and which has to be applauded even if only because it is an experiment in democracy."



THE PROCESS



■ HISTORY

■ HOW IT ALL BEGAN

You probably remember that after the 2007 parliamentary elections a wobbly government was formed, and after the 2010 elections none whatsoever. Belgium broke all international records in the field of negotiations for government formation. And during that longest-ever formation period citizens could only watch from the sidelines. Some rejoiced in the snail's pace process, others were disgusted – but both groups had one thing in common: they were disregarded, much like supporters at a football match.

Of course, some citizens voiced their opinions - the online discussion boards of all newspapers were filled to the brim with braying from both sides. Facebook and Twitter also hosted much intense discussion. There was the Shame demonstration, the Camping16 initiative, the chip shop revolution. Some citizens solemnly swore never to vote again, and others, as a sign of silent protest, refused to shave.

But we all had one thing in common: powerlessness. The citizens had cast their vote, and could now only watch how their political representatives tried to form a government.

■ THE INKLING OF AN IDEA

In that context, David Van Reybrouck, author of the book *Congo*, was reminded of how the citizens of (the former) Zaire convened in Kinshasa, in the early nineties, to discuss the future of their country. “Their National Sovereign Convention was far from perfect, but it did show how ordinary citizens were able to create a new public space.” This was in September 2010. In an opinion piece for the *De Standaard* and *Le Soir* newspapers, he wrote:

“DREAM ALONG FOR A BIT. I SEE ONE THOUSAND BELGIANS CONVENE. (...) HALF OF THEM MEN, HALF WOMEN, FROM ALL REGIONS AND COMMUNITIES, EVERYTHING NICELY BALANCED. I SEE PEOPLE FROM CIVIL SOCIETY: TRADE UNIONS, YOUTH GROUPS, WOMENS’ ASSOCIATIONS, DIFFERENT RELIGIONS, THOSE WHO BELIEVE AND WHO EMPHATICALLY DON’T, THOSE BORN HERE AND THOSE WHO CAME HERE. (...) WE WILL LISTEN TO ONE ANOTHER BEFORE DEFENDING OURSELVES. EMPATHY PRECEDES ANY COMPROMISE. (...) THERE WILL BE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. (...) THE CITIZENRY, THAT’S US. LET’S GET STARTED!”



Paul Hermant, the renowned RTBF radio opinion maker, devoted his daily chronicle to the idea. He was of the opinion that the proposal had “the power of a bright idea”:

“REMARKABLY, GOOD IDEAS OFTEN SEEM NAIVE AT FIRST SIGHT. NAIVETY RESULTS FROM CLARITY AND SIMPLICITY, AND I DON’T KNOW WHY, BUT CLARITY AND SIMPLICITY ARE SELDOM SEEN AS POLITICAL QUALITIES. EUROPE’S FOUNDING FATHERS WERE SO AFRAID OF THEIR IDEA’S NAIVETY THAT THEY QUICKLY MADE IT MORE COMPLICATED, IN ORDER TO BE TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY.”

Paul also referred to previous citizen panels in Belgium. He confessed himself to be in favour of random selection. Participants were not allowed to register themselves, but had to be designated at random: “The power of citizen panels resides in the random selection of the participants. Drawing lots is the birth of democracy, more than that, its cradle.”

■ INCREASED MOMENTUM

Paul and David did not know one another, but met for coffee after the failure of the umpteenth political negotiation attempt in January 2011. They realised that this was no longer a crisis of Belgium, but had become a crisis of democracy. Isn't democracy more than just the act of voting? Democracy, doesn't that mean citizens debating about the future of their society? Citizens may have the right to vote, but do they also have the right to speak? What if we let citizens participate in the political debate, they tentatively proposed.

And then, all of a sudden, things went very quickly. Just a week later, they were conferring with five experts on citizen participation. And over just a few months, this small group of 7 became a group of 27 people. Scientists, journalists and intellectuals, but also people from the communications and logistics industries and people from the cultural sector. Dutch, French and German speakers; young and old; new and old Belgians. People with very different political preferences, but one same preoccupation: the quality of our democracy.

These were long evenings – at David or Paul's, in bars, beside the motorway, in free function rooms. Conversations about how television sucked civil society dry, the potential of social media, the culture of permanent, immediate feedback and the chronic election fever that derived from it... "For the first time in history, those new media have made the importance of the next elections greater than that of the previous round," they said to each other, "Isn't that just a recipe for paralysis?"

And along the way, a few crucial core questions took shape:

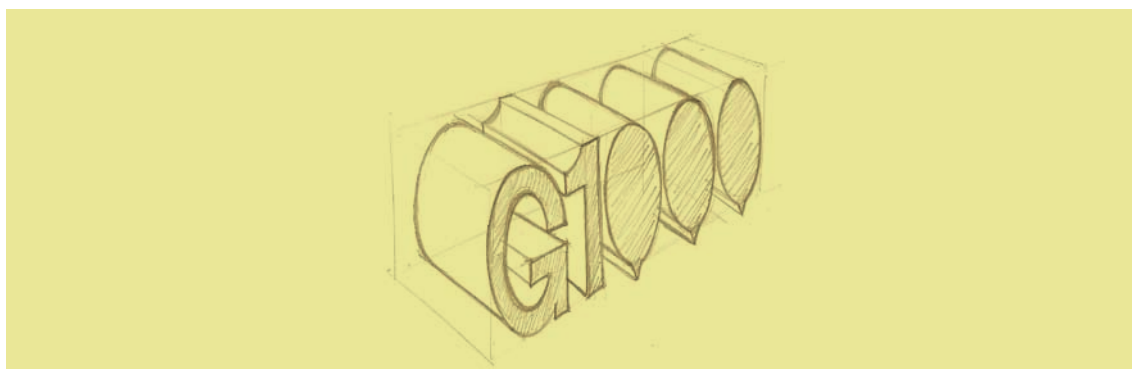
- Although many sectors of society have innovation as their motto – corporations, science, culture, sports – innovation is seen as superfluous for one sector only: democracy. That can't be correct!
- The traditional meeting ground for citizens – organised civil society – is eroding. Trade unions and other big organisations might still connect power and people, but the connection seems to become ever more frail. And what's more, many political parties are also facing decreasing membership numbers. Don't we need new channels?
- How should we reformulate the clamour of the base into clear-cut recommendations for the top? How can the ideas and experiences of many fit better into the decision-making process?
- Through referendums and opinion polls? Maybe so, but these will still not make citizens debate among themselves. Citizens vote in a polling booth or have a chat with the opinion pollster, but still won't talk to their neighbour. Isn't society more than the sum of our individual gut feelings?
- There have recently been many instances of experiments with deliberative democracy. A random sample of citizens is invited to inform themselves adequately about a given theme, and debate among themselves. Research has shown that if a big,

diverse group is assembled, it will often take more acceptable decisions than those a small group of experts would propose. Couldn't that be a sensible addition to our traditional democratic system?

■ THE MANIFESTO

As our conversations unfolded, the desire to try out deliberative democracy grew. What if we brought a thousand citizens together? “Ah,” a new team member remarked, “What you want is like a G20, but fiftyfold. A G1000, as it were!” And all of a sudden, we had a name. “Citizens’ Forum” and other complicated designations were unceremoniously binned. We could then begin drawing up a Manifesto.

On 11 June 2011, after exactly one year without a government, the Manifesto of the G1000 was published. No fewer than five national newspapers printed it: De Standaard, De Morgen, De Tijd, Le Soir and La Libre Belgique. “If the politicians can’t provide a solution, then involve the citizenry in the debate,” it said. “What ordinary people lack in knowledge, they make up in freedom.” After only a few short days, more than 10,000 people had signed the Manifesto, more than 800 volunteers registered, and thousands of donations streamed in.



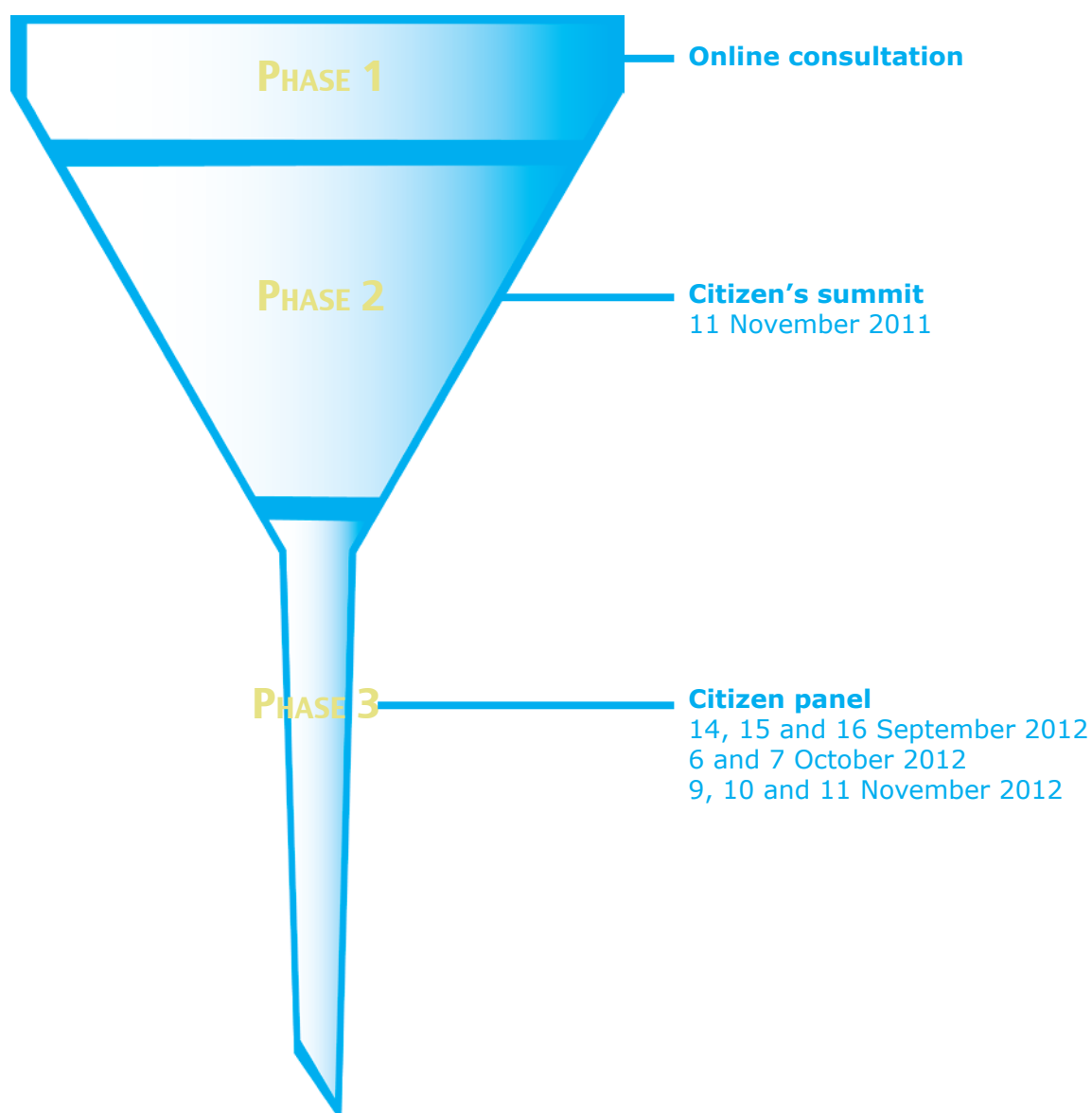
The Manifesto endorsed the following keywords: independence, openness, dignity, optimism, complementarity, participation, transparency, diversity, opportunity and dynamics. It was not conceived to save Belgium but to revitalise democracy – that was essential. The G1000 was planned as a generous and hopeful gesture from the citizenry to a democratic system in crisis.

■ DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Above all, the project wanted to prove the value of deliberative democracy in Belgium. How did it happen that in our country, where much knowhow about deliberative democracy was accumulated over the last decade, the federal level of government had never once used it, not even in times of crisis? Why did no one seek the advice of the King Baudouin Foundation, the Flemish Government’s Institution for Society & Technology or the Foundation for Future Generations? Had ignorance bred contempt?

The G1000 was fortunate to be adopted from the start by the Foundation for Future Generations, whose director was one of the project initiators. It was equally fortuitous that Min Reuchamps and Didier Caluwaerts were on board from day one: two young scientists whose recent theses about deliberative democracy had been internationally noted. After all, the G1000's method had to be rock-solid. The coaching of the process was entrusted to Levuur, a Leuven-based firm specialised in facilitation and participative dynamics.

ITS OUTLINES SOON BECAME APPARENT: THE G1000 WOULD CONSIST OF A THREE-STAGE PLAN: AN ONLINE CONSULTATION, A ONE-DAY CITIZENS' SUMMIT AND A CITIZEN PANEL OF THREE WEEKENDS. MONTHS WERE SPENT PREPARING THIS PROCESS – DAY AND NIGHT. CITIZENS HAD TO BE SELECTED AT RANDOM, FUNDS HAD TO BE FOUND, SCENARIOS WERE NEEDED, A COMMUNICATION PLAN HAD TO BE DRAWN UP, A SUFFICIENTLY BIG VENUE WITH CHILDCARE FACILITIES HAD TO BE FOUND, AND SO FORTH.



■ AN UNFORGETTABLE DAY IN THE AUTUMN

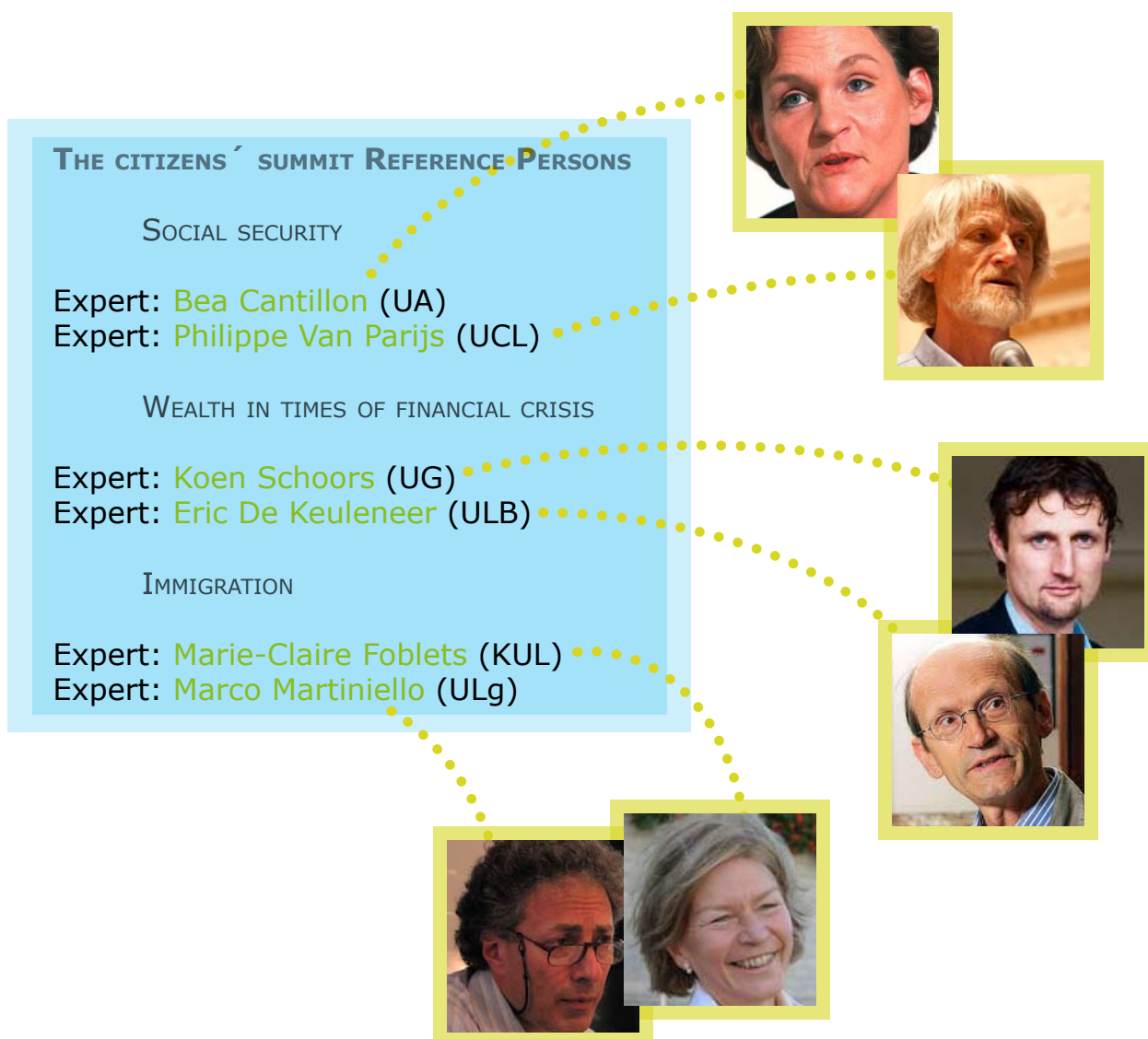


G100 IN NUMBERS



THEY STARTED FLOWING IN AT DAYBREAK ON 11 NOVEMBER 2011, AT THE TOUR & TAXIS SITE IN BRUSSELS: MORE THAN 700 PARTICIPANTS. THE YOUNG MOTHER NEXT TO THE RETIRED SOLDIER, THE FARMER FROM THE ARDENNES NEXT TO THE UNEMPLOYED CHILDMINDER FROM OSTEND, THE CEO ALONGSIDE THE HOMELESS MAN. CITIZENS OF A COUNTRY IN CRISIS. THEY WOULD DEBATE TOGETHER ALL DAY, AND WERE SUPPORTED BY ALMOST 200 CONVERSATION LEADERS, INTERPRETERS, TRANSLATORS, ASSISTANTS, AND RECEPTIONISTS. AS WELL AS THE CRUCIAL REFERENCE PERSONS, OF COURSE. THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PRESS WERE PRESENT IN MASSIVE NUMBERS.





THE DEBATES – ABOUT SOCIAL SECURITY, MIGRATION, WEALTH AND FINANCIAL CRISIS – LASTED FOR TEN HOURS. THE CITIZENS WERE SEATED ON TABLES OF TEN. SOME DISCUSSIONS WERE INTENSE, BUT THERE WERE NO REAL CONFLICTS. SIMULTANEOUSLY, THERE WERE G-OFFS – MINI-CITIZENS' SUMMITS FOR THOSE NOT SELECTED – AT MORE THAN 50 LOCATIONS ACROSS BELGIUM. AND CITIZENS AT HOME COULD EVEN JOIN THE DEBATE FROM THEIR COUCHES, THANKS TO THE G-HOME, AN ONLINE DEBATING MODULE PROVIDED, FREE OF CHARGE, BY THE BELGIAN FIRM SYNTHETRON. BY THE END OF THAT LONG DAY, EVERY PARTICIPANT REALISED: WE REPRESENT MORE THAN JUST A SPORADIC GESTURE IN THE VOTING BOOTH OR AN ANGRY SHOUT ON TWITTER. WE CAN DO MORE, MUCH MORE.

What was most apparent over the course of the day were the sincerity and openness citizens showed when listening to one another. Gut feelings and self-interest were transcended, precisely through debating together. The great fear traditionally held against providing more space for citizens is that citizens are so focused on their self-interest that all debate will become one big free-for-all. Or the NIMBY problem ('Not in my backyard': agreeing to a measure, as long as it doesn't affect me). The participants did change their minds during the 11 November 2011 conversations. Contact is crucial to democracy.

For the third phase, the organisers were looking for 32 citizens. They silently hoped that maybe fifty people from the G1000 would submit their candidacy, as they well realised they asked for a huge commitment: after all, participants would have to keep three entire weekends free. To their complete bafflement, almost five hundred (491) participants of the citizens' summit volunteered. The team had to some extent anticipated people's willingness to discuss big political issues at big event, but that the commitment of many of them would go further than that was a big surprise.

