

# Deliberative democracy in Belgium

G1000  
&  
Ostbelgien Model

Cato Léonard

Rome, July 15th 2019



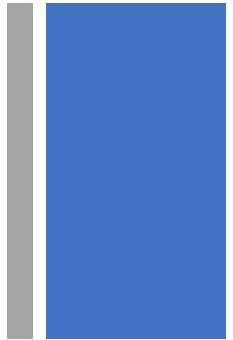
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## How can citizens express themselves?

- ✓ Elections
- ✓ Opinion polls / referenda
- ✓ Deliberative democracy

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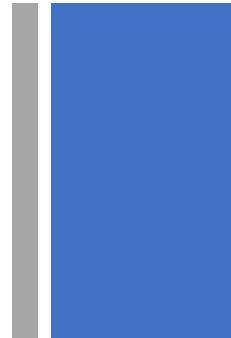
## Elections



- + Everybody votes, nobody speaks
- The elected person doesn't know why she/he is elected

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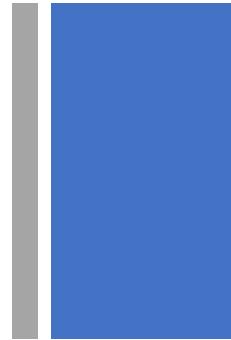
## Opinion polls/referenda



- + More focus on the content
- Lack of knowledge amongst citizens on the details

# James Fishkin

prof in Austin, Texas, prof in Stanford, California, Center for Deliberative Democracy



“In a poll, we ask people what they think when they don’t think. It would be more interesting to ask what they think after they had a chance to think.”

# G1000: Deliberative democracy

INNOVATION OF DEMOCRACY BY ENGAGING CITIZENS IN  
AN ORGANISED DEBATE

CITIZENS ARE ABLE TO COME WITH SERIOUS PROPOSALS FOR POLICY WHEN:

YOU BRING THEM TOGETHER IN DIVERSITY

PROVIDE THEM EXPERTISE ON THE SUBJECT

IN AN ORGANISED DEBATE

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY IS COMPLEMENTARY TO

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

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# Consensus through debate



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# G1000

27 founders

750 citizens draft by lot in Brussels 11/11/11

730 citizens online, G-Home

350 citizens at home G-Offs

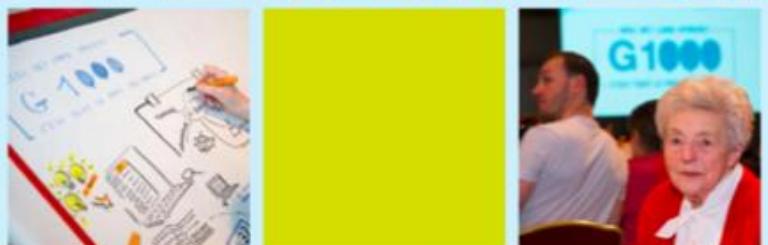
7 presidents of parliament accepted the results

32 citizens continued meetings in Flemish and Walloon Parliament + Senate

Budget: 450.000 euro

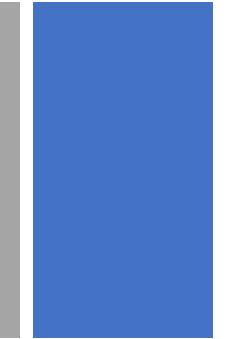


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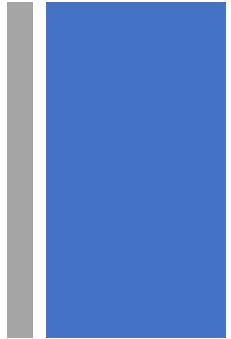


DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

G1000



# Take aways

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1. Diversity of citizens is key
  2. Participation charter: What will be done with the result, how will you measure success?
  3. Let citizens and stakeholders decide on the subjects to be discussed
  4. Have experts available for technical issues.
  5. Be transparent: communicate on the process and the results.