Results and methodological innovations aside, this was an extremely important conclusion: even in a country that has again a functioning government for more than a year, more and more citizens refuse the powerlessness they previously faced. Undoubtedly this continuing desire for civic involvement is a strong point for the future of democracy in Belgium.



INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY, A WORLDWIDE TREND

THE G1000 WANTS TO PUT DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY ON THE BELGIAN AGENDA. BUT THE NECESSITY OF DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL IS AN INTERNATIONAL PHENOMENON. METHODS THAT LET CITIZENS PARTICIPATE IN THE DEBATES THAT WILL SHAPE THEIR COUNTRIES' FUTURE ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED ALL OVER THE WORLD. THE G1000 CAN BE POSITIONED WITHIN AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF INITIATIVES THAT WISH TO INCREASE THE INPUT AND PARTICIPATION OF ORDINARY CITIZENS IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES.



British Columbia Citizens' Assembly, Canada



Citizens' Parliament, Australia



Constitutional Council, Iceland



We the Citizens, Ireland

The Web site Participedia (<http://www.participedia.net>) offers a neat overview of nearly 2,000 recent participative actions. Some famous examples include the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly in Canada (2004), the Citizens' Parliament in Australia (2009), the Constitutional Council in Iceland (2011) and We the Citizens in Ireland (2011). A map on the site proves just how widespread the phenomenon has become: the search for new forms of democratic involvement is not limited to Europe, but is also taking place in Africa, the Americas and Asia. This is a subject on policymakers' radar – abroad as well as here. In October 2012, the Council of Europe organised the World Forum for Democracy, which brought a large number of civil society organisations and policy representatives together to work on this same issue.

Participedia also demonstrates how diverse participative initiatives can be: they can be countrywide, regional, but also on the city or neighbourhood level. Organised debate has been proven to engender positive results at all levels and, while it may not be as evident as elections, has an unmistakeable influence on policy decisions.

Participative democracy is a growing, global movement that renews and buttresses our democracies.

■ DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY: THE RESULT OF YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

It is no coincidence that the desire for democratic innovation is so keenly felt all over the world today. Its wide support base suggests this is a new attempt to thwart a historically prevalent critique on representative democracy.

But what critique? “A democracy that only organises citizen participation through elections,” political scientists and philosophers have been postulating for years, “is extremely minimalistic.” Such a system is not sufficiently supported by the population; it demands from the citizens that they vote, but not that they think about what their vote means. A minimalist democracy does not call on its citizens to be adequately informed, and does not offer them the chance to clarify their votes. The freedom of interpretation government enjoys then becomes very big indeed. In a minimalist democracy, citizens may well give pointers, but they are not invited to discuss them systematically – not with their government, and not with other citizens either. In short, they are allowed to vote but not to speak.

The search for a solution is as old as this critique, but in recent years we have seen a number of new practices. What is happening could perhaps be called a deliberative turn. Deliberation is increasingly used to inform citizens of the interests, experiences and preoccupations of others. Unlike debate among politicians, deliberation does not necessarily result in a resounding victory for one opinion, and not always in a consensus either; it results in more understanding of the competing opinion, and a better grasp of the policy matter at hand. Contemporary thought about democracy is now permeated with the conviction that the deliberation procedure itself is at least as important as the final decision.



WHY NOW?

The social developments that increase the need for deliberative democracy are not exclusive to Belgium. Many countries are experiencing more vocal citizens, a starkly different media ecology, a loss of traditional status for political parties and the weakening of civil society organisations' legacy to function as a channel between the powerholders and the people.

Moreover, lessons have been learned from the democratic revolutions elsewhere in the world. The optimism the wave of democratisation in South America and Central and Eastern Europe engendered in the early nineties was soon replaced by insecurity. Are elections sufficient? They may well be at the heart of our democratic system, but on their own they are apparently unable to support it. Certain countries may well have organised, orderly elections, but they still cannot be quali-

fied as full democracies. In many post-conflict countries, elections and violence go hand in hand. One could perhaps use the phrase of American sociologist Michael Mann and call this “the dark side of democracy”. Elections create majorities and minorities, and therefore may induce conflict. In addition, political scientists sometimes refer to the problem of electoral fallacy: it is a false idea to think that free and fair elections alone are enough to sustain a democracy.

There is a growing awareness that in the well-established democracies, too, additional efforts are needed to deal with the tensions inherent to democracy. Deliberative democracy may be of use. Examples abroad show that deliberation does not only lead to better policy recommendations but also increases social cohesion among all members of society. When citizens actually speak together, they will more smoothly align themselves to the common interest. The voices of the many can help to enrich the decisions of the few.

■ A RICH VARIETY OF TECHNIQUES

Deliberative democracy is not confined to a single form or method. Techniques and scale of deliberation both vary. A few internationally renowned methods are:

THE CITIZEN PANEL:

a group of randomly selected citizens who formulate a recommendation over a short time, based on the testimonies of experts.

THE CONSENSUS CONFERENCE:

closely related to the citizen panel; a group of people who convene over two weekends to set out the agenda for a public forum of a few days' duration.

THE DELIBERATIVE POLL:

a randomly selected group of 250 to 500 citizens listens to experts, then enters into debate in groups of 15 people, and reconvenes afterwards to engage the experts in dialogue.

THE TOWN HALL MEETING:

500 to 5000 participants discuss in groups of 10 to 12 people, and their opinions are collected by way of an IT system.



These and other international examples are based on either random selection or self-selection. For the latter, people voluntarily register as candidate, expert or stakeholder. For example, self-selection was used in the case of the Participatory Budgeting process in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989, and was subsequently often applied in other Latin American cities; but it was used also for the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy, that was cited as a factor in the spectacular decline of crime levels in that city during the nineties.

The G1000 was based on various international examples and used a mixed method that essentially builds upon what political scientists call a “mini-public”. Instead of enlisting existing institutions or civil society organisations, a new group of citizens was convened: a sample of the entire population of the country. This group was small enough to make deliberation possible, but also large enough to enable a large variety of opinions to come to the fore.

The G1000 team was inspired by many international predecessors, and will pass on their own experience on in turn. Experiences were shared with top foreign researchers, organisations and networks: We the Citizens (Ireland), Netwerk Democratie (the Netherlands), Mehr Demokratie (Germany), Citizens for Europe (trans-European), Deliberative Democracy Consortium (United States), and The newDemocracy Foundation (Australia).

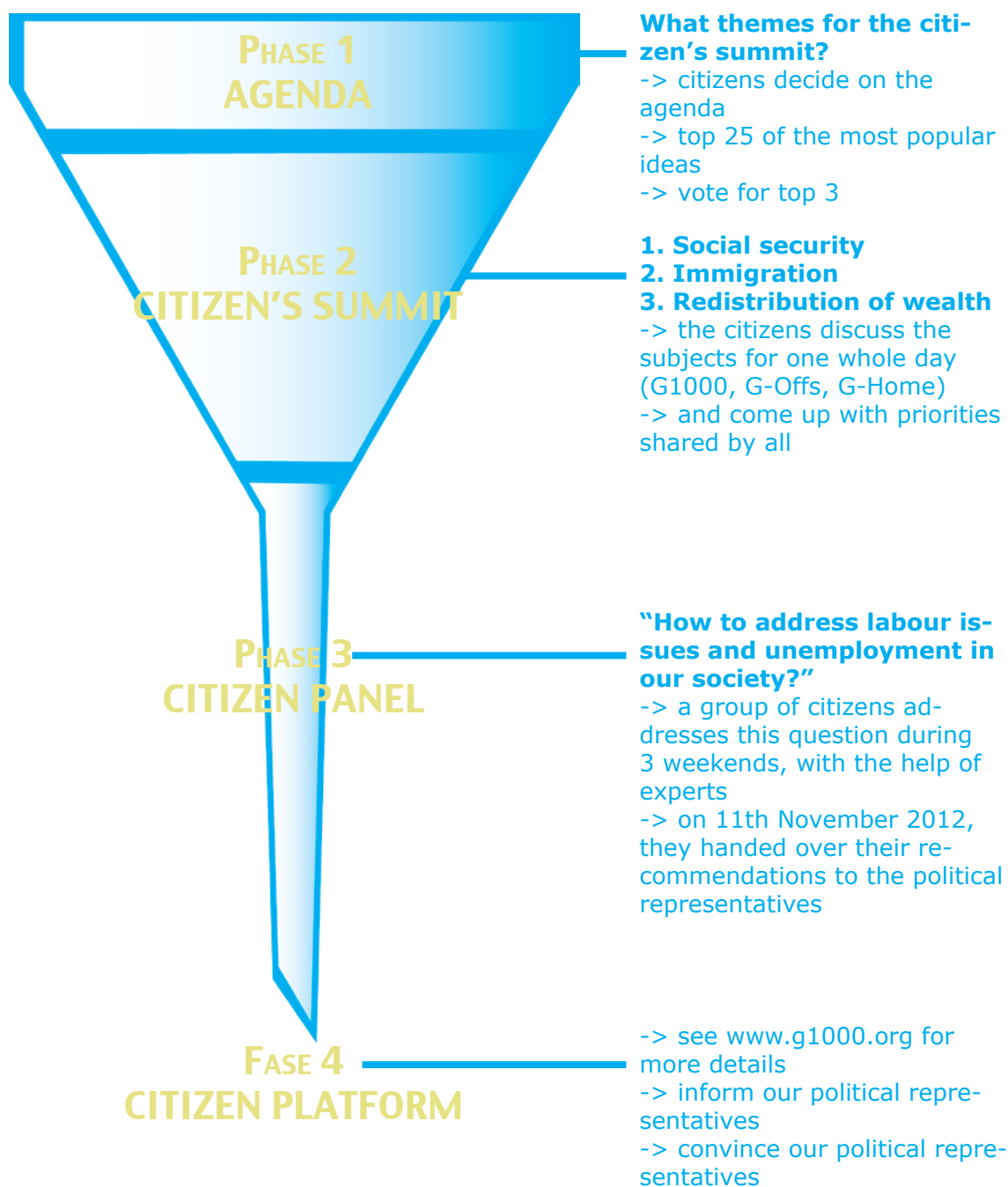


Deliberative democracy worldwide (www.participedia.net)

METHOD

THE G1000 CITIZENS' SUMMIT WAS THE MIDDLE PART OF A HOP-STEP-JUMP PERFORMANCE THAT MAKES USE OF THREE FORMS OF CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION – IT WAS THE "STEP".

Phase 1, the "hop", took place online. Citizens could bring up subjects and discussion themes they deemed worth including in the agenda of a citizens' summit. Each subject was then subjected to a vote. The three most popular subjects finally became the themes for discussion of the G1000 (Phase 2, the "step"). The findings were then deepened in the "jump" phase. 32 'delegates' concluded the process, assisted by facilitators and experts.





PHASE 1: CITIZENS SET THE AGENDA

Essentially, the G1000's agenda can be boiled down to one point: to enable citizens to speak together. But what should they talk about? Let them decide for themselves. Right from the start, the G1000 has been different from other deliberative exercises in that it enabled complete participation in setting the agenda. The citizens themselves decide what would be discussed – not the organisers.

From July 2011 onwards, everyone had the opportunity to voice their opinion about the subjects to be discussed at a citizens' summit, online, on the Web site of the G1000. Thousands of ideas resulted from this process. Those who proposed ideas were equally asked to attribute scores to others people's proposals. This vote accentuated the subjects that received broad popular support.

THE TOP 10 IDEAS OF FRENCH-SPEAKING CITIZENS

- The development of language immersion education (50/50), which should permit future generations to be at least bilingual, without much difficulty.
- Transparency and accessibility of the tax returns of all persons who take up public office (as in Denmark).
- We need to oblige the banks to go back to their core business – participating in the real economy – and stop them from speculating against it.
- Our political system should consist of far fewer levels of power. In Luxembourg, a small country with three languages, there are only two levels of power: federal and municipal.
- The media should mention the other communities, not to criticize but in order to understand them better. Why not set up a bilingual newscast?
- Political office should be time-limited, and it should be impossible to stand for office two consecutive times, in order to avoid electoral pressure and collusion.
- All administrative documents should be in the language the citizens request themselves, no matter what the region may be (which is what the private sector does).
- I believe that one of the big problems the summit should talk about is the proletarianization of more and more people in this country.
- Wouldn't a financial transaction tax allow the government to tax smaller incomes less, and to avoid the heightened precarity of the already suffering average class people?
- Schools where Dutch- and French-speaking students can interact should be set up again, even if the interaction is limited to break times.

THE TOP 10 IDEAS OF DUTCH-SPEAKING CITIZENS

- Such a big government, yet such a small country. Is that correct? Not if it were up to me.
- Elections should be synchronized. Now politicians are forming a government while they are preparing the municipal elections already, behind the scenes.
- Do citizens have to keep paying for the banks' malpractice? How can we ensure that we do not become the ultimate payer for this economic crisis?
- Why can't we make language education in the official national languages compulsory in every school in this country? That way, the different communities could communicate smoothly.
- What will we have to do to erase the prejudice between Walloons and Flemish forever, and become one solid community again?
- Shouldn't we resume working towards a shared public opinion by creating real bilingualism? I understand that the reluctance to introducing bi- or multilingual is considerable in Flanders, for historical reasons, but I still think we should dare to consider that option.
- Which policy areas that have been regionalised can be repatriated to the federal level, in order to ensure more efficient governance? Development aid and environmental norms come to mind.
- Any "more direct democracy" should be a part of Democracy 2.0. Technologically speaking, it's perfectly possible to involve the citizen directly, to a certain extent.
- When you vote for a party, you immediately also consent to the full programme of that party. Wouldn't it be better to vote for themes, rather than persons?
- Which positive measures can be taken to integrate foreigners smoothly in our society, and prevent their becoming futureless in deprived neighbourhoods?

IN OCTOBER 2011, ALL PROPOSALS WERE CLUSTERED IN ORDER TO CREATE A TOP 25: A LIST OF BEST-APPRECIATED THEMES. THIS LIST WAS RANDOMISED, AND BROUGHT ONLINE AGAIN. AT THIS STAGE, CITIZENS WERE ASKED TO SELECT THREE THEMES IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE.

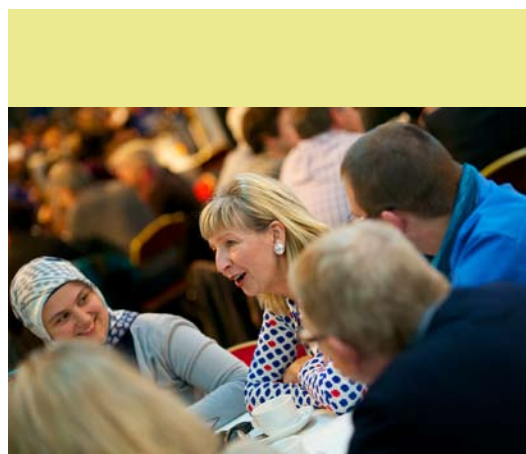
AT THE END OF THE FIRST PHASE, THE CITIZENS DECIDED THAT THE G1000 CITIZENS' SUMMIT WOULD DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING THEMES: SOCIAL SECURITY, WEALTH IN TIMES OF FINANCIAL CRISIS AND IMMIGRATION.



PHASE 2: MORE THAN 700 CITIZENS ENTER A DIALOGUE IN BRUSSELS

RECRUITMENT: WHO ARE THE PARTICIPANTS?

In the run-up to 11 November 2011, the most heated arguments were about the composition of the group of citizens who would participate in the citizens' summit. The main principles of the G1000 – inclusion and diversity – were broadly defended. The challenge that we were facing time and again was: “how can a group of around 1,000 citizens represent the Belgian population as closely as possible”. In order to guarantee the correct representation of the existing diversity in age, gender, religion, ethnicity, social status and so forth, the organization chose to recruit citizens at random, over the telephone. Because each Belgian citizen should have the same chance to be invited and let their voice be heard. We used quotas for language, gender, age and province of residence. Moreover, 10% of seats were reserved for socially vulnerable persons and groups who are hard to reach over the telephone, such as the homeless or illiterate. A broad range of civic organizations assisted us in relaying our invitation to this audience.



The numbers speak for themselves. Notwithstanding the beautiful weather and the railway strike on 10 November (which had knock-on effects until the next morning), and the fact that G1000 participants are not offered any financial compensation (excluding their travelling expenses for a round trip to Brussels), the number of attendees was confirmed to be 704 persons. 52% of attendees were female and 48% men; 61% Dutch- and 39% French-speaking. There were also 4 German speakers in attendance. A fair number of participants have a mother tongue that is not an official national language. The age of the attendees spanned the spectrum between 19 and 85 years old.

HOW DO CONVERSATIONS RUN THEIR COURSE?

The citizens enter a ten-hour dialogue. They discuss the three themes on the agenda around tables that seat 10 people, with one conversation leader per table. These people take charge of streamlining the citizens' deliberation. All of them are volunteers who received intensive training the day before the citizens' summit. Conversation leaders aside, reporters, interpreters and logistics assistants are active as well. They enable the participants to process large amounts of information

in a short time, and to use this information in discussions and debates. There are 32 bilingual tables, each of which can use the services of an interpreter. 30 tables are exclusively Dutch-speaking, 18 French-speaking and one is mixed French- and German-speaking.

Each subject is professionally introduced by two academic experts. They have their say, but not the final say, as there is a lengthy discussion around each table afterwards. Subsequently, the findings from each table are relayed to the central desk, which clusters them and projects them on large displays. Each participant can then indicate their preferences one last time with their individual voting devices. A short while later, the results of each round of voting are declared.



MORE THAN 1,000

Two side projects take place concurrently with the citizens' summit: the G-Home enables citizen discussion at home, thanks to software the Belgian firm Synthetron provided free of charge. The G-Offs bring citizens together of their own accord, to discuss the same subjects as the G1000 around local tables across the country. In order to ensure the simultaneous development of all debates, the Brussels summit is broadcast on the Net through live streaming. In the end, the group of participants who engaged in discussions through the G-Home or G-Offs is larger than the G1000 in Brussels.



PHASE 3: THE CITIZEN PANEL EXPANDS

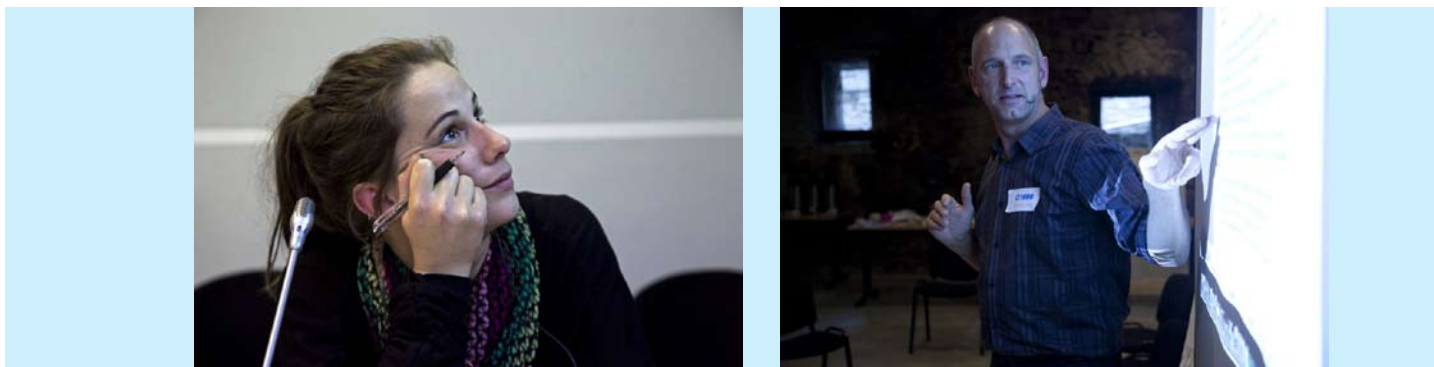
During Phase 3, the ideas that have been roughly sketched during the G1000 are expanded into concrete policy proposals.

The challenge is to select a diverse group of citizens to take charge of this task. On the day of the G1000, all participants are invited to register as candidates. Not fewer than 491 participants eventually register. From this group, 32 people are randomly selected, but again the balance regarding gender, language, province, age and education level is carefully kept.

Phase 3 has expansion as its goal. In order to guarantee this over a period of 3 weekends, one central, encompassing theme is selected. Prior to their first convention they, (each of the 32 citizen panel members) have the opportunity to voice and substantiate their preference. The theme distilled from these preferences is “How to address labour issues and unemployment in our society?”



The discussions unfold according to the citizen panel method, also called consensus conference method, which is often used in Belgium and abroad to work with a group of citizens towards recommendations about complex social questions. This method demands that participants immerse themselves in the subject by perusing relevant information and learning from experts. In order to write a final report, they discuss together, and listen to one another after they have been informed by the various short presentations of the experts.



At the end of the ride, the citizen panel members enter into a dialogue with the governmental actors in charge, by way of their recommendations. On 11 November 2012 – one year after the G1000 – they submit a report, in which they offer the government their opinions and insights.

The citizens extend a hand to politics. On the occasion of the citizens' summit closing ceremony, the participants welcome the seven Belgian parliament chairpersons. André Flahaut, Chairperson of the Federal Parliament, praises the work and says: "We, politicians, do not enjoy a monopoly on ideas."



Pictured, from left to right: André Flahaut, Chairperson of the Chamber of Deputies, Sabine de Bethune, Chairperson of the Senate, Françoise Dupuis, Chairperson of the Parliament of the Brussels Capital Region, Jean-Charles Luperto, Chairperson of the Parliament of the French Community, Jan Peumans, Chairperson of the Flemish Parliament and Emily Hoyos, then-Chairperson of the Walloon Parliament. (Ferdel Schröder, Chairperson of the Parliament of the German Community, visited the citizens' summit earlier that day.)

■ FUNDRAISING AND FINANCING

■ FUNDRAISING? JUST DO IT!

THANKS EVER SO MUCH TO THE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO SUPPORTED US! WHETHER IT WAS WITH ONE EURO OR THOUSANDS AT A TIME, WITH SOFTWARE, FOOD, FLOWERS, MATERIAL OR LABOUR SUPPORT... THE **G1000** WAS ONLY POSSIBLE THANKS TO THEM.

Amassing the necessary funding for the G1000 has been a rather atypical story. It's unique to see organisers take charge of the financing of their own project. As the G1000 is a completely civic and independent initiative, crowdfunding seemed like the most natural financing method. Natural, yes, but not self-evident...

Imagine two people who know nothing whatsoever about fundraising, an organisation no one has ever heard of as it has just been set up, and a 460,000 euro budget that needs to be found within six months. Then, also imagine that it normally takes two to three years to build up the confidence capital necessary to start generating significant donations.

Cato Léonard is an expert in stakeholder engagement and marketing, David Van Reybrouck is a writer. But there they are off for their own road-movie... You might say to yourself: "These people were totally insane!" Which is, in fact, exactly what Cato muttered under her breath when she joined the team. But as for the rest of the G1000 project, we made up for the lack of time, experience and means by enthusiasm, enthusiasm and more enthusiasm.

Benoît Derenne (director of the Foundation for Future Generations, which has adopted the G1000): "Normally, this couldn't have worked out. But as neither David nor Cato knew the rules of the game, they charged into the fundraising business with the energy of the very naive! Without this extraordinary explosion of effort, they could never have made it. They were so convinced of their cause that people were quite literally shaken up. As the director of a Foundation for 15 years now, I can tell you that people don't often give you 10,000 euro for just an idea!"

■ A COMMUNICATION AND MICRO-FINANCING STORY

Word of the G1000 had to be spread if any contributors were to be found. "Our strategy was very simple: to generate maximum media attention and hope for sufficient support", Cato explains. She and David knocked at all the doors of all the media outfits in the kingdom. "And surprisingly, we were often received very graciously! For the first time in my career, I found myself in a negotiation position where I had nothing to give back. The media supported us, with articles or publicity space, because they liked our initiative. But we also received free support from Marc Michils, the CEO at Saatchi & Saatchi, a publicity firm, a billboard firm, a film direction outfit and 8 famous Belgians who joined us for a cinema commercial made by an audio-visual firm... as well as so many others."

The public at large, private enterprise, organisations and other foundations soon followed, with no less than 3,018 gifts of 1 to 500 euro and 41 gifts of more than 500 euro (of which a third came from citizens, a third from organisations and another third from private firms). They all donated on an individual and anonymous basis, in order to avoid the risk of the G1000 being “recuperated” for another cause. And besides all that, we set up a text action with the support of 4 mobile operators and asked a number of cultural personalities (artists, theatres, musicians) to support us, which they did by donating one evening’s revenue.

Let’s not forget the valuable gifts in kind we received either! From the confectionery and candy makers who offered us the necessary sweets, to the floral decoration club who pillaged the grounds of all nearby market gardeners to provide the flowers at the citizens’ summit and the supermarkets who donated the citizen panel’s beverages, to all contractors who offered us reduced rates. We must have received more than 100,000 euro in kind.



■ CIVIL SOCIETY: A GREAT SUPPORT BASE

Unlike the media, who were quite curious about the results of the G1000, the actors within civil society quickly became interested in the process. Participative processes are not a great unknown for trade unions, health insurance companies, youth organisations, women’s groups, environmental NGOs, or chambers of commerce, as they sometimes already use these processes. And their publications have hundreds of thousands of readers. So night after night, Cato and David, but also Benoît Derenne or Dave Sinardet (political scientist and VUB/UA professor, one of the founding members) organised conferences to introduce the principle of the G1000 to a growing audience over and over again...

■ “TUPPERWARE PARTY”

Cato had an idea when she told herself that many influential people might read the newspapers, but respond better if they are contacted directly.

Cato: “In order to win time, and also create an atmosphere of exchange, we used the Tupperware party principle. Did I have a CEO or a trade union leader in my network? Well then, I would ask them to open their Rolodexes for me, by inviting their friends to a private meeting in their living room. We did that to garner funds, of course, but equally to hear their opinions and see their reaction when they heard about our project. These evenings were a real learning experience!”

■ AND OUR BALANCE SHEET?

The 11 November 2011 citizens' summit was held when the budget hadn't been nailed completely yet... Benoît: "Some contributors did not keep their promises, but we had inked up the announced amounts in our budget estimates... We were luckily able to integrate the G1000 into the Foundation for Future Generations' programme quite quickly, so that the Foundation could play a buffer role between income and outlay."

Today, the budget for Phase 3 has been fully found... but we are already launching the fundraising campaign for the next phase. In 2013, the G1000 aspires to become a permanent platform for democratic innovation and citizens' deliberation.

Cato: "We have been astonished by the mobilizing force of the G1000 more than once. And we take that as proof that our ideas are consistently supported by the population, who also want to reinvigorate democracy..."



And as we remain faithful to our principle never to miss an opportunity for more crowdfunding, we could hardly wrap up this chapter without asking for your support...

SUPPORT THE G1000!

ALL DONATIONS ARE WELCOME ON THE ACCOUNT OF THE FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS:

523-0812345-45

IBAN BE44 5230 8123 4545

BIC TRIOBEBB

(INDICATE 'DONATION G1000 - FFG' IN THE STRUCTURED MESSAGE FIELD)

GIFTS OF 40 EURO AND UP (ON AN ANNUAL BASIS) QUALIFY AS FISCAL DEDUCTIBLES.



THE BUDGET

PROJECT COORDINATION	€ 27 903
STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT	€ 61 921
FINANCIAL COSTS	€ 23 534
ONLINE PROCESS	€ 19395
RECRUITING	€ 26172
FACILITATORS' EXECUTION AND ASSISTANCE (MANUAL, ETC.)	€ 69259
TRANSPORT, CATERING, HOTELS	€ 117428
LOGISTICS & AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA	€ 90418
INTERPRETERS	€ 3388
MISCELLANEOUS	€ 9535
TOTAL	€ 448953

ORGANISATION

THE G1000 TEAM IS AN UNORGANIZED ORGANIZATION... NO OFFICES, NO MEETING ROOMS, ORGANIZATION CHARTS OR BUSINESS CARDS. IT IS A FLAT AND OPEN ORGANIZATION THAT SOLELY RELIES ON THE EFFORT OF ITS VOLUNTEERS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW EXTERN CONSULTANTS IN CHARGE OF PROCESS COACHING. THESE VOLUNTEERS MOVE MOUNTAINS OF WORK FOR FREE, WITHOUT RESERVATIONS, AND WITH THE BEST CHEER IMAGINABLE.



How do you apply as a volunteer for this team? Being a bit daft is a plus: kitchen sink experimentation in the field of democratic innovation requires some willingness to deviate from business as usual.

A small core of motivated people, citizens who wanted to engage in a fairly mad initiative, quickly formed around the two citizens who had the initial idea to organize a citizens' summit. But it quickly became apparent that this core could use quite a bit of support. Mass support, even! And, moreover, free of charge if at all possible.

During the first phase of the G1000, starting in Spring 2011, the core group (founders and organizers) of the G1000 team looked for people who were interested in the G1000 and propagating the idea in order to find new support. Over the summer, many information meetings were held across the country: from Brussels to Eupen, Antwerp and Bruges and back, to Liege and Namur. These meetings, where core group members answered questions from the audience, had the goal of informing people and recruiting G1000 'ambassadors'. Concurrently, in early Autumn 2011, help with concrete matters was sought. The citizens' summit of 11 November 2011 did not only have to be held, it needed some preparation too.



Who sets the scene up – and who dismantles it afterwards? Who can supervise the commuter service between Brussels North station and Tour & Taxis? Who can offer stop-over accommodation (we organized Citizens' Bed&Breakfasts)? Who helps with serving food, and who welcomes the participants? Are there any parking spaces we can use? Who is able to interpret, preferably from French to Dutch and Dutch to French, and all day long?

The G100 team organized itself in five specific sections: methodology, logistics, communication, fundraising and volunteers. And all tasks were divided as such. Every two or three weeks, the whole team would confer in Brussels for a general meeting, but each section's key players would hold weekly cockpit conferences, often over Skype. In the week preceding the 11 November citizens' summit, every day started with a cockpit conference, as there was always so much left to be arranged.

During one of these cockpit conferences, the idea was brought up – and swiftly approved – to put childcare facilities and a Muslim prayer room in place (11 November 2011 was after all a Friday). They even managed to arrange a 'cabbie' in Liege, who would pick the country's eldest participant up at 7a.m. sharp in Burg-Reuland (in the German-speaking part of the country) and bring her home at 8p.m.... (a 360 km drive).

And then we haven't mentioned yet the conversation leaders – in G1000 jargon, the "table facilitators". These volunteers professionally and excellently took charge of a very important task: making the discussions at the more than 80 tables flow efficiently. Volunteering and professionalism are not always contradictory terms!

So many citizens registered for this mammoth project that, unfortunately, not everyone who wanted to could contribute... After all, no one in the core group had ever been in charge of a company that suddenly, from one day to the other, had more than 800 employees. Many e-mail requests to volunteer were never individually answered, as there was no such thing as a human resources department. But not to worry: the madness of Phase 3 was yet to explode!

For this phase, the G1000 team chose another method of participation search. Instead of randomly calling for volunteers, they explicitly summarized what kind of tasks needed to be fulfilled. In the monthly newsletters and on Facebook, detailed calls for help were posted: "The G1000 is looking for a graphic designer", "Wanted: data analyst", and so forth. These calls were immediately answered. The core group was looking for more specific profiles: multilingual translators (to Dutch, French, German and English), methodology assistants who could validate the intermediate findings, communication personnel to give the G100 a voice, reporters for the three weekends, editors, Web designers, coordinators, designers and assistants.

So there remains but one pregnant question: who's the boss of the G1000 team? There isn't one. The core group (which varies in its composition and kind of meetings as the phases progress) decides in an organic way. Which is funny, because it is comparable with the citizen panel's proceedings: listening, talking, opining, sleeping on an idea, seeking outside advice, entering dialogue again and reaching a consensus. And when it becomes necessary, time itself can be a decisive factor.

MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK. AT THIS MOMENT – OCTOBER 2012 – MORE THAN 80 PEOPLE ARE WORKING TOGETHER ON AN ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY BASIS. THIS EXPERIMENT WOULD NOT HAVE SUCCEEDED WITHOUT THEM. AND ALL OF THAT IS THANKS TO THE ONE SHARED PREOCCUPATION OF ALL THOSE VOLUNTEERS TOGETHER: THE QUALITY OF OUR DEMOCRACY! AND EXACTLY THIS EMOTION WILL CREATE DEMOCRACY.

The G1000 was initially the private project of a few citizens, but it was co-opted into the Foundation for Future Generations – a Belgian civic foundation with more than ten years' experience in citizen participation – as early as June 2011. This had the advantage of shifting the financial responsibility for the project to a solid foundation with years of experience. On a business level, there were nothing but advantages either, in working together with a competent organization which has considerable know-how regarding citizen participation. As such, the G1000 will be able to continue to operate from within this foundation for the coming years.



Cécile Leclercq

"It's absolutely unique in the sense that these are actually citizens who have decided on launching this initiative, not NGOs or other societies."



Elio Di Rupo, Prime Minister of Belgium

'A healthy democracy does not only need a well-functioning Parliament and proportional political representation, but also instances of direct democracy. A rich fabric of NGOs and civil society organizations already ensures that democracy stays alive between elections, but I also applaud every other constructive initiative that wants to increase citizen participation and bring innovation to our democracy from below, as long as it is conducted in a respectful way. Besides that, politicians also have to innovate. And we can do this by going back to basics: by listening, meeting citizens face-to-face, no matter if it's at the local market day or over one of its digital equivalents social media have provided us with today.'



Hadja Lahbib,
journalist RTBF

"Whether you are for or against this initiative, it remains interesting to see how the G1000 succeeded in mobilizing people over political themes and the future of the country. To have 1000 people reflect on it in a time in which so many seem to have lost interest in politics."

Karel Van Eetvelt, chairman of the union of the self-employed, Unizo

"I am a player myself in civil society organizations, and sadly I can see commitment to these civil society organizations cave in. Even while we play a role in democracy. That's why I find it interesting that other ways such as the G1000 are emerging to channel such opinions and convey them to the government."



THE RESULTS

THE VALUE OF THE **G1000** COMPRISES OF 3 COMPONENTS: METHODIC INNOVATION, FORMULATING PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS, AND PUTTING THE NECESSITY OF DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION ON THE AGENDA.

■ THE G1000 PUTS THE NEED FOR DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION ON THE AGENDA

WHAT DETERMINES WHETHER YOU ARE SUCCESSFUL OR NOT? THE PURPOSE YOU AIMED AT. THE G1000 WANTED PRIMARILY TO PUT THE DEBATE ON DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION ON THE PUBLIC AGENDA. THAT MISSION HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED.

The timing was right. The G1000 surfed along on the undercurrent that branches further off worldwide and reaches citizens: they want participation in democracy. The G1000 brought this undercurrent to the surface in Belgium and put it on the map.

Because of its sudden visibility the G1000 set off a lot of new initiatives. The young organization was invited all over the country to talk about their experiment on deliberative democracy: at meetings of the Union of Flemish Cities and Municipalities, at the Union of Flemish Provinces, the Walloon parliament, civil society organizations, think tanks and at universities. After the citizens' summit the number of civic participation initiatives rose swiftly, mainly in Flanders. There was a K35 in Kortrijk, a G100 in Kuurne, a G100 about the future of education, another G100 at a high school in Leuven and Ieders Stem Telt, a project aimed at getting vulnerable groups involved in debate about the elections. In the Netherlands there was also a G500 en A Day of Hundred. Indeed, citizens' participation is a challenge that does not stop at the borders of a country. The G1000 exchanged ideas with several European countries.

Remarkable too is that the G1000 was praised by very heterogeneous communities: the initiative was nominated as Product of the Year by the Marketing Foundation, the weekly Knack nominated the two Flemish spokespersons - Francesca Vanthielen and David Van Reybrouck - for Personality of the Year. Van Reybrouck also received the biennial Van Acker award from the foundation of the same name and Didier Caluwaerts, one of the methodological founders of the G1000, won a European prize, the Jean Blondel PhD Award from the European Consortium for Political Research for his PhD that lies at the base of this project.

Meanwhile a number of books and articles were published on the G1000, also in very different contexts.

The Manifesto of the G1000 was published in various news outfits

In Dutch: De Standaard, De Tijd, De Morgen, 11 June 2011

In French: Le Soir, La Libre Belgique, 11 June 2011

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Master and bachelor theses

Mariem Boustani (UCL), masterthesis

Anne-Sophie Igot (UCL), masterthesis

Vincent Jacquet (ULg), masterthesis

Ken Lambeets (KULeuven), masterthesis

Benjamin Rieder (UGent), bachelorthesis

FINALLY, THE G1000 WILL ALWAYS DEVOTE ITSELF TO ADDITIONAL FORMS OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION BY COMBINING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND CAREFULLY-CHOSEN ACTION AND PROJECTS, BASED ON ALREADY TESTED METHODS OR NEW ONES (SUCH AS ONLINE ACTIONS). THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY STARTS IN LEUVEN ON THE 13TH OF DECEMBER 2012.



THE G1000 PUTS SOCIO-ECONOMIC PRIORITIES ON THE AGENDA

WHAT WAS THE G1000 OUTPUT ON CONTENT? THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITIZEN PANEL ARE STATED FURTHER ON IN THIS REPORT, BUT EACH OF THE THREE PHASES YIELDED RESULTS THAT SHAPED THE AGENDA FOR THE NEXT PHASE.



PHASE 1



During the first phase, the online consultation, several thousands of ideas were submitted; those who visited the site ranked them in order to reach a top 25. Through the internet people could vote for their topics of preference from the top 25, of which three were selected for the citizens' summit: social security, immigration, and the distribution of wealth at a time of crises. Even in the midst of a constitutional and institutional crisis, citizens were mainly concerned about social-economic issues. Clearly citizens and political negotiators were not on the same wavelength.



PHASE 2

During the second phase, the citizens' summit, the participants talked about the three selected themes. The aim of these talks was not finding consensus but get a better view on the most important elements of the topics at hand. The participants first explained why they had accepted the invitation to participate in the event, which simultaneously explained their presence. The results were: 63% of them wanted to show their personal civic commitment; 52% mentioned their worry about the crisis of democracy and representative politics; 43% argued that they participated in order to renew democracy; 35% participated out of curiosity and because they didn't want to miss an event like this; 29% mentioned they were interested in the process of dialogue in diversity; and 21% wanted to contribute to repairing the dialogue between Belgium's various communities.

Although it is impossible to get to the bottom of these issues in one day, even a day of intense work, the G1000 still managed to capture a powerful signal given by the citizens: for the sake of society are willing to suggest correcting measures even when they do not entirely correspond with their own self-interests. The results of this phase can be summarized in four key terms: a sense for equality, originality, reasonableness, and balance.

EQUALITY? The voting results on social security show how people esteem equality: most valued measure concerning health care is 'guaranteeing equality and equality of access to the system' (45%), concerning the reform of pensions is 'harmonizing regulations' (23%) and concerning childcare benefits is 'same amount of childcare benefits for 1,2 or 3 children' (45%). 'Lower corporate taxes but equal for everybody' scored highest concerning distribution of welfare.

REASONABLENESS? On a delicate subject like immigration a desire for assimilation requirements ('integration duty', 31%) is counterbalanced by a demand for 'quicker procedures and objective criteria' (26%) and an appeal for 'better integration facilities' (21%) and more 'development assistance' (20%). Radical ideas like 'foreigners out' or 'all borders open' didn't get general support.

ORIGINALITY? Here are a few ideas worth considering: 'no childcare benefits but children checks' (24% of the votes concerning childcare benefits), 'guaranteed basic income for everybody' (15% of the votes concerning unemployment) and 'smaller packages for drugs' (21% of the votes concerning health care).

BALANCE can mainly be discerned in proposals coming out of the discussions on 'distribution of wealth in times of financial crisis'. The participants transcend classical left- versus right-wing thinking. 'Lowering corporate taxes', the most valued (43%) and so-called most neoliberal measure, gets counterbalanced by a radical measure meant to create equality: 'abolish all loopholes'. 'Introducing a Tobin tax on financial transactions' (31%), a measure that for years has been known as an explicit left wing theme, comes in second. The third proposition is: 'lower costs on labour, especially for specific categories' (27%) and 'more green taxes' (15%) ends on four. These are propositions that have liberal, social as well as green touches. Overall, all proposals show a high level of balance.

From the first intermediate results emerges a clear picture: citizens who are engaged in dialogue with each other, are able to reason sensibly and discriminatively for the common good.

These voting results, which are not more than preliminary conclusions from a full day of deliberation were pooled with the ideas that came out of the G-homes and G-offs in order to form a solid basis for the third phase of the G1000, the citizen panel. All the ideas were analyzed and summarised to help the 32 citizens to select a topic they would further elaborate during three weekend-long deliberative meetings. The G1000 has thus been a process in which each phase feeds into the next.

Werkloosheid / Chômage

Kies 2 maatregelen / Choisissez 2 mesures

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 36% | 1. Werkloosheidsuitkeringen beperken in de tijd
Limiter les allocations au chômage dans le temps |
| 35% | 2. Begeleiding van werkzoekenden op maat van het individu
Offrir un accompagnement sur mesure aux demandeurs d'emploi |
| 38% | 3. Werk aantrekkelijk maken door minimumlonen te verhogen
Rendre le travail plus attrayant en augmentant les salaires de base |
| 16% | 4. Meer en betere controle op zwartwerk
Plus et mieux de contrôle sur le travail en noir |
| 9% | 5. Betaalbare kinderopvang
Accueil des enfants plus accessible financièrement |
| 15% | 6. Gegarandeerd basisinkomen voor iedereen
Revenus de base garantis pour tout le monde |

Pensioenen / Pensions

Kies 2 maatregelen / Choisissez 2 mesures

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 18% | 1. Einde van de beroepsloopbaan versoepelen, geleidelijke uitstap
Aménager les fins de carrière en assouplissant, fin de carrière graduelle |
| 18% | 2. Werken met een basispensioen en rekening houden met de individuele situatie
Créer un socle minimal et permettre à chacun de le compléter individuellement |
| 15% | 3. Het systeem van brugpensioenen herzien of afschaffen
Revoir/supprimer le système de prépension |
| 23% | 4. Statuten harmoniseren en het systeem transparanter en gelijk maken
Harmoniser les et rendre le système plus transparent et plus égalitaire |
| 10% | 5. Systeem financieren vanuit diversere bronnen: inkomen uit kapitaal, 2 ^e en 3 ^e pijler
Financer le système en diversifiant les sources: revenus du capital, 2 ^e et 3 ^e pilier |
| 16% | 6. Rekening houden met speciale situaties: zware beroepen, thuiswerkende vrouwen
Tenir compte de situations particulières: métiers pénibles, femmes au foyer... |

Kinderbijslag / Allocations familiales

Kies 2 maatregelen / Choisissez 2 mesures

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 31% | 1. Meer kindergeld voor lagere inkomens
Allocations plus grandes pour les revenus les plus bas |
| 45% | 2. Zelfde bedrag aan kindergeld voor kind 1, 2, 3...
Un même montant pour le 1 ^r , 2 ^e , 3 ^e enfant |
| 24% | 3. Geen kindergeld maar kinderchèques om specifieke kosten van kinderen te
Remplacer les allocations familiales par un chèque-enfant pour couvrir des frais spécifiques |

Gezondheidszorg / Soins de santé

Kies 2 maatregelen / Choisissez 2 mesures

- 35%** 1. Garanderen van gelijkheid en gelijkheid van toegang tot het systeem.
Garantir l'égalité et l'égalité de l'accès au système.
- 27%** 2. Hogere belastingen voor de farmaceutische sector.
Taxes plus hautes sur les industries pharmaceutiques
- 17%** 3. Afschaffen van de verloning per prestatie.
Abolition du système de rémunération par prestations
- 31%** 4. Overconsumptie tegengaan door de huisarts centraal te plaatsen.
Réduire l'excès de consommation en remettant le généraliste au centre.
- 21%** 5. Kleinere geneesmiddelenverpakkingen en bewustmakingscampagne tegen overconsumptie
Conditionnements plus petits, campagne de sensibilisation pour réduire la consommation.
- 14%** 6. Vereenvoudiging, voorbereid door een raad van burgers, naar participatief model
Simplification préparée par un conseil de citoyens selon un processus participatif

Welvaart verdelen / Répartir les richesses

Kies 2 maatregelen / Choisissez 2 mesures

- 43%** 1. Hervorming vennootschapbelasting: verlagen maar alle achterpoortjes afschaffen
Réforme de l'impôt des sociétés: réduire mais en fermant toutes les échappatoires
- 27%** 2. De kosten op arbeid verlagen, zeker voor specifieke categorieën
Réduire le coût du travail, certainement pour des catégories spécifiques
- 31%** 3. Tobintaks: taks op financiële transacties
Taxe Tobin: taxes sur les transactions financières
- 15%** 4. Meer 'groene' belasting: belasting op zaken die het milieu vervuilen
Plus de taxation 'verte': taxes sur les activités qui polluent l'environnement
- 19%** 5. Splitsen van zakenbanken en spaarbanken
Scinder les banques d'affaires et les banques d'épargne
- 16%** 6. Europees financieel beleid als tegenwicht t.o.v. Internationale financiële groepen
Gouvernance financière eur. (contre-pouvoir aux groupes financiers internationaux)

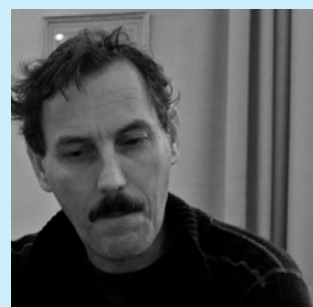
IMMIGRATIE / IMMIGRATION

Kies 3 principes/ Choisissez 3 principes

- 31%** 1. Plicht tot integratie / Devoir d'intégration
- 26%** 2. Snelle procedures & objectieve criteria / Procédures rapides & critères objectifs
- 20%** 3. Ontwikkelingssamenwerking! / Coopération au développement!
- 21%** 4. Integratiemogelijkheden verbeteren / Améliorer les possibilités
- 18%** 5. Strikter beleid (beperken, sanctioneren) / Politique plus stricte (limiter, sanctionner)
- 14%** 6. Bruggen tussen de culturen / Jeter des ponts entre les cultures
- 25%** 7. Europees geharmoniseerd beleid / gouvernance européenne harmonisée
- 8%** 8. Rekruteren volgens noden arbeidsmarkt / Recruter selon les besoins du marché du travail
- 13%** 9. Criminelen terugsturen / Renvoyer les criminels

THE CITIZEN PANEL FINAL REPORT

This English chapter is for informational purposes only; the original texts produced, agreed upon and signed by the citizen panel are the French and Dutch versions.



HOW TO ADDRESS LABOUR ISSUES AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN OUR SOCIETY?

■ FOREWORD

During the third phase, which ends the pilot experience of the G1000, the findings from the citizens' summit of 11 November 2011 served as the basis for the deliberations of the citizen panel that has enhanced the reflection.

But, who are these citizens? The 32 participants were randomly selected from a list of more than 491 applicants from all over the country and who had attended the citizens' summit, G-Offs or G-Home.

Why 32? Because 32 is a number large enough to ensure both maximal diversity and optimal group dynamics, which is necessary to explore a complex issue. Above all, the composition of such citizen panels is usually based on a multiple of 8 in order to reach these two variables.

What did they talk about? The main topic comes from the citizens' summit. In fact, the 32 participants chose the topic among the various topics discussed during the summit. "How to address labour issues and unemployment in our society?" has become their starting question. This question also relates to the other topics of the G1000 such as the distribution of welfare in times of economic crisis and immigration.

How did the deliberations take place? To participate in the discussion, no prior knowledge was required. Of course, the participants could look for information, but it was not at all compulsory. What was important was, on the one hand, their will to contribute to the discussion with the background of their personal experiences and, on the other hand, our commitment to provide a methodological framework able to help them in their reflections. Our help was also intended to guide them towards experts in order to enable them collectively to reach common knowledge base, necessary for the drafting of their recommendations.

The three weekends were 14-15-16 September (in the Flemish Parliament, Brussels), on 6-7 October (in the Walloon Parliament, Namur) and 9-10-11 November 2012 (in the House of the Parliamentarians, Brussels). Two participants had to leave the citizen panel before the end due to personal reasons.

We leave the citizen panel the opportunity to present you with its reflections and recommendations.

■ INTRODUCTION

About a year ago, we were randomly selected to participate in the citizens' summit of the G1000, the largest citizen deliberation ever in Belgium. The topics of the discussion were still to be determined by the votes from the public, but we already felt it was going to be a full learning experience.

So it was. On 11 November 2011, we discovered another way to engage in social life. We discovered that we, too, could have our say even as "ordinary citizens". Needless to say, we were candidates for the next phase, the citizen panel.

During the first two weekends, we learned about the topic that we had chosen and that we were to explore, that is "How to address labour issues and unemployment in our society?". We first gathered information about this vast and complex topic and on this basis we defined six main dimensions which we wanted to work on. There are:

- **ACTING FOR A FAIRER REMUNERATION OF WORK**
- **HOW TO USE THE COST OF LABOUR TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT**
- **ASSISTING LABOUR MARKET ACCESS (IN THE FRAMEWORK OF A SOCIAL EUROPE)**
- **WORK AND OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS**
- **WORK OF QUALITY FOR QUALITY OF LIFE**
- **WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION**

Then, we made a list of all the questions we wanted to ask the experts during the third weekend. We were not afraid to abandon frequently mooted ideas in order to propose our own reflections.

The following pages are the report of our work. They present the recommendations that we want to submit to our political representatives.

The topics and the first ideas are the results of the first weekend, the opinions and questions for the experts of the second weekend, the recommendations of the third. Each weekend, there were experts, but especially during the final weekend. Their input was important, but we are the authors of the final recommendations.

We would like to send a hopeful message to our political representatives: we believe that citizens can bring added value to our democracy. This report is an illustration of our will to commit and our ability to do so.

We are grateful to all the people who contributed to make our citizen endeavor possible.

■ THE CITIZEN PANEL

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SAM BASTIAENS
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BART DE RIJCKE
CÉCILE DELVAL
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VERONIQUE HENNISSSEN
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ANNA MISSINNE
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■ 1. ACTING FOR A FAIRER REMUNERATION OF WORK

■ DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME: WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO ADDRESS?

We perceive too big of a gap between low and high income. Furthermore, we suspect this gap will continue to widen. We think that this will be a problem for our society and could increase the social tension.

In this chapter, we explore the truth of this starting point and if so, how can we narrow down this income gap.

■ OUR FIRST THOUGHTS, OPINIONS AND IDEAS ON THIS TOPIC

We assume that the income gap is related to the welfare of any society. In countries where this gap is narrow (eg. Scandinavia), it seems that the average level of welfare is higher.

In our opinion, the income gap in Belgium should be narrowed down. This would mitigate tensions and increase general welfare. The number of people in situations of insecurity or poverty would decrease. The wealth created in our country would be better distributed between everyone and would be less monopolized by the richest.

We observe that some mechanisms have the effect of widening instead of narrowing the gap between the lowest incomes and the highest incomes:

- The income gap, in absolute terms, widens because of the indexation mechanism, which has a limited impact on the increase of the lowest wages.
- The income gap widens because the managers reduce the lowest wages and are rewarded by higher wages.
- The imbalance between labour costs here and in foreign countries has a negative impact on the basic income. Even in Europe the free circulation of goods & services challenges competition, since the levels of social security are not the same everywhere. However, consumer pressure (faire trade) may lead companies not to outsource their production (e.g. provider of IKEA mattresses).

In order to narrow the income gap, we need first to raise the lowest wages. It was also said that high wages are less problematic as long as lowest wages provide sufficient incomes (but this is contradictory with the idea that the income gap – and not absolute income – is related to welfare).

- Low wages must be raised in order to ensure that working is more attractive than staying unemployed.
- In order to raise the basic wages, labour costs should be dealt with. Labour costs

are too high.

Meanwhile, we need to think of how to limit excessively high incomes.

- One possible way is the participation of workers in the decision making, especially on wages.

■ WHAT QUESTIONS DO WE HAVE FOR THE REFERENCE PERSONS WHO HELP US FORM OUR OPINION?

- To what extent is the income gap related to welfare?
 - How do we measure welfare and the income gap?
 - Are there any comparative studies between Belgium and other countries?
 - How has Belgium evolved in the last 10 years in terms of incomes, income gap, buying power, welfare?
- How does the index work? What is its effect on the income gap? What is its effect on wage scales?
- What is the power of an agreement on wages in a Collective Labour Agreement? Why not set one up in sectors where there are no Collective Labour Agreements? Do the existing channels of “concertation” have a real impact on wages?
- What are the options for limiting high wages? What are the pros & cons? What is the unforeseen collateral damage (e.g. the recent increase of the tax on high incomes in France)?
- What are the impediments to a change of taxation in order to diminish the tax on work but increase the tax on pollution?

■ WHAT ARE OUR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS?

In order to ensure social stability, we must have a large middle class and we need to limit the income gap. If welfare and social peace increase, there will be a large societal basis to develop solidarity, one element that we wish to anchor in our society.

The income gap in Belgium is relatively low in comparison with other countries, thanks to the redistributing effect of personal income tax. However, we observe that many incomes – some in the middle class – have gone down or reached the poverty threshold.

Advice 1

Therefore, the objective of all public policies should be aimed at reducing the income gap. This is our starting point for the following propositions.

To ensure this, a system of transparent and accessible monitoring is necessary. This will enable the society (citizens, companies, public authorities, unions, etc.) to follow the evolution of the income gap in relation to the measures that have been implemented or are to be implemented, and also to assume their responsibilities.

Advice 2

Taxation is a tool for the state. The state can take action against the gap between high and low incomes in order to foster welfare in society.

To bring this about, the following things need to be done:

- Raise the net income of the lowest wages via the reduction of their fiscal burden. This should not lead to a transfer of fiscal pressure to middle-range wages.

We also suggest taxing high wages in another way:

- By a redefinition of the tax base because the individual incomes are not limited to the pay slip. Other incomes have to be taken into account such as extra-legal advantages (travel, business car, stock options, etc.);
- By a distinction between two dimensions: one is the proportion of the productivity of the worker and the other is the “value on the market”, i.e. the extra-money the employer has to give in order to attract the candidate. In fiscal terms, this surplus should be more highly taxed than the income related to the work.

Advice 3

The aim of the index is to maintain the level of buying power.

In the future, in order to avoid the widening of the income gap, the index system should become efficient for people with low and middle-level wages. In this direction, we do not wish for an index jump.

Indeed, an index jump would hit people with low incomes more severely than more privileged people. Moreover, the effect of an index jump is not limited in time but has consequences in the long run for low and middle-level wages.

■ 2. HOW TO USE THE COST OF LABOUR TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT

■ DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME: WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO ADDRESS?

In this chapter we will be examining the correlation between the cost of labour and the creation of new employment, stemming from the hypothesis that there is in fact a link between both. Specifically we want to examine the following:

- On the one hand, the relationship between the total cost of an employee to the employer and the hiring/human resourcing-strategy of the employer. Will the employer hire more people when the per capita labour cost goes down, and if so, what possibilities are there to bring down this cost.
- On the other hand, there is the impact that higher net wages can have: does a higher net salary translate itself into higher consumption, and if so does this consequently have an impact on national employment.

■ OUR FIRST THOUGHTS, OPINIONS AND IDEAS ON THIS TOPIC

When first touching upon the subject, several questions arose.

We wondered if the various elements that constitute the collective labour cost (net salary, payroll tax, social security-contributions of employer and employee, benefits of all kinds and several other minor costs) may unnecessarily complicate the system. Could it perhaps be more efficient to have only one segment deducted from the gross salary, that gets divided later on (from a central dispensary fund) among the various needs and systems.

We believe that the social security system is a very good and important system that must be maintained, but we wonder whether or not we could, through the systems of collecting and redistribution (recurring to the people), achieve savings that would make it possible to reduce labour costs. Are there perhaps too many parties (administrations, mutual funds, unions, etc.) involved in the system of redistribution? Could it be profitable to streamline the system and make it more efficient? Are there possibilities to create more direct links between someone's personal responsibility and the contributions/benefits that this person pays/receives from the social security system. We think of a bonus/malus system. We realize, off course, that this raises questions and dilemmas on personal responsibility and protection of the weaker members of society.

Spontaneously the thought occurs that reducing the labour costs will create jobs (lower the price and the demand goes up). We don't have, however, a proper insight on that specific correlation, so we have to gain that insight to be able to make recommendations.

Off course we realize that reducing these charges will have to be off-set in whole or partly by raising other charges. What are the options with the VAT-system? Raising or lowering the VAT will most likely have an effect on employment also. (what can

we learn from the VAT-decreases in the Horeca-sector, over here and in France?) Can we make VAT applicable on all products and services, and thus liberate means to reduce labour costs?

Finally we wonder: does this reduction of the labour costs have to be conditional or not. In other words: should the principle be to realize a uniform and all-inclusive reduction, or should it be used instrumentally and goal-oriented for certain specific categories of jobs, sectors, corporations... And then there's the question whether job creation is an effect or a (*sine qua non*) condition for reducing the costs of labour: do you have to impose conditions of job creation on a lowering of labour costs, yes or no?

■ WHAT QUESTIONS DO WE HAVE FOR THE REFERENCE PERSONS WHO HELP US FORM OUR OPINION?

- Where does employment lie at this moment (sectors, small businesses, big enterprises, regions...), where does job creation occur nowadays and how do we see this evolving through time? What are the forecasts?
- What are the key elements that constitute labour cost? And which of these, if there are any, could be actively exploited to reduce labour costs? What about the relation between civilian contributions (in pay) and the benefits that civilians get from the social security system?
- Is there a correlation between the reduction of labour cost and job creation? If so, what is the nature of this correlation. Is there a direct or indirect link? How quickly would such a reduction impact job creation? Does such a reduction also contain risks as regards employment?
- What is the impact of social and labour costs on small businesses and business owners in comparison to big corporations?
- Do corporations have to be taxed less or more in function of job creation? If so, what instruments could be used for this?
- What is the impact of the evolution from direct to indirect taxation on job creation? And how to best use the instrument of indirect taxation in favour of job creation?

■ WHAT ARE OUR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS?

Argument 1

This could have as a consequence (i) that a solution can be found for the ongoing reduction of the number of people who contribute to the social security, largely due to the ageing population.

Advice 1

We wish to reduce labour costs. To achieve this, we advise a reduction in the costs that put pressure on labour and to enhance the possibilities of financing social security with incomes, not stemming from social contributions on labour. (e.g. an increase in the taxes on certain incomes with the exception of small savers or by raising a tax on the added value of financial transactions – the Tobintax)

Argument 2

Idem advice 1

Advice 2

We want to stress the importance of upholding a decent minimum wage and to ensure that everyone has access to the same basic standard of living. To accomplish this, we believe it is necessary to:

- Impose a European standard regarding the regulation of labour costs, starting with synchronising policy with neighbouring countries.
- Exercise control on the application of the measures regarding work permits for foreign workers.
- Set up a ban on hiring independent subcontractors at very low prices.
- Tax based upon the country where one works.

Argument 3

The reduction of the cost of labour will improve the competitiveness of companies. We ask permission to adapt labour cost on a sectorial level; that way we can engage in labour-intensive sectors, especially industries.

Raising net wages will have a positive effect on the economy.

Advice 3

The economic models have established a correlation (from 0% to 100%) between reducing labour costs and job creation. There, we believe it to be necessary to reduce the labour cost for employers and employees, on condition that jobs are created

and the lowest salaries get a net raise.

On the other side, the European Union has to grant us permission to execute reforms on sectorial level in regards to these labour costs.

One panel member expresses regret that these recommendations are too vague.

■ 3. ASSISTING LABOUR MARKET ACCESS (IN THE FRAMEWORK OF A SOCIAL EUROPE)

■ DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME: WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO ADDRESS?

In this chapter, we aim at finding possibilities as regards the facilitation of labour market access in the framework of a social European Union. Within this framework, we mainly focus on the issue of bottleneck occupations, or in other words: how to facilitate potential employees' entry into bottleneck occupations?

Our hypothesis is as follows: if people are to be able to develop themselves and plan their lives on a long-term basis, it is of essential importance that everyone can develop their personal skills, so that they can contribute to society. In order to reach this goal, we want equal opportunity in labour market access and freedom of movement, so that each individual can offer their services anywhere across Europe.

In order to facilitate job entry, it is necessary to consider evolutions on the three following axes:

- Ensuring that labour supply and demand interact within a simplified, understandable administration system. Therefore, we should consider methods to facilitate matching between employers and potential employees. What are the specific problems the various actors (administrations, officials, immigrants, employers and employees) are facing? How do we connect individuals to job opportunities? How do we train them for employment? The latter two questions are important when considering bottleneck occupations, as there are not enough 'suitable' and 'competent' people for them on the labour market at present.
- The portrayal of diversity as a basic model or mainstream. Diversity is a reality and enriches us. How can we give everyone their place? How do we bring equal opportunities to all?
- Reframing or reconsidering the system of subsidies that support employment creation (so as to prevent distortion of competition).

We, citizens, are able to deliver an important contribution in the framework of this theme. Thanks to our different origins, experiences and perspectives, as well as our constructive approach, we are able to propose creative solutions that enrich and direct the debate.

Given that each and all of us will encounter this issue sooner or later, it is important that we consistently use a bottom-up approach.

■ OUR FIRST THOUGHTS, OPINIONS AND IDEAS ON THIS TOPIC

The various preoccupations and opinions that result from the initial exploration of this issue by the citizen panel are found below:

- The administrative steps to be taken in order to get access to work should be simplified for all kinds of jobs, not only for bottleneck occupations (which is the case now).
- Education and training should be catering to the needs and demands of the labour market, including bottleneck occupations, as far as possible. It seems essential to us to consider the following, three interrelated elements to this end: in one sense, this is about connecting education and the labour market. On the other hand, education should have a broad enough scope. And finally, the aspirations and talents of individuals have to be considered as well. This means that, to us, it is unacceptable that individuals should be forced to learn or practice a trade “against their will”.
- We wish for a more transparent approach in presenting job offers: we note that at present, job offers are presented in different ways, and not everyone has access to them. Furthermore, we note that matching job supply and demand is not assisted (sufficiently). Two questions come to the fore: who should publish which job offers, and how should this take place? What is the role of temp agencies in this context?
- We consider the role and function of “employment schemes”. Do these schemes facilitate or prevent equal opportunity in labour market access? How are employment schemes evaluated? We also ask ourselves some critical questions: isn't the combination of different employment schemes an approach that disregards the goal of job creation? Don't employment schemes become a (cheap) instrument for employers to practice a fast cycle of ‘job rotation’ (i.e., firing the employee once the requirements of the employment scheme have been met, only to hire a new, ‘advantageous’ employee immediately afterwards)? Don't employment schemes have the side effect that the real skills of employees are no longer taken into account, and that employees are thus not able to build up a career?
- The recognition of degrees and skills, obtained both within and without the European Union: what do we know exactly about the recognition of European (Bologna) and other foreign degrees? We opine that the current system of recognition does not function optimally: on the one hand it reduces immigrants' chances of labour market participation, and on the other there is a risk that this system distorts our labour market. Finally, what can be done to verify and assess an individual's skills if they are unqualified?
- We take note of the following paradox: at present, one needs papers to get work, and work to get papers (a true chicken-and-egg-issue). Therefore, we ask ourselves: why is it necessary to have the necessary identity papers in order to get access to work?
- Finally, we are of the opinion that what has to be discouraged is to NOT work, instead of it being discouraged to work.

■ WHAT QUESTIONS DO WE HAVE FOR THE REFERENCE PERSONS WHO HELP US FORM OUR OPINION?

- When is an occupation defined as a bottleneck occupation? If there are multiple explanations or causes for this, do we have to consider multiple (or various) solutions for this issue?
- What are the possibilities to ensure that training becomes more attuned to the needs and demands of the labour market, and that labour market access is fast and easy? How can economic sectors, and the firms within them, contribute to these possibilities? And vice versa, how can we ensure that young people have a clearer idea of the world of work (e.g. through internships)?
- Do employers have the possibility to let experienced employees coach and train newcomers by way of a 'coaching' or 'sponsor' system?
- What do we know about the efficiency and disadvantages of employment schemes (their positive and negative aspects)? Do you think an approach focused on specific target groups is more efficient than a generalised approach, or the other way around?
- What steps does a Belgian employer have to take in order to hire a person? Are these steps the same for target groups, such as young people, migrants, ex-convicts or people with an irregular residency status? What are the possibilities to simplify these steps?
- How can we find, or create, a transparent "matching" system, wherein labour supply and demand converge (data base)?
- How does the current system of European (Bologna) and foreign degrees work? How do we identify and evaluate the competencies of EU and non-EU nationals? Is there a way to additionally take peoples' real skills into account?
- How can we set up a system of "whereabouts" (which would indicate who is employed where) for part-time workers, so that this labour method can be supported and assisted more optimally (Dimona, Smart...)?

■ WHAT ARE OUR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS?

Our recommendations are aimed at better convergence of labour supply and available employment opportunities.

Argument 1

Too many young people leave school without qualifications or perspectives on the labour market. At present, the adult education system has to recuperate and reorient far too many young people. This wastes the time of both these young people, and society at large. If they had a better idea of what their future might shape up to, and they were able to prepare for this during their schooling, they would most likely be more motivated to learn and study.

Advice 1

Firstly, we attach great importance to young people being better-prepared for life at work. Multiple actors and organisations share responsibility for this.

A. The Centre for Student Assistance should help all students discover their talents and qualities, and certainly not disregard disadvantaged groups in doing so. Moreover, it should correctly inform students about the present state of the labour market and its condition within 10 years, both in the student's own region and across the language border. This should happen at an early age (15 to 16 years).

B. The Government should frequently refresh its framework of curricula to be instituted, in step with the evolving labour market. Schools should then get involved, and institute new curricula that effectively prepare for labour market entry. We especially think of the application of new technologies in this regard. As an aside, technical occupations obviously need to be raised in stature.

C. Firms and organisations should invite schools, and sensitise them to the changing need for personnel across different sectors. They should be obliged to create meaningful internships or part-time job opportunities for students, preferably at an early stage of the curriculum (starting from ages 14 or 15).

D. Schools themselves should also establish links with firms and organisations, by inviting them over and thus sensitising students about the labour market. Separately, (technical and vocational) teachers and training personnel should stay in touch with the labour market, possibly by doing internships in firms and organisations themselves. The Government should team up with schools and professional federations to systematically evaluate the ease of access that students experience in various sectors.

Argument 2

At present, employment assistance (by VDAB, Actiris, FOREM and their subcontractors) is not meeting expectations. The target for the numbers of 'unemployed to be put to work – within a certain duration' is high, but the quality of assistance much less so.

Advice 2

If we aim for a better match between labour supply and available job opportunities, it is equally essential that jobseekers can smoothly find work that meet their talents and skills. The guidance of unemployed people in their search for a position should happen in a much more personal manner. Time should be invested in exploring their talents and qualifications in a dialogue with them. Separately, opportunities in bottleneck occupations should be targeted, as the chance for a successful application for those is far greater.

Consequently, more funding and manpower should be devoted to this guidance process. This necessitates a regular analysis of the future shape of the labour markets and future profile of skills in demand on the part of the Government.

Advice 3

A number of unemployed have both the qualities and the motivation to start their own business. There are excellent guidance programs for these “starting entrepreneurs”. These should certainly be expanded. Still, simultaneously, far too few coaches and jobseekers are aware of them. There is a real and urgent need for a better flow of information about this subject.

Argument 4

We believe cutting red tape can have a reinforcing effect: it could induce the hiring of new employees and the creation of new firms.

Advice 4

We opine that it is essential to increase labour market flexibility, so that employees can move between different firms and organisations more smoothly. We point towards decreasing administrative hassle (cutting red tape) and more intra-firm cooperation. We believe that such a simplification should happen across all different government services at once.

Advice 5

In their present form, employment schemes have too many negative side effects, and do not lead to a decrease in the number of labour market mismatches. It follows that an evaluation of employment scheme efficiency is necessary: inefficient schemes (e.g. youth employment schemes) should be terminated.

Advice 6

The Government is currently showing a great ambivalence about raising the retirement age. If this is a serious goal, stricter legislation and execution should impede the easy dismissal of employees over 50. In the event that (older) employees are dismissed, employers should bear responsibility for their guidance into new employment. There should probably be different rules for large firms and organisations and SME's in this regard.

Two citizens do not underwrite this theme's advices, as they believe not enough attention is paid to young people's free will.

■ 4. WORK AND OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS

■ DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME: WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO ADDRESS?

The labour market is in a state of flux; so is the way young (and less young) people approach work. In their search for a different work-life balance, they oscillate between the desire for meaningful employment, and a view of work as simply making a living.

Many people are questioning themselves about the sectors of the future, and the best way to develop their skill set and career. Many people also question themselves about their contribution to society: what is meaningful work in a changing world, that faces great transformations (in the field of energy, ecology, globalisation...)? In such a context, traditional assumptions about work no longer offer the right development opportunities. We want to investigate this tension and discover if we can make meaningful recommendations about it.

■ OUR FIRST THOUGHTS, OPINIONS AND IDEAS ON THIS TOPIC

- We are evolving in the direction of a more flexible labour market; young people should learn to handle this, and develop resilience towards the changing context.
- Both education and professional circles should attempt to better gauge the future. What sectors will become more important?
- What does work mean for young people? There is a tension between “meaningful” work and “making a living”.

On the one hand many young people today are strongly focused on material items and consumption. Some see work as a necessary evil and rather focus on their life and activities outside of work.

But on the other, many young people find the lack of meaning and perspective in their work quite problematic.

- Many young people feel as if they have no impact on society. They disengage because they feel like they are being railroaded, have to comply.
- There is too little connection between (core) skills of young people, their interests and the societal labour market needs.
- Another way of labour organisation (integration of tasks, teaming up, etc.) could make young people feel that their work is meaningful.
- Young people should also be able to deploy their talents outside the context of employment.

- Young people are not necessarily sufficiently mature to make choices that will determine the rest of their lives at 18. The labour market should leave space for a sort of reflection, or exploration, period.
- Young people have a right to work. Different forms of “community services” could form an alternative to the conventional labour market.
- Existing socio-cultural organisations (youth groups, etc.) should be able to play a role in the reinforcement of young people’s position on the labour market.
- The current generations’ impact has a decisive influence on the perspectives of future generations.

■ WHAT QUESTIONS DO WE HAVE FOR THE REFERENCE PERSONS WHO HELP US FORM OUR OPINION?

- How will our labour market look in 20 years? What sectors and occupations will take prominence? What are the new forms of labour organisation we will face?
- A number of questions regarding the relationship of young people vis-a-vis work:
 - What are young people’s expectations about work? What renders work “meaningful” for them?
 - Why do young people feel as if they make no mark in society? How can work help resolve this?
 - Why do some young people see work as a “necessary evil”?
- What methods exist to ensure that everyone – young people, students, grown-ups – can engage with society in another way than through wage labour, that is nonetheless well-structured (i.e., not by piecemeal, patchy volunteering)? Our point of departure is a broader, re-imagined form of “community service”, which would allow people to decide to take a distance at any moment from their career, albeit within a structured framework.
- How should we handle the future’s challenges, and educate and prepare people for these changes? In this context, two additional questions arise:
 - What are the challenges to a context of transition (diminishing oil supplies, changing demographics, and so on)?
 - How can firms adjust to this context?

■ WHAT ARE OUR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS?

Advice 1

Since it is difficult to assess the impact of future changes (population ageing, population growth, oil depletion, climate change and others), we believe labour market resilience (i.e., its capacity to absorb shocks) should increase.

- Compliance with the Constitutional Court's 7 July 2011 decision regarding the equalisation of manual and clerical staff statutes could be ensured by scrapping the different redundancy regulations these statutes contain. This could be done by channelling and partitioning the redundancy pay for clerical staff, and putting it to active use (retraining, outplacement...), and also adopting the same arrangement for manual workers.

As a result, the temporary worker statute can return to its roots: a reservoir to be used in case of labour market shortages. Human resources management will largely return to the firm itself, which increases reciprocal commitment.

Wages should be linked more to knowledge and competencies, rather than set on the basis of seniority alone, in order to give older employees more opportunities to switch jobs.

In order to avoid that the generation about to enter the labour market should bear the brunt of an ageing population alone, the labour market should be opened up to retirees. This will also decrease the risk of knowledge loss in the years, and decades, to come.

Our labour laws, which date a century back, should be revised according to the flexibility so earnestly needed by the labour market.

- A second way to increase labour market resilience is to invest in local, comparatively small-scale economies.

Argument 2

We want to support social innovation. This will benefit both employers and employees, and will have a positive socio-economic impact, as it increases mutual trust.

Encouraging enriching employment opportunities is, in part, an answer to the problem of an ageing population.

Advice 2

For future generations, more attention should be given to “enriching jobs” that motivate people to stay at work until later in life. This especially in a context of an ageing population, and with the aim of maintaining our current wealth level.

This does not concern pension fund reform, but can offer a partial answer to the

non-rejuvenation of the population.

Below, we list some ways to enrich jobs:

- A “mentor role” for older employees (vis-à-vis younger employees, interns, students or newcomers), which could be an intermediary stage between work and retirement.
- The development of a “society cheque”, which stipulates an amount of time the employee can spend on work of common purpose.
- The stimulation of job rotation within the firm to make employees develop different skills. Moreover, varied work is more interesting.
- The setting up of a social innovation platform to unite all actors (employers, employees, researchers, schools – a corporate G1000?).
- Encouraging local firms to take secondary schools under their wing.

Argument 3

In the present situation, participation is too often limited to an institutionalised form of participation, which does not necessarily reflect all human components of an enterprise.

We have to break this mould. A more versatile participation, involving more and different people, is a necessity.

We need to change our culture and mentality, in order to attain real participation within firms, organisations, politics and public finance, in short, everywhere where people work together towards a common goal. We believe participation is an enrichment for firms.

A few examples of this enrichment:

- Development of a sense of involvement and responsibility;
- Taking one's life in one's own hands;
- More attentiveness towards the common purpose instead of profit maximisation;
- Stimulation of social and economic cohesion;
- Motivation of employees.

Advice 3

In order to ensure that organisations (schools, civil society, public services, etc.) adopt broader participation methods, we propose two complementary recommendations:

1. Supporting firms to promote and bring about participative measures within their specific context. E.g. transfer of consultants or knowledge to firms.
2. The introduction of instruments to measure, valorise, recognise and follow up on the progress firms make in the field of participation. Examples include:
 - A tender to define firms' engagement;
 - A social balance sheet that includes participation in addition to the rate of employment (which will allow the valorisation of employing young people), the degree of diversity, professional training policy, etc.;
 - Labels to acknowledge participation (parallel to the existing norms about corporate well-being);
 - And – why not? – the institution of fiscal advantages to participation?

■ 5. WORK OF QUALITY FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

■ DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME: WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO ADDRESS?

In this section, we want to discuss the relation between quality of life and work of quality. We consider the role (remunerated) work should have in the attainment of a good quality of life.

■ OUR FIRST THOUGHTS, OPINIONS AND IDEAS ON THIS TOPIC

In our opinion, a good quality of life means that:

- Everyone should have the prospect of meeting their primary needs (food, lodging, health...);
- Everyone can engage themselves in their work. We define this as everyone having a job that expands upon their talents and passions, and everyone having access to the necessary training and education to attain enriching work (in all senses of the word);
- Everyone can also engage themselves outside of work. We believe that people should be free in their choice for (or against) remunerated work, and that we live in a society where work does not define one's entire life, and work is not the only source of recognition (leisure activities, volunteer work, home-keeping... should be as well);
- Pressure and stress on the job should be non-existent or at least much less prominent (no matter if one is employee or employer);
- Everyone can forge and maintain the social relations of their choosing, both at work and in their private life;
- We live in a society where we have less of a need for money to be happy, a society which does not exclude anyone for financial reasons, a less consumer-oriented society.

In order to realise this, we believe it must be possible to evolve flexibly between different situations as we negotiate different periods, or phases, of life: a time for work, for family life, for volunteering, for leisure... We must ensure that (all) existing talent in our society does not go to waste.

We also have to develop another attitude towards unemployment. Unemployment must not be a situation that leads to others' disdain. Concurrently, the idea that only sufficiently 'productive' persons can gain a foothold on the labour market must be banished. If we want to use all talent within our society, everyone must have a place on the labour market, irrespective of their productivity level. Cooperation should become our guiding principle, not competition. Then, fear will not be a decisive force when we make choices for ourselves.

And maybe such a society also presupposes that we should make a difference between wages/ salaries and incomes.

Which is how we reach a core theme in our conversations about the subject. Some panel members wonder whether an unconditional basic income could not be a good way to accomplish the ideal society we have described above. The pros and cons that already bubble to the surface in our own discussions are:

- Cons: this would decrease the motivation to work; it would discriminate against some occupations.
- Pros: this would be less costly across the board; it would enable everyone to plan their lives more freely and creatively. One is no longer obliged to participate in our consumer society (the “right to sloth”). Some administrative formalities can be abolished, which frees up energy for other activities. We would no longer have to accept bottom-barrel wages or other indignities for survival’s sake.

■ WHAT QUESTIONS DO WE HAVE FOR THE REFERENCE PERSONS WHO HELP US FORM OUR OPINION?

- To what extent is an unconditional basic income a means to realise the society of quality we have described above?
 - Is it feasible? An utopian vision? Possible to realise in our country?
 - What stipend? Which income level? In which relation to other sources of income?
 - Is there any Belgian data on the subject?
 - Should this also be introduced abroad – is something like this only successful if it can be executed at the international level?
 - What risks are associated with an unconditional basic income?
- How can we recognise and valorise different forms of contribution to society? (House-keeping, volunteering, helping pensioners...)
 - What initiatives already exist in Belgium? What would be feasible?
 - How can we valorise volunteer work?
- What measures already exist, and what could be introduced in Belgium to realise the quality of life we envision?
- In what direction is the world of work developing regarding quality of life? What ways exist to look at work? And to plan it (in time and space)? What forms of organization?

■ WHAT ARE OUR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS?

As citizens, we are under the impression that the usual rhetoric of our government is usually geared towards numbers and job creation. It appears of the essence to us, though, to think collectively about other ways to consider the values that steer and shape our society.

Considering the issue of quality of life, both at and outside work, we find it essential to encourage a context wherein:

- Everyone receives recognition and is able to fulfil a role in the development of social cohesion;
- Everyone can devote the necessary time to what is essential to them (family, friends, civil society);
- Solidarity, loyalty, generosity and cooperation are stimulated;
- The chance to engage life as free and autonomous actors is guaranteed;
- The idea of “growing beyond” and the reduction of our ecological footprint are seen as genuine opportunities;
- The premise is a mindset of worldwide fraternity.

In this context, we could transcend the limited vision of our social model, that is still too heavily geared towards individualism and materialism, and wherein purchasing power and rampant consumption are the proof of achievement.

In short, we want a society where it is possible to dream and where people are not only motivated by mistrust or fear of the future, but by hope for a better quality of life.

Argument 1

In our opinion, the unconditional basic income would supersede the various extant forms of redistribution (such as unemployment and child subsidies, welfare, pensions and other replacement incomes).

This stipend will be less costly across the board than all extant subsidies combined, because the system will be based on a different form of wealth redistribution; it will stimulate a better quality of life, more freedom and creativity in the way we engage our lives and activities, without having the obligation to follow the consumer society; it will also allow us to abolish certain administrative formalities, and therefore free up energy for other activities, such as innovation.

Advice 1

We think the unconditional basic income would be a good means to realise this society.

A minority of panel members does not wish to support the proposition, as they think it is unworkable and possibly dangerous.

Advice 2

We believe a better quality of life at work is essential for general well-being. Considering this, our recommendations are as follows:

- Employees should be (more) involved in decision-making within their company (more interaction between management and workers in a less hierarchic structure: cooperation/creativity).
- The criteria for (mentally and physically) taxing work should be revised, analysed and measured (by way of evaluation certificates issued by external organisations), and compensated by the organisation of work and labour market flexibility.
- The objectives behind employment should be redefined by giving employees more responsibility, as well as more autonomy in their working arrangements (schedules, trainings, ways of working...).

■ 6. WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

■ DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME: WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO ADDRESS?

Workplace discrimination concerns expectations of equal treatment. Discrimination is a problem impeding access to education and the labour market (entry, progression and exit), and manifests itself in many different stages, some of them subtle and indirect.

If we are to tackle the issue of workplace discrimination, we should not ignore its social dimension. Which means we should diminish the fear of the “other”, and emphasize our commonalities instead of our differences. Moreover, a clear distinction between the term discrimination and the terms immigration and racism, which we can situate within discrimination, should be made.

■ OUR FIRST THOUGHTS, OPINIONS AND IDEAS ON THIS TOPIC

Workplace discrimination is punishable by law; nonetheless, positive solutions that do not only concern the punishment of improper behaviour, but rather increase contact between people, should be sought. Possible solutions are the intensification of business contact with the countries of origin, strengthening dialogue, stimulating civil society and adopting a more balanced spatial distribution to avoid the formation of ghettos (cf. the Netherlands).

Our Belgian society is diverse, and the media should be a good reflection of this diversity. Hereby, we can stimulate an attitude of respect and openness towards the other, without however blindly accepting everything (no cultural relativism), and based on the Rights of Man. It is however necessary for people to know their rights before they can demand them, or take their own responsibility in the matter. Therefore, it is important that the integration of civics and anthropology classes in school curricula would be considered. It is important to emphasize mutual respect in these classes: when people are received openly, they are more likely to integrate. Stigmatisation has the opposite effect.

The steps that have been taken in the fight against gender discrimination can also provide inspiration for tackling other forms of discrimination.

We can also learn from foreign examples, for instance where recruitment is concerned (e.g. anonymous CV and job applications: not mentioning name, age or ethnic origin, and insisting on the publication of all job opportunities).

In the short term, positive discrimination (quota and target rates) could be considered, but a change in mentality (education) will be necessary to ensure a transition in the longer term.

■ WHAT QUESTIONS DO WE HAVE FOR THE REFERENCE PERSONS WHO HELP US FORM OUR OPINION?

- What is the future proportional breakdown of the Belgian working age population (old and new Belgian), and what will this mean for workplace discrimination?
- How was gender discrimination in the workplace eradicated? What worked and what didn't? And, maybe, from a wider perspective: is there a history of workplace discrimination? How does it look? What can we learn from it?
- Are there any inspiring foreign examples that counter workplace discrimination? In how far could these apply in, or to, Belgium?
- What are examples of measures (legal, as well as voluntarily borne by employers and employees) that try to counter workplace discrimination, how are they evaluated and what can we learn from this evaluation? Please specifically elaborate on anonymous solicitations, quota's and target rates.
- What is the importance of specific measures against workplace discrimination? Is it throwing good effort after bad, as long as intolerance and discrimination still exist in society at large, or could a more diverse workplace help to create a more diverse society?

■ WELKE ZIJN ONZE CONCLUSIES EN AANBEVELINGEN?

Discrimination is a serious matter. We deem it important to consider all differences and diversity (ethnic, religious, age-wise, political, economic, regarding (dis)abilities...) in our society as enrichments. It is important for our economic development to give all talents a chance to flourish. As a society, we want to transcend discrimination and put diversity to good use: we can thus create more social cohesion and gross national happiness.

Argument 1

- Of course quantitative analysis is essential groundwork, but we believe that qualitative analysis is an equally important tool to understand the motives and dynamics of discrimination. This concerns labour market entry (hiring decisions a.o.), as well as workplace activity and leaving an organisation (entry, transfer or exit). Qualitative analysis is necessary to give the numbers a useful meaning, in order to fashion them into tools to tackle the issue.
- We find it important not to simply make observations, but to also undertake action.

Advice 1

We want to make existing research materials about discrimination more usable in the field. It is thus important for the results of both quantitative and qualitative analysis to be disseminated more widely. Furthermore, these insights should be “translated” into concrete measures that will give firms and organisations levers in their fight against discrimination.

Argument 2

- It is inadmissible that so many talents and skills remain unutilised.
- A more positive view of discriminated groups and persons can have a viral effect on best practice.
- Research has shown that both employers and employees hold an unjustified, very negative perception of people of different ethnic origins. We believe this perception should urgently be corrected, as it is one of the prime causes of discrimination.
- A more positive appreciation of discriminated groups and persons will engender a more positive self-image for these groups and persons, and catalyse better integration.

Advice 2

A more positive image must be created for all discriminated groups and persons: “Putting faces to the numbers”.

- The negative image of discriminated groups and persons should be rectified through the media (newscasters, soap operas), tour operators, police, schools, and others. This way, we want to disseminate positive information about discriminated groups laterally, in all echelons of society (including firms). Such actions should always be targeted towards specific target groups and issues.
- We propose the following ways to sensitize people and generate more empathy: “storytelling” (telling life stories, witness accounts...) and “roadshows” (itinerant theatre plays) in schools, cultural centres, firms and other places.

Argument 3

- This measure will engender more solidarity on the labour market, in the workplace and in society as a whole.
- If no stricter measures are adopted, we will need to wait another 400 years before everyone enjoys equal opportunities.

Advice 3

We want to impose the following measure on firms, in order to provide them with an incentive to discriminate less. We want to make non-discrimination a prerequisite for obtaining subsidies and winning public tenders. The Government should not only encourage, but also oblige firms to draw up a diversity plan. Such a plan should contain a vision, indicators and ways to attain the proposed targets, in both the short and long term.

This plan has to be developed in dialogue with all concerned parties (employers, employees, social actors in the region...) and be adapted to the specific context of the concerned region.

The larger the tender or subsidy (in absolute terms), the stricter the conditions regarding diversity should become. This way, this will still be manageable for smaller organisations.

■ LIST OF REFERENCE PERSONS

■ WEEKEND 1

Bea Cantillon is director of the Centre for Social Policy Herman Deleeck at the University of Antwerp, where she teaches social policy in Belgium and Europe. She has published about the consequences of socio-demographic change for social security, social indicators, social federalism and social policy in Europe, among other subjects.

■ WEEKEND 2

Bernard Conter is a political scientist and works with the Walloon Institute for Evaluation, Research and Statistics (IWEPS). His themes are labour market policy and occupation training.

Marc De Vos is professor in labour law at the University of Ghent and the Free University of Brussels. He is also general manager of the Itinera Institute in Brussels, an independent thinktank focused on policy reform.

■ WEEKEND 3

THEME WAGE GAP

Sandra Rosveldts is head of the “Research and Development” section of the ACW, the umbrella organisation of the Christian employees’ associations. The research section focuses on social research about both today’s issues and long-term problems.

Christian Valenduc is professor at the University Faculties of Namur and, since 1998, advisor-general Finance at the Federal Public Service Finance. He is responsible for the economic research associated with taxation policy, the management of micro-simulation models, and taxation statistics.

THEME LABOUR COST

Paul Verschueren is a commercial engineer, and has been working with Federigon, the Federation of HR Service Providers, since 2000. He was at first the head of its economic research section, but has been director for the Flemish region since this year.

Stéphane Verstraete is the director of the Belgian firm SolAZ, active in civil engineering and (soil) remediation.

Jan Vanthuyne is director-general of the Directorate of Employment and Labour Market. The Directorate is responsible for the preparation, support and implementation of all policy regarding employment, labour market regulation and unemployment insurance.

THEME LABOUR MARKET ENTRY

Bernard Maingain is a solicitor at Xirius. He is specialised in legal strategies for firms, human resources and labour law. His career has in part been inspired by the concern for making people the focus of all enterprise.

Michèle Claus is labour market specialist at the FEB (Federation of Enterprises in Belgium), the employers' association.

Ludo Struyven has been research leader at the HIVA – KU Leuven since 1994. He is active in the themes of labour market policy, activation of unemployed, regional and city-level policy, labour market mediation and market processes.

THEME QUALITY OF LIFE

Yannick Vanderborght is professor at the University Faculty Saint Louis in Brussels, and guest lecturer at the KU Leuven. He holds a PhD in political science, and is mainly interested in unemployment and poverty, social policy and the principle of a basic income.

Caroline Gijssels is doctor in social sciences at the KU Leuven. In the past, she carried out considerable research about “critical realism”. At the moment, she is mainly studying the actors and structures of the social economy and civil society in Belgium.

Mieke Van Gramberen is general manager of the non-profit association Flanders Synergy. FS promotes innovation in the field of labour organisation in firms, social profit organisations and government bodies, with the goal of creating more resilient organisations and better labour quality.

THEME FUTURE GENERATIONS

Abraham Franssen is professor in social science at the University Faculty Saint Louis in Brussels, and has been guest lecturer at the KU Leuven since 2003. His main research fields are the analysis of public action, deviation fields, justice and research methodology.

Mark Trullemans is coordinator of diversity policy at Actiris, the Brussels regional service for labour mediation, responsible for the implementation of Brussels employment policy.

Xavier Roberti works at Terre, a social economy firm watchful for its social impact, mainly active in the recycling business.

THEME DISCRIMINATION

Albert Martens is a social scientist and emeritus professor at the KU Leuven. He was, and still is, active within the themes of immigration policy and workplace discrimination.

Jozef De Witte is director at the Belgian Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism. He was previously active in adult education, and with 11.11.11.

Dirk Jacobs is professor in social science at the Université libre de Bruxelles. He wrote a dissertation about migrants' voting rights, and is conducting research about the political participation of ethnic minorities and education sociology.

■ COMPOSITION OF THE CITIZEN PANEL

Elif Alduman - 1978 - Strombeek-Bever

Ik ben getrouwd en mama van een kindje van 4. Ik studeerde af aan de EHSAL (International MBA). Ik werk bij Fedactio (Federatie van Actieve Verenigingen van België).

Patrick Avonds - 1955 - Zedelgem

Ik ben gehuwd en ben een trotse vader en grootvader.
Na 38 jaar nachtarbeid en ploegarbeid bij CNH ben ik bruggepensioneerd. Mijn grootste hobby is toeren met de motor en ik heb een passie voor wijnen.

Sam Bastiaens - 1992 - Zomergem

Als 20-jarige student rechten ben ik de jongste deelnemer van het Burgerpanel. Ik ben al jaren actief in verscheidene verenigingen, vooral al 15 jaar scouting, waar van nu 4 jaar als leider. Ik ben gedreven, sociaal, enthousiast en een babbelaar.

Aicha Bouharras - 1981 - Genk

Ik ben opgegroeid en woon in Genk; de sluiting van de Ford fabriek raakt me diep. Ik werk als educatieve medewerker bij het Internationaal Comité, studeer momenteel af als sociaal-cultureel werker (Sociale Hogeschool Heverlee). Ik verdiep me graag in de islam, en ben bibliothecaris van de Moskee van Winterslag. Ik ben trots op mijn Marokkaanse roots, maar ben even zot van alle verschillende culturen die ik dankzij mijn werk leer kennen!

Pierre Darchambeau - 1972 - Ans

Je vis à Liège, en couple, sans enfant. Je suis informaticien de formation, et gérant de sociétés. Je suis laïque. J'ai été Conseiller communal durant 12 ans. En participant au G1000 et au Panel citoyen, je cherche une autre forme de démocratie, non soumise aux partis politiques traditionnels.

Bart De Rijcke - 1962 - Oosterzele

Ik ben een zoeker en wrik graag aan vaste zekerheden. Ik woon in een klein Vlaams gehucht, maar hou ook van de stad. Bij gebrek aan diploma werk ik meestal als arbeider. Ik denk graag na over de dingen, hou van initiatief en verantwoordelijkheid nemen en wil graag bijdragen aan een leefbare, warme samenleving.

Cécile Delval - 1965 - Antoing

Je suis enseignante dans le secondaire, dans la région de Tournai. J'adore mon métier (heureusement, car il n'est pas toujours facile). Je suis à l'écoute des autres, j'ai beaucoup de patience et un caractère assez Zen. Les seules choses qui me font perdre mon calme sont le manque de respect et l'injustice.

Linda Errens - 1969 - Lontzen

Ich bin KassiererIn in einem Supermarkt im deutschsprachigen Gebiet Belgiens. Ich bin verheiratet und Mutter von zwei Kindern, die stolz darauf sind, dass ihre Mutter am G1000 teilnimmt. Auch wenn ich nicht oft öffentlich das Wort ergreife, bin ich froh, dass ich am Bürgerpanel beteiligt bin.

Francine Féret - 1947 - Waterloo

Licenciée en traduction/interprétation, sociologie, et études ISCO – mouvement ouvrier chrétien. Engagée dans le domaine syndical et politique (hors partis). J'ai créé une coopérative pour pouvoir faire de l'économie qui soit au service du social. J'ai adopté un enfant couleur café il y a 21 ans. Et je reste rebelle malgré mon grand âge!

Veronique Hennissen - 1977 - Lint

Ik ben 35 jaar en mama van 3 kinderen. Ik werk fulltime als magazijnmedewerker en wil me inzetten voor ons landje België.

Michel Janssen - 1945 - De Panne

Retraité, père et grand père. Je suis licencié en sciences économiques et financières. J'ai quitté la Belgique en 1974 pour travailler pour une multinationale américaine. Ceci m'a permis de travailler et de vivre dans et avec des cultures différentes, et de connaître les différents systèmes de sécurité sociale. Depuis cette année je suis à nouveau résident en Belgique. Mes intérêts sont lire (économie et politique), travailler comme consultant pour des jeunes entreprises, le golf et le bricolage (quand je ne fais pas du babysitting).

Hermann Lennartz - 1965 - Hombourg

Ich bin Vater von 5 Kindern, meine Frau ist depressiv (das wurde ihr als einschränkende Krankheit, als Handikap, anerkannt). Während 15 Jahren habe ich in einem Unternehmen gearbeitet, das seine Aktivitäten nach Polen verlegt und anschließend geschlossen hat unter dem Vorwand der Wirtschaftskrise. Seitdem habe ich keine feste Arbeit mehr gefunden, ich bin mal arbeitslos und mal als Interim beschäftigt. Meine Hobbys sind Modelleisenbahn und Musik.

Monshemvula Benjamin Mabusa - 1952 - Dour

Je suis un citoyen du monde. Né en Afrique, et ayant atterri à Dour, par l'unique volonté de Dieu.

Zoubairi Majiev - 1950 - Malle

Ik ben van Tsjetsjeense afkomst, heb het diploma van econoomboekhouder (behaald in de Sovjet-Unie in 1972, erkend in Vlaanderen op het niveau van licentiaat in 2005) en behaalde een Master in de sociologie aan de Universiteit van Antwerpen in 2011. Als 60-plusser ben ik nog steeds op zoek naar een job.

Luc Mathieu - 1960 - Dilbeek

Gelukkig getrouwd en vader van 2 kinderen. Sinds 2011 ben ik zelfstandig ondernemer geworden en momenteel ben ik verantwoordelijk voor een KMO van 10-tal medewerkers. Voordien heb ik verschillende internationale managementposities bekleed in multinationals. Ik hou van innovatieve ideeën zoals de G1000.

Danielle Mathy - 1949 - Charleroi

Je suis l'aînée d'une famille de 9 enfants et mère de 3 garçons et 1 fille. J'aime réfléchir, comparer les religions, la culture des pays et voir leur évolution dans le temps. J'essaie de comprendre les coutumes et les lois des différents pays.

Louise Michaux - 1989 - Havelange

Institutrice primaire de formation, je me suis spécialisée dans le domaine de l'éducation à l'environnement. Actuellement, je travaille en tant que tuteur énergie dans un Centre Public d'Action Sociale, mais j'aimerais par la suite créer un centre pédagogique relatif au domaine de la nature, de l'environnement. Le G1000 m'a donné envie d'explorer le monde politique, je me suis donc récemment engagée dans la politique locale de ma région.

Anna Missinne - 1950 - Kessel-Lo

Ik ben vrouw, moeder en oma. Ik leef ontzettend mee met de ROMA zigeuners, ik deel hun angst én hun levensvreugde. Ik wil me inzetten opdat ze werk kunnen vinden, en zelf hun leven kunnen bepalen. Tijdens de week-ends van het Burgerpanel draag ik hun handgemaakte kleding, om de aandacht te vestigen op hun problemen.

Bruno Monfort - 1952 - Fernelmont

Divorcé, 2 grandes filles. Ingénieur agronome, chercheur à l'unif de Gembloux dans le domaine des grandes cultures (céréales, orges de brasserie). Plutôt "ni dieu ni maître". Souvent impliqué dans des associations (patro, cercle, parents, fêtes ...) J'aime les voyages, les rencontres. Et la cueillette des champignons.

Lieve Proost - 1950 - Hasselt

Ik ben alleenstaande. Ik was actief in onderwijs, architectuur, opbouwwerk en verenigingen, en vanaf 2006 consulent in een werkwinkel. Ik geniet van lezen en cultuur, van werken in de tuin, maar vooral van mijn kleinzoon.

Michaël Pruys - 1979 - Ath

Je suis marié et père de 2 enfants. Et aussi cycliste, photographe, marcheur et assembleur de mots fortement amateur, animateur de chantier jeunes, accompagnant de personnes handicapées, bénévole - aide soignant, secouriste, et propriétaire momentané d'un certain nombre de briques moyennement bien empilées...

Mieke Schevelenbos - 1965 - Everberg

Ik studeerde Germaanse en communicatiewetenschappen, ben moeder van 2 dochters. Gedurende 15 jaar leidde ik de afdeling Communicatie van het Belgisch Instituut voor de Verkeersveiligheid (BIVV), bekend van o.a. de Bob-campagnes. Mijn passie voor sociale marketing bleef m'n drijfveer bij WWF en BrandNew-Day en zeker nu, als directeur marketing en communicatie van de Gezinsbond. Ik geloof in de G1000 als katalysator.

Rushabh Shah - 1988 - Wilrijk

Ik ben een informaticus met een passie voor muziek, films en boeken. Binnen de informatica houd ik mij vooral bezig met netwerken en systemen. Ik ben geboren en getogen in Antwerpen met een Indische achtergrond. Mijn studies heb ik voltooid aan de OLVC en de KdG-Hogeschool in Antwerpen.

Marijke Smeets - 1980 - Berchem

Ik heb mijn wortels in Limburg, ben meter van Teun (1 jaar), woon samen in Antwerpen, werk in Nederland (bedrijfsvoering) en ik studeer aan de KU Leuven (deeltijdse Master na Master).

Ingrid Thys - 1965 - Lendelede

Ik ben afgestudeerd aan de RUG (1987) en kies al een hele tijd voor een deeltijdse job - ik werk vooral als boekhouder - om daarnaast onbetaalde jobs te kunnen doen voor verenigingen die ik nuttig vind. Ik ben gehuwd en heb twee studerende kinderen.

Sven Van den Eynde - 1980 - Antwerpen

Ik ben informaticus en gehuwd. Mensen beschrijven me als warm, behulpzaam en betrouwbaar. Maar daarnaast sta ik ook bekend als de verstrooide professor. Ik geniet van leuke dingen doen met familie en vrienden, muziek, lekker eten, en mijn job.

Franco Vitiello - 1960 - Bruxelles

“J’ai quitté l’île aux esclaves, la chaloupe a vogué vers l’île des libertés où je devrai rendre ma liberté”...

Pierre Wuidart - 1981 - Tournai

Je travaille comme journaliste dans une télé régionale. J’aime jouer, voyager, discuter avec des amis, relever des défis et rencontrer des gens. Je suis célibataire, chrétien et gay.

Naima Yaakoubi - 1970 - Bruxelles

Diplômée des études supérieures approfondies en Terminologie au Maroc et formatrice bénévole en auto-développement personnel. J’habite à Bruxelles, où je travaille comme aide ménagère. Mon but principal est de préserver la liberté de pensée et d’expression ; vivre le maximum possible d’échanges humains...

Özkan Yilmaz - 1978 - Heusden-Zolder

Ik ben de zoon van een ex-mijnwerker en studeerde Informatica (Universiteit Hasselt). Tijdens mijn studies was ik actief in verschillende sociaal-culturele verenigingen. Ik werkte voor de Lucernacolleges, BETIAD (Federatie van actieve ondernemers) en nu als regiodirecteur voor Fedactio in Limburg.

Language

Dutch: 18
French: 12
German: 2

Gender

Female: 16
Male: 16

Education

Secondary: 12
College: 8
University: 12



By province

Antwerp: 5
Limburg: 3
East Flanders: 3
West Flanders: 3
Flemish Brabant: 5
Walloon Brabant: 1
Namur: 2
Liege: 3
Hainaut: 4
Luxembourg: 1
Brussels Capital Region: 2

By age

Less than 30: 7
30 – 45: 9
45 – 60: 9
60 and over: 7
Youngest participant: 19
Oldest participant: 66

~~Propag~~  ~~Anda Erre~~
Y. R. H. 

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Anna
Rome

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■ THE G1000 RECOMMENDATIONS

The G1000 does not have a monopoly on truth, but our search for democratic innovation nevertheless provided us with several suggestions that we would like to share with society.

... to the parliamentary commissions authorized on work and unemployment

- Take the suggestions in content from the citizen panel seriously: they are the results of a slow and thoughtful process with an adequate reflection of the population of this country.
- Analyze and continue to explore the line of thinking of the citizen panel: the fact that a consensus was reached says something about the public support of certain policies.
- Communicate what you found valuable and less valuable about the citizens' work.
- Do not hesitate to organize yourself moments of citizens' participation on legislative matters.

... to local and provincial governments

- Enable citizens' participation on several levels. Take note of existing participative initiatives nationally and internationally and improve capacity-building within your administration.
- Involve citizens assigned by lot in diverse decisional processes (town and country planning, municipal budget). Have the courage to include citizens at an early stage, attempt to approach citizens with a blank page. The ones who only consult them by the end of a decision making process, risk evoking irritation and rejection.
- Be clear in your aim over citizens' participation and honour the deal. Take note of the Participatiewijzer for local governments drawn up by the National Ombudsman in the Netherlands. Use the Participatiewiki from Socium/Lodewijk Deraet Foundation/De Wakkere Burger and the seven-step-plan for citizens' participation from Kenniscentrum Vlaamse Steden. The King Baudouin Foundation has acquired lots of experience on governance and participation.

... to regional and federal parliaments and governments

- Support deliberative democracy as a valuable supplement to representative democracy. Keep the citizens' perspective into account during policy research through participative and deliberative processes.
- Develop departments that make citizens' participation possible when demanded by parliament or government. Such departments (have) exist(ed) throughout Europe (and even in Belgium) in which they were used for mainly TA's (technology assessments). Their functioning as a para-parliamentary instrument is inspiring.
- Reinforce confidence between citizen and government by making room for regularly recurring structural consultation with random tests and citizens assigned by lot.
- Ratify the huge expertise concerning governance built up by the King Baudouin Foundation and the Foundation for Future Generations. Use the broad international experience as collected at Participedia.net.

... to political parties

- Promote reflection about the future of our democratic model within your party. Have research facilities ponder about the question: how do we see the functioning of democracy in 2030?
- Support numerous participative initiatives from your local divisions.
- Appeal to citizen panels to learn what the population is concerned with, to test new ideas or to attain or co-create new ones.

... to social partners

- Invest in innovative ways of socio-economic consultation by giving stakeholders' management with all involved parties a chance as a valuable addition for classical consultation between the top of the trade unions and employers' associations.
- Develop new forms of dialogue between your members and civil society. Run the risk of appealing to citizen panels assigned by lot to explore or defuse delicate subjects.

... to citizens

- Do not wait until the government organizes deliberative processes for you, rather design your own participative process and establish its instructiveness, in which degree it increases social learning, engagement and involvement. Make use of expertise accumulated in organizations like Network Participation in Flanders and the Foundation for Future Generations.
- Learn that society is not a total of individuals which all look at the government but an interaction of citizens, institutions and governments. Learn that it is not applicable to hold only politicians accountable: in a democracy citizens also have an important mutual responsibility.
- Discover how much deliberation is a learning school for democracy. Get involved, take responsibility. The G1000 showed that collective thinking about problems can not only provide original solutions, but also enhance a sense of public responsibility.

... to the European Union

- Study the Belgian crisis not solely as a conflict of government inside one of the member states but as a crisis of democracy, also arising elsewhere in Europe.
- Spend space, time and means in the year 2013, Year of the Citizen, to look for new forms of citizens' participation and democratic innovation.

... to the Council of Europe

- Promote a real democratic culture by informing the member states about the value of participative and deliberative democracy, for example within the scope of a new Forum mondial de la démocratie.
- Broaden the scope of action not only by involving national governments, but also civil society actors in the search for democratic innovation and improvement.
- Enhance the visibility of your role as a guardian, promoter and protagonist of democratic values in Europe.

■ REACTIONS OF THE CHAIRPERSONS AFTER RECEIVING THE FINAL REPORT OF THE CITIZEN PANEL

Today I am able to say that my skepticism and my fears have abated. That was already the case on 11 November last year though, when we were able to study the conclusion of the works, and noticed the even-handed nature of the decisions that were made (...) I have heard a lot of advice today – we should not start the discussion now, but identify suitable places for that – which is also balanced and sensible. In any case, I will bring the report to the national budget negotiations tonight, so that these meaningful discussions can help us. (...) You have worked very hard, and I think we should continue this in a flexible and suitable way.

André Flahaut – Chairperson of the Chamber of Deputies

In my opinion, the most important aspect is the processes that you created. It shows that this way of thinking about politics works, that it bears fruit. And that we can expand on this and find a way to modernise democracy. It has been called deliberative democracy. We will have to look for ways to structure this, and to take recourse to it for specific issues. And maybe, in due course, it should get a legal and regulatory framework. (...) It proves that the gap between politics and the citizenry is not that wide. Well, at least that there are ways to bridge it. Let that too, be one of today's conclusions.

Sabine de Bethune – Chairperson of the Senate

It is a resounding invitation to us, politicians, to participate in the reinvention of democracy and the creation of new links with the citizens, both in and outside Parliament. This is an enormous challenge, especially in this period where many rifts have appeared. It demands time, a good methodology, respect and endurance, but they are in evidence and I want to engage myself to this, at least where the Walloon Parliament is concerned.

Patrick Dupriez – Chairperson of the Walloon Parliament

Democracy is not a static fact; rather an evolutionary idea. Today, we are evolving in the direction of democracy as an interaction between members of Parliament, political parties, Ministers, cabinet staff, legal institutions like the Council of State or the Constitutional Court, all kinds of experts, the media, pressure groups... Here, today, citizens' initiative added itself to that list. (...)

Whatever the case, the politician might still occupy a central place in our democracy, but has not been the only actor in the field for a long time now. As politicians, we can mourn this evolution, but we may as well see it as an enrichment. Because the absolute primacy of politics does not exist anymore, and we can therefore safely say that things are more democratic now than they used to be.

Jan Peumans – Chairperson of the Flemish Parliament

I think back to the G1000's Citizen's Summit, which took place a year ago in Tour and Taxis, with pleasure. Then I was already very impressed by your initiative to bring politics closer to the people. Yes, impressed to such an extent that I even begged Ms Fatma Girretz and Mr Min Reuchamps, two of the co-organisers, to explain this concept in the Parliament of the German-speaking Community in the greatest detail. And due to this, ladies and gentlemen, we have decided that we will involve the population of the German-speaking Community in the execution of the sixth state reform in a similar manner.

Ferdel Schröder – Chairperson of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community

A real democratic society is more than an article from the Constitution. (...) Today, the world is in flux, and is looking for new equilibriums and forms of expression. I am glad that initiatives like the G1000, which meant an enormous amount of reflection and relational work for many people, has enabled them to express their wish: to become actors for our future.

Françoise Dupuis – Chairperson of the Brussels Parliament

In an era where it is necessary to redefine the public sphere, I think that initiatives like this are a substantial enrichment. Not as a replacement for the system, but rather to enhance it with the power of the proposal and that of representativeness. The participative democracy of the G1000 gives the population their voice back – a voice that perhaps was not heard in the past. For us, politicians, there will be a divide between pre- and post-G1000: participative democracy will from now on be considered indispensable to our profession.

Jean-Charles Luperto – Chairperson of the Parliament of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation

Thomas d'Ansembourg, author of 'Cessez d'être gentil, soyez vrai!'

"This initiative brings people together again, surpassing political colours and identities. I value that very much in these times. That people are aware again of what they can achieve by cooperating. That they can see again what unites them instead of emphasizing over and over again what makes them different - as political parties do."



Guy Verhofstadt, party chairperson of the European liberal democrats ALDE

"I believe that this exercise is socially relevant, especially in times in which ideological differences between parties are fading. On the other hand there is the danger of populism. A project like the G1000 should not tempt politicians into not taking their responsibility anymore en simply echoing what people want to hear. On the contrary, the G1000 has to result in stimulating politicians to develop new visions for tomorrow's society."



Fatma, of the volunteer unit

"In my opinion, the most extraordinary thing is the power of mobilization of the G1000. To our first appeal 800 volunteers reacted. At that point we didn't succeed in putting everybody to work... Since then we have organized ourselves into units (logistics, communication...). And new volunteers continue pouring in with incredibly positive energy. It is really an example!"



Le Soir

"The citizens' gathering G1000 is a premiere in Belgium with the exception of the common consultations in the French educational system. Other examples of participative or deliberative democracy in other countries has inspired them."



'The G1000 was only the beginning'

THE LAST QUESTION ON THE FINAL REPORT ON THE **G1000** CAN ONLY BE A WINDOW ON THE FUTURE. WAS THE **G1000** A ONE-OFF EXPERIMENT ON CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION OR DOES ITS AMBITION REACH FURTHER THAN DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION? **DAVID VAN REYBROUCK** AND **BENOÎT DERENNE** ARE LOOKING AHEAD. AND FAR AHEAD. "WHY SHOULD THE SENATE NOT BECOME A PERMANENT CITIZENS' PLATFORM?"

It's Belgian weather at its best in Namur at the time when the second session of the G32 in the beginning of October kicks off. Drizzling wet, all too familiar. But the Walloon parliament offers shelter for the 32 Belgians who retreat here to debate the importance of work and unemployment in our society - a theme they chose a couple of weeks before as being the most important in a contemporary social debate. In one of the many auditoriums a varied group of Flemish, Walloon, German-speaking, highly-skilled and unskilled people and a few with foreign background listen to one of the statements by a person of reference. It is one of the experts who should help prepare the listeners sufficiently so they can come up with well thought-out proposals for a labour market policy during the next conference. This should complete the G1000 - concrete policy choices about which citizens are truly concerned.

But suppose these propositions are of bad quality, or very extreme, or identical to the ones the government has already put into practice (as a reader of this final report you already know they are not)? Would the G1000 have been a failure then? If so, is that the end of this citizens' initiative for a better democracy? "On the contrary", **David Van Reybrouck** reacts at once. "A scientist does not stop his research when the findings are disappointing, does he? He will then study the various parameters of his research more intensely. This is also how we approach it. The G1000 is an experiment that will not end with just that. I would even dare to say that if the findings are disappointing, it will be even more important to continue. Because this means there is still a lot of work to do."

‘There is no real confrontation in our democracy anymore. It is like chatting on the Internet, where people, feeling safe behind their computer screen, show their irritation shamelessly.’

What is the purpose then? Organise an even better citizens’ summit?

Benoît Derenne: “Not only that. We wanted to create a shock effect with the citizens’ summit, direct the attention to the necessity of a better democracy. But such an innovative, inclusive democracy does not necessarily have to be organized only through citizens’ summits.”

DVR: “Our aim is a broader participation of citizens in decision-making processes and this can be done in various ways. With the G1000 we wanted to broadcast that our democracy is in crisis. It is not enough to only have citizens vote every couple of years. Today we have come to a point that for example an American president who wins the elections has at most 18 months time to set up a policy. After that the campaign starts again. This has to change.”

BD: “There is no real confrontation in our democracy anymore. It is like chatting on the Internet, where people, feeling safe behind their computer screen, show their irritation shamelessly. In our democracy the citizen is also on his or her own and therefore casts his or her often disgruntled vote every 4 years. We have to organize this confrontation between citizens again and permanently implement it in policy processes. This is the only way to allow them to transcend their conflicts.”

DVR: “The mistrust in our democracy comes from both sides. Politicians have become afraid of the (according to them) thoughtless choices of their voters. And these voters are screaming even louder again and again, fuelled by powerless rage. We have to convert the screaming into conversation again.”

That comes down to a full-blown conversion of our democracy. Isn’t that a bit overzealous?

DVR: “No, we have reduced democracy to voting and this change is recent. In almost 3,000 years of history we have only organised elections in the last 200 years. We want to find acceptance again for assignment by lot- you are picked randomly for a certain task. As happened with the participants of the G1000. Assignment by lot has always existed. The philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau drew a distinction between 2 forms of representation: election or assignment by lot. But we have completely forgotten about that. Only when picking a jury for an assizes trial do we still use that system.”

BD: “Besides, there is nothing wrong with change. A company that does not innovate, will go broke, even if it was ever so successful before. We should not be afraid to invest in research and development in the field of democracy either; that’s even vital if we don’t want our system to whither!”

DVR: “Isn’t it remarkable that innovation is the motto of our time, but that we don’t apply it to our way of governing? OK, our aim is indeed ambitious. You could compare this fight for inclusive democracy to the fight for universal suffrage. At that time it didn’t seem possible that a woman or a farmer could vote wisely. Today is the same: voters are treated like cattle, like helpless children of a country. We believe they should have a say, on top of voting rights. And this will benefit policy making and society.”

But I suppose you won't be organising a revolution tomorrow?

DVR: "We prefer the slow approach indeed. We want to continue as a permanent platform that seeks for methods to improve democracy. With 3 points of attention: research, creation and outreach. The first one is clear, we want to gather international research and distribute it. With creation I not only mean our actions like the G1000 and subsequent initiatives, but also our role as consultant for civil society organizations or governments who want to set up some form of participation for their members or citizens. We want to make our knowhow and methods available for concrete projects. With outreach, we mean working toward implementing these insights in government and advocate more and better democracy in the different levels of government."

BD: "This is crucial: we have to plug in our ideas to government practice. So far we have mainly worked on politics. The recommendations of the G1000 have no force of constraint. If politicians want to ignore them, they can legitimately do so. That's why we want to continue and set up things together."

How are you going to tempt them?

BD: "Nobody can avoid this trend for more citizen participation. In Germany there are Länder, bigger than Belgium, where certain decisions are invariably taken with the help of a citizen panel. In Brazil a fixed amount of some local authorities' budgets is allocated in consultation with a citizens' council. And in my other native country, Switzerland (Benoît Derenne has dual nationality, note from the editors), you can sometimes vote every 2 weeks over some local project or general issue."

'Voters are treated like cattle. We believe they should have a say, on top of voting rights. And this will benefit policy making and society.'

DVR: "Moreover, our country isn't doing that badly on matters of participation. The King Baudouin Foundation, the Instituut van Samenleving en Technologie and our own Foundation for Future Generations have all built up a lot of expertise. Especially local governments have expressed their interest in organizing participation. The fact that local interest is witnessed everywhere internationally is due to town and country planning. They want to change or implant something and ask for the opinion of the citizens."

That's it, participation, like on de Lange Wapper in Antwerp. The government is doing it already.

DVR: "Yes, but it is often too informal. Look at the referendums of the last couple of years: on the European constitution or the reconstruction of the Havenlaan in Brussels. These are proposals that the government had fully prepared and in the end you can say 'yes' or 'no' to it. This is not how it works. The government has to have the guts to approach citizens with a blank page. They have to learn to let go of control. We too, during the G1000. When suddenly migration popped up as one of the crucial themes we were afraid that radical solutions would emerge. But the experts in the

organization said: “Trust the process.” You see, the discussion brought very though-out, usable solutions. Give citizens the chance to think along and they will seize it.”

BD: “The citizens have so far not let me down. Not for the time being, not in the projects before this one. But it is crucial that your methodology is suitable. Participation can only work if you start with a diverse mix of people who have not explicitly chosen for it. This is what doesn’t happen enough, nor for referendums. It is always the motivated, the highly-skilled, the politically engaged that will be drawn to it more than others. And then your findings will not be correct. But getting the method right is very difficult and also depends on the concrete project. This is why we, as a platform, could remain playing an important advisory role. And this is also why the G1000 was so important, as an experiment to see whether the method worked.”

Will this platform stay afloat on volunteers?

DVR: “Volunteers will always be welcome. But we have to evolve to a stable organization and in that case you need paid positions. We expect to receive these funds as one of the players in democratic innovation. Just as a political party gets funding for that same reason.”

BD: “But for the tasks that we have so far explained, we are financially prepared.”

Take a look at 10 years in the future. Where does democracy stand then?

BD: “I am afraid that 10 years is somewhat short. We have been busy for 10 years already and progress is slow. Let us ask politicians in the next couple of years how they see citizens’ participation in their system. Let them participate in this decision making. They are in fact citizens too.”

DVR: “Let’s have a look at 30 years from now and I see 2 processes. On the one hand you will have citizens who among each other will shape democracy more and more horizontally through forms of participation and on the other hand you will have the government which associates citizens more and more in decision making. In the beginning it will be occasionally, for example for files like pension reform and asylum policy, later it will be structurally. Why would our Senate - which is already a reflection chamber - not be able to evolve into a permanent citizens’ platform? A place in which citizens are assigned randomly and in which for the duration of for example 3 months, draw up policies. As a kind of paid citizens’ service or a jury - not on crime, but on our future. If representation of the people can adopt various shapes, why would Parliament not be able to consist of a chamber of elected citizens and of a Senate of allotted citizens? This is what the far future could look like.”

■ 10 MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE G1000

1 "THE G1000 IS AGAINST PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY..."

Wrong. The G1000 advocates parliamentary democracy and tries to strengthen the system with new forms of citizen participation. A parliamentary democracy which does not innovate itself, that is what we find dangerous!

2 "...OR AT LEAST AGAINST ELECTIONS."

Wrong again. We consider elections as an important instrument in democracy but not the only one. The G1000 is seeking new instruments for citizen participation. Because voting once in so many years is not sufficient in times of the Internet.

3 "THE G1000 IS A POLITICAL PARTY."

No. The G1000 is a citizen's initiative that aims at better democracy through more citizen participation. We have nothing against political parties. We recognize their role and believe that they can be helped in their search for honourable compromises through constructive participation from allotted citizens.

4 "THE G1000 IS SOMETHING FLEMISH."

Wrong, but understandable. When the G1000 started in 2011 there were more prominent people involved on the Flemish side (Francesca Vanthielen, Dave Sinaert, David Van Reybrouck) than on the Walloon side. Because of that the G1000 received more media attention from Flanders than from the French-speaking media. Nevertheless, the project worked from the start with people from the three language communities of our country. Nowadays everything is done consistently in 3 or even 4 languages.

5 "THE G1000 IS ABOUT SAVING BELGIUM."

Wrong, but also understandable. Because the G1000 started during the seemingly endless government crisis, a lot of people thought that the purpose of the G1000 was saving Belgium. We said it then and we say it again: the G1000 does not want to save Belgium, but breathe new life into democracy, regardless of which level. We believe that citizens who deliberate can add significance to the society in which they live, locally, provincially, regionally, nationally or internationally.

6 "THE G1000 IS NAIVE."

No. What we do is based on solid experiences abroad and international scientific research. All our activities have a carefully prepared methodological dimension. This does not mean that everything will automatically be successful, but it does mean that considering how democracy can be improved is not a matter of chasing ghosts. The international observers at the G1000, by the way, were full of praise about the quality of the process.

7 "THE G1000 IS EXPENSIVE."

Ja en nee. Met een totaal budget van 450.000 euro was de G1000 niet goedkoop. Maar verkiezingen kosten de staat al snel 10 miljoen euro. Laat ons niet vergeten: geen democratie is veel duurder dan wel een democratie. Bovendien zat de G1000 in een proces van innovatie. Prototypes zijn altijd duur. Het valt te verwachten dat de prijs van burgerberaadslagen zal dalen, zoals dat bij auto's en computers ook het geval was.

8 "THE THINGS CITIZENS COME UP WITH THEMSELVES DOES NOT ADD ANYTHING TO WHAT PARTIES HAVE BEEN SAYING FOR YEARS ALREADY."

Foreign experiments prove the following: citizens can sometimes come up with very innovative ideas, but sometimes they just repeat what politicians have claimed for years already. The latter is still valuable: this way you learn what the public support is for certain measures. It is refreshing to know the opinion of the citizen, apart from political party interests.

9 "CITIZENS CANNOT DO POLITICS."

Incorrect. If you offer sufficient time, space and information, they are perfectly capable of coming up with meaningful solutions themselves. Maybe they do not have the knowledge and the experience of professional politicians, but they hold a very important trump: freedom. They do not have to worry about getting elected or re-elected so they are less restricted in their search.

10 "BY SOCIABLY SITTING AROUND A TABLE YOU AVOID CONFLICT."

This danger is real. Citizen participation can sometimes arouse the impression that a rational consensus is always real and available. Of course this is not the case. Consensus is not the key point of democracy, conflict is. Communality sometimes means making difficult decisions. The G1000 does not want to sweep conflict under the table, but nor does it want to blow it out of proportion. Nowadays the latter occurs too frequently. Democracy does not mean solving conflict, but learning to deal with it: this consideration determines our work.



Peter Verhelst, author

"Every politician who does not relate to the G1000 (and further on to what 32 people will continue to develop based on the results) is not worthy of his profession nor our vote."



Geert Noels, head economist, Econopolis

'I have lots of sympathy for projects that start off as grassroots initiatives, such as the G1000. But I am quite critical as to the organization's later evolution into the current G32. The lack of transparency in this evolution is more than a simple point of concern. Perhaps it would have been better to quit after the G1000?'



Alain Deneef

"A formidable initiative."

De Morgen

"As simple as it is ambitious."



Yvonne Zonderop, author and journalist

Yvonne Zonderop dedicated the final chapter of her recently published book "Polderen 3.0: Nederland en het algemeen belang" (2012) on the G1000. She found it to be "a classic example" of the modern way to stimulate public interest.



Gerdi Verbeet, chairperson of the Second Chamber in the Netherlands

Ms Gerdi Verbeet was full of praise for the G1000 as became apparent from her recent book "Vertrouwen is goed maar begrijpen is beter: over de vitaliteit van de parlementaire democratie": "I am impressed by the attempt of the organizers of the G1000 to provide a new stimulus for the democratic process. The G1000 therefore is consistent with a method developed in the US and Scandinavia and which is meanwhile being implemented in many countries. After an intense exchange of ideas with experts it turns out that citizens are very well able to pass practical judgment on complicated questions which then can benefit parliament. I would give such an idea a chance. (...) The Chamber should adopt a proactive disposition. Society has to be engaged in placing issues on the agenda."

Ronny, organizer G-Off in Bruges and volunteer logistics unit

"I can't stand intolerance, this is why I am supporting the G1000. First as the organizer of the G-Off in Bruges (a group that participated not on site in the citizens' summit - and of which the members still get together to talk about the future of democracy), later as the person in charge of the logistics unit. I strongly believe in this initiative for and by people."



■ THE G1000 REPORT BY THE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

"AS EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES ARE IN CRISIS THE G1000 SHOWS A WAY FORWARD."

To monitor the G1000 citizens' summit a team of 9 international monitors was invited. The group consisted of academics as well as experienced practitioners from the field, all critical thinkers and widely acclaimed experts on issues of political participation. They were present during the entire day of the citizens' summit, during which they received access to all relevant sources and documents. They were given permission to interview participants and talk to the facilitators, experts, volunteers and members of the organizing team. Translation to English was provided to them. They each communicated their impressions to the organisers of the G1000. The following report is a summary of their comments and observations.

■ INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As international observers at the G1000 citizens' summit we are thankful for having had the opportunity to follow closely the audacious democratic and deliberative experiment of bringing together several hundreds of people in a deliberative initiative aimed at discussing social and economic issues of great relevance and deciding upon them. It was a unique experience. It was heart-warming and inspiring to see and feel the enthusiasm and true engagement of the participants, volunteers and organisers, and we believe that the initiative has provided nothing less than the 'raw material' for the further development of democracy. We especially thank the initiators of G1000 for having invited us to evaluate this experiment. Throughout our stay we were warmly hosted and smoothly introduced to the G1000 process. Although not all of us had the language skills to follow the debates at the tables directly, we could rely on translation facilities to get acquainted with these debates and, in general, enjoyed the open and transparent spirit of the G1000. This enabled us to draw up the following report. Summarizing our findings, we can state from the outset that our overall impressions are very positive. We have especially appreciated the fact that the G1000 is an independent, non-partisan, inclusive and volunteer project, truly developed from the bottom up by citizens who have a sincere concern about their society, who possess a clear will and a strong vision.

■ ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

One of the most impressive features of the G1000 was the diversity of participants in terms of gender, age, political preferences as well as social, professional and cultural background. We were also impressed by the inclusion of diverse faith communities and the fair representation of Belgium's different language communities. All the participants whom we interviewed stated that they were honoured to be able to be part of this democratic intervention; many even felt that it was high time for a new type of democracy in Belgium. We experienced an overwhelming

positive atmosphere among the participants who also expressed a strong belief in their ability to come up with workable policy recommendations. Participants found that the topics, proposals and decisions reached at their table were well clustered by the central desk and that the summary in the plenary clearly reflected their debates. It will be interesting to see whether the table facilitators can validate these impressions. Due to the very tight time schedule, some participants felt that they needed more time for reflection - discussions at the tables sometimes had to be conducted in a hasty manner. The work of the table facilitators was evaluated very positively, especially their ability to ensure respectful and focussed discussions and a fair participation of everyone at the table. The input by the experts was mostly judged as objective, although some participants expressed concern that the views may have been slightly biased. We believe that everybody who was able to speak either French or Dutch had a chance to follow all stages of the G1000 without any problem and to get engaged either as participant or volunteer. Thanks to the G-Homes, the online discussion tool, the G-Offs, the deliberative process was not limited to the selected participants who were physically present in Brussels. For us, and probably also for the participants, the translation of the presentations by the experts was sometimes hard to follow, mostly due to interferences from the busy room. However, thanks to the mix of French slides and Dutch speech, and vice versa, the linguistic complexity throughout the day was managed successfully. Registration and arrival of the participants was well organised and all other aspects of the process went smoothly. Considering the number of participants and the size of the hall, the noise level was much lower than expected. However, we noticed some interference between the tables and some participants expressed their difficulties in hearing others across their table. This affected especially elderly participants who had more difficulties to follow the debates.

All in all, we can state that the G1000 has been a great success in the view of participants, although some minor problems and challenges occurred.

■ ABOUT THE EXPERTS

Thanks to the simultaneous translation of the keynote speeches into English we were able to gain a good understanding of the thematic context of the debates. From what we have understood we find that the keynotes were slightly biased; the experts who introduced the three themes approached the matter from a somewhat 'left-wing' oriented perspective. Therefore their input did not necessarily represent the full diversity of the viewpoints on these themes. Since a plurality of expert views is a crucial element for the establishment of a legitimate and reliable deliberative process, we find that the somewhat one-sided input by the experts represented a weakness. Full access to the biographies of the speakers could have helped to put their keynote addresses into a context. However, we have to point out that the impact of the keynote speeches on the final voting results seemed to be small; the results are to be located in the middle of the political spectrum, or at least they do not show a clear correlation with the ones proposed by the experts. It thus seems that the danger was avoided: the experts did not have too much influence on the way proposals were framed and participants did not only respond to the proposals presented to them. Still, the keynote presentations could have been more divergent in order to enlarge the scope of discussions following at the tables. We believe

a more divergent input, especially on the topic of the distribution of wealth, would have been beneficial and would have allowed for more non-conventional and new proposals.

■ ABOUT THE G1000 AS A FORM OF POLITICS

From what we understood the G1000 has always meant to be a complementary tool to the parliamentary or representative democracy and was aimed at providing new stimuli to the discussion about politics in Belgium. Listening to the final remarks of the presidents of the various parliaments in Belgium, we do see that G1000 has earned the respect of these politicians. This respect is summed up in what one of them stated: “we do not have the monopoly on ideas and solutions”. However, the G1000 has also triggered somewhat of an uneasy feeling among politicians with regard to the legitimacy of their own position and decisions. It will remain a challenge to persuade political representatives of the benefits of deliberative co-governance with citizens.

■ ABOUT THE PROCESS

We were impressed by the fact the G1000 organisers had been able to mobilise so many volunteers, participants and media representatives. The energetic response to the public invitation that the organisers had issued is certainly to be credited to the organisers’ efforts in the field of communication, dissemination of information and advocacy. At the same time, this public success was also evidence of the fact that the ideas behind the G1000 are right on the nail. Its success reflects the citizens’ eagerness to be involved in new forms of political engagement that allow their voices to be heard. Impressive was also the smooth and to-the-minute flow of the entire G1000 process. With military-like precision notes were passed from the tables to the central desk enabling the aggregation of themes, the preparation of powerpoint slides, and the preparation of ballots. It was proof of the fact that many skilful people with different resources and capacities had been involved in the planning and implementation of this event and that reliable technology was in place, e.g. voting machines and visual presentation techniques. The downside of this tight schedule was the necessity to set up a strict system of top-down management, both at the tables and at the central desk. This might have influenced or at least limited the outcomes. As the central desk had the power to predetermine the policy options for a later vote by clustering the many different proposals from every table, its potential influence should not be underestimated. To our view, this process should have been made more explicit and transparent, especially for the participants. For them it was not always clear how the proposals were ranked and prepared at the end for voting. Additionally, the classification of the information coming from each table along a pre-set number of proposals stemming from the experts’ keynote speeches somewhat reduced the amount of creativity present in the deliberations. However, we believe that the central desk’s application of a “grounded theory” approach and a successful round of reliability tests gave the process a high level of validity and led to a reliable clustering. As stated earlier, the participants shared our appreciation of the validity of the process of clustering. Concerning the amount of themes, we believe that the decision to discuss four distinct themes in the course of one day limited the participants’ capacity to fully

assimilate the complexity of each of these themes. In addition there was no thematic material or information made available to the participants prior to the event. A smaller number of topics would have allowed for better and more fine-tuned proposals. An additional plenary session in which participants could reflect and compare their discussions with those of other tables could have helped as well. We have to stress however that we did not find evidence of too much influence by the central desk or the organisers on the clustering of proposals. The bottom-up procedure to identify three distinct themes for the G1000, starting with several thousands of issues and including the vote of several thousands of citizens, was a great success. However, the process of framing, summarising and clustering the thousands of ideas to a list of 25 needs to be made more transparent and the methodology should be explained. Such an explanation could also include more information about the team in charge of the clustering and framing as their socio-economic and demographic background might have impacted the process. The very user friendly website, however, has already offered lots of information on the manifesto, principles, funding mechanisms, the work plan and other elements, and has thus ensured a high degree of transparency.

A major factor contributing to the success of the G1000 was the presence of the several hundreds of volunteers who took care of catering, refreshments, breaks or the kids' corner. Not only their commitment during the G1000 day was crucial, also their engagement throughout the recruiting process. The management of the volunteers was equally successful. The name G1000 presented a risk. As G-summits usually end in failure and are often accompanied by big and sometimes violent mass protests, the name could have triggered some unfortunate connotations. But these connotations turned out to be irrelevant. The G1000 team also secured its independence of financial supporters by ceiling the financial support of an individual actor to 7% of the total project budget.

In summary, the G1000 has lived up to the internationally accepted standards of mass deliberative processes, with regard to the selection of participants as well as the clustering of the topics and proposals.

■ ABOUT THE FACILITATORS

From what we have seen, the facilitators did a terrific job in extremely difficult circumstances: very long hours; different skill sets and abilities of the participants; noisy, crowded surroundings; linguistic differences; a tightly-packed agenda. We were impressed to see them in action, and they were a clear asset to the organisation, even more so given the fact that they were doing this work voluntarily. They applied participatory methods that allowed for active participation and ownership of the tables and the aggregated results. Moreover, they alternated between different formats and techniques, which made the whole process lively and easy to follow even for those who are not used to speak in public. The facilitators presented and clearly explained the process for the table discussions and guided the participants through the process. Stationery and related materials at all tables, including mobile flip charts, were well planned, appropriate and widely used. It was clear from the hearty and prolonged applause that the facilitators received at the end of the day that their work had been strongly appreciated. We recommend to collect

the facilitators' experiences. Their perceptions on group dynamics and contents of the debate are extremely valuable for both the evaluation process of the G1000 and the G32. Although the preparation and briefing of the facilitators did happen only a day prior to the event, they mostly felt well prepared and secure, surely also thanks to their own professional background and experience. Along with the graphic facilitation, they were the key to success.

■ ABOUT THE G32

We find it very important that the G32 will be given adequate space and time to truly get to grips with the complexities of the themes and that every effort is made to ensure that it is they who are in control of the agenda of the final discussions, not the G1000 organising team. We also suggest to brief key political leaders about the G32 in order to achieve sufficient political buy-in and ensure that the results of the G32 are transposed to decision-making debates. We believe it is very important that all the input submitted to the central desk during the G1000 is passed on to the G32 and taken into account. In this way it will be possible to assess the quality of the clustering process and to see how much the clustering process covered all the policy options identified during the G1000. We recommend to maintain a high level of transparency for the G32 process and to allow those who are not participating in this process a way to be kept informed of the process and its results. It was a wise decision to include participants of the G-homes and the G-offs in the G32; this will give the project additional strength.

Having received a great deal of attention from the national and international media, the organisers of the G1000 should now make an effort to invite politicians to formulate responses to this process. It will be important to see how they act upon the proposals, especially the ones the G32 will produce. Perhaps an additional media event should be organised at which political representatives discuss the final outcome. In this way the G1000 could push elected representatives towards explaining their policy choices and making them accountable for taking them into account. In this way the expectations of the participants of the G1000 could be satisfied and frustration might be avoided. We recommend using the experiences and insights of the G1000 to draw more general lessons on participatory processes, their output and impact. Given the heavy costs and logistics associated with participatory methodologies, how can a strong link with the political level be established in order to ensure that the results will be duly considered?

Concerning the content of the discussions, one could investigate which topics are the most suitable for mass deliberation and identify the added value of such processes especially regarding controversial issues. In addition, it would be good to learn lessons from the participants. What were their feelings, what has motivated them to take part, and how did they experience the G1000? It would be worthwhile to survey participants on such issues. Talking to participants, we noticed that there was a diffused understanding of why the G1000 actually was happening and we heard that people participated for a variety of reasons. A strong recurring theme in our conversations, however, was that there is a general dissatisfaction with the way democracy in Belgium is organised. The G1000 could help to define what kind of democracy would be better suited to meet the needs of today's citizens.

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On 11 June 2011, the Manifesto of the G1000 appeared in five national newspapers. The initial 27 signatories were the initiative's founders. In the weeks that followed, they were joined by 10,000 other signatories.



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(Leuven, 1983) PhD candidate, VUB. Researches democracy in deeply divided societies.
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Sigrid Bousset

(Brussel, 1969) Playwright and literary organiser. Recently published *Meer dan ik mij herinner*, a compilation of conversations with Ivo Michiels.
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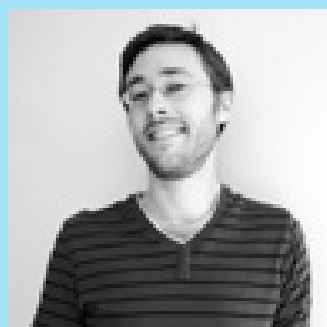
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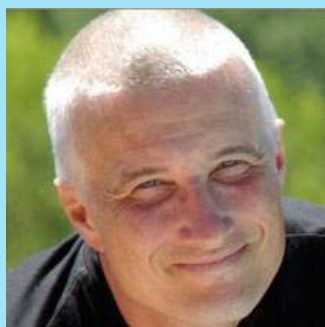
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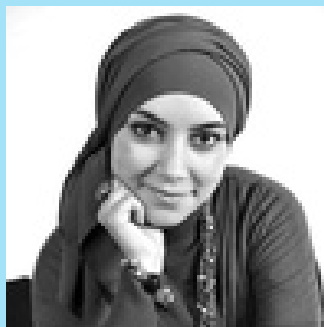
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... en al diegenen die vrijwillig de handen uit de mouwen hebben gestoken en hier per abuis niet zijn opgelijst!

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3M
AFOSOC-VESOFO
Art2Work
Atanor
Atelier en Tik
AuviPartners
Belgacom, Mobistar, Base, Telenet (0900 nummer)
Belgian Poster
Brightfish
Café de Fiennes
CDS
Colruyt
Delhaize
Geert Groffen
GFK Significant
Gum Studio
Het digitaal Geweld
Hogeschool Gent
Hotel Bloom
Hyundai
Inbev
Ivox
Kadenza
KPMG
Levuur
Lotus Bakeries
Momentum-pco
Negotrade
Paratel
Passaporta

Projuice
Rode Kruis
Saatchi & Saatchi
Sherpa
Streamdis
Studio Dann
Synthetron
T&T
Tolkenscholen Antwerpen, Brussel en Bergen
Video in motion
Visualharvesting
WDM
Wouter Deprez en NTGent
WWCC

STARRING IN THE CINEMA AD

Colette Braeckman, Fatma Girretz, Pierre Kroll, Dirk Tieleman, Sam Touzani, Pie Tshibanda, Bruno Vanden Broecke, Frieda Van Wijck, Francesca Vanthielen, Tom Waes, Manuel Zimmermann

Gerrit Rauws, director of the King Baudouin Foundation

"If democracy is just a method to make elections possible, then it turns out to be a meagre one. Public deliberation can be a way to reinforce representative democracy. Especially for social problems of which the choices to be made by the government are not obvious."



Maxime Prévot,
mayor of Namur

"I believe in a beautiful complementarity between the legitimacy of our elected representatives and that of the expertise of citizens' life experience. Governance of today is not the same as 15 or 30 years ago. Governance of the future calls for new methods of engagement and participation as much as taking part now rather than watching it happen from a distance."



Jürgen Oosterwaal, chief editor Knack

"Of course there is a certain naivety behind this project and it sounds rather pompous, but I find it hard when people treat it like a laughing matter. Our democracy is tired and is even showing signs of weariness. That a group of people is trying to take matters into their own hands and through study and dialogue is trying to reinvent the democratic process is admirable and shows a sense of civic pride."



Nathalie & Jean-Luc, volunteers

Nathalie is the contact person for participants of the citizen panel: "It is my opinion that it is a gift to be allowed to participate. A privilege to witness such a fascinating process from close by." Jean-Luc was one of the attendees last year at one of the tables of the citizens' summit and registered himself as a volunteer this time. He is now the resident photographer.

Miriana,
of the communication unit

"Can somebody explain to me why politicians are so afraid of citizens? We only have the best intentions for (representative) democracy and we want to give it a new breath of life. OK, maybe the present party political body could receive a few scratches...but isn't it in dire need of innovation?!"



As European democracies are in crisis the G1000 shows a way forward.

- Report of the international observers to the G1000



On 11 June 2011, after exactly one year without a government, the Manifesto of the G1000 was published. No less than five national newspapers printed it: De Standaard, De Morgen, De Tijd, Le Soir and La Libre Belgique. “If the politicians can’t provide a solution, then involve the citizenry in the debate,” it said. “What ordinary people lack in knowledge, they make up in freedom.” After only a few days, more than 10,000 people had signed the Manifesto, more than 800 volunteers registered, and thousands of donations streamed in.

What did this citizen initiative become one and a half year later, after a citizen summit and a citizen panel? What are the findings, the lessons learned and the perspectives for the future?

Can the G1000 experiment of deliberative democracy by sortition inspire the necessary renewal of our democracy?

One thing is for sure, the G1000 has put the need for revitalization of democracy on the agenda.

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