Having citizens involved  
in democratic processes  
empowers politicians  
to do their job  
and  
narrowsthe gap  
between  
citizens and democracy

# Ostbelgien Model

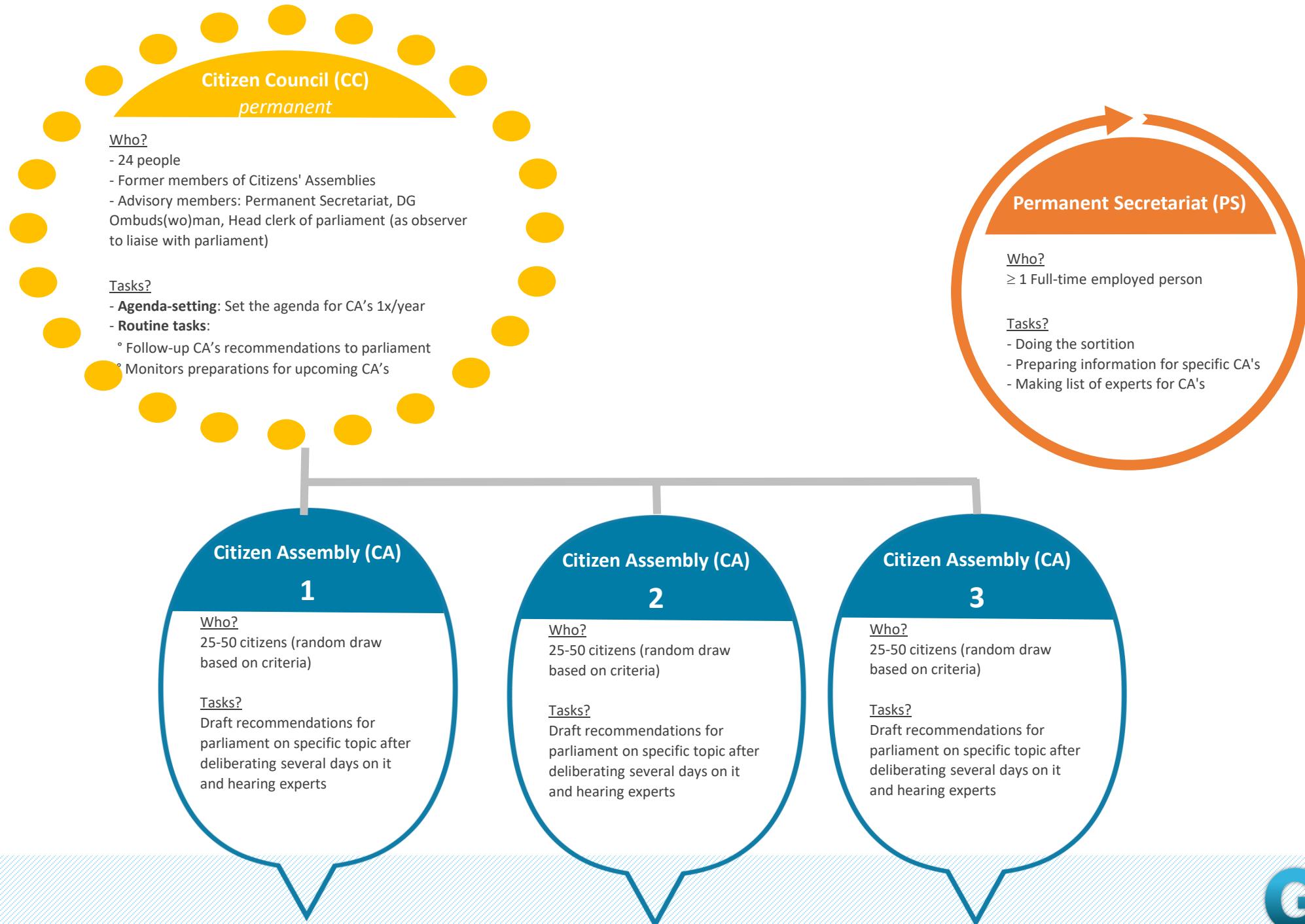
- 2018: The Minister President of the German speaking part of Belgium (the smallest region in Europe) asks the G1000 to rethink the democratic system by adding a permanent citizens' assembly to the existing structure.
- G1000 together with worldwide experts on deliberative democracy **deliver a tailor made solution**
- 2019: The proposal was **unanimously voted** by the parliament.



G1000

# Ostbelgien Model

- **Citizens Council (CA)** – permanent 24 citizens in rotation
  - Role:
    - agenda setting
    - follow-up
- **Permanent Secretary (PS)**
  - Role:
    - logistics
    - sortition of the citizens
    - Process and organisation
- **Citizens' Assembly (CA)** - 25-50 citizens draft by lot
  - Role:
    - deliberative discussion on one topic at a time
    - make recommendations for policy to the political actors



## Citizen Council (CC)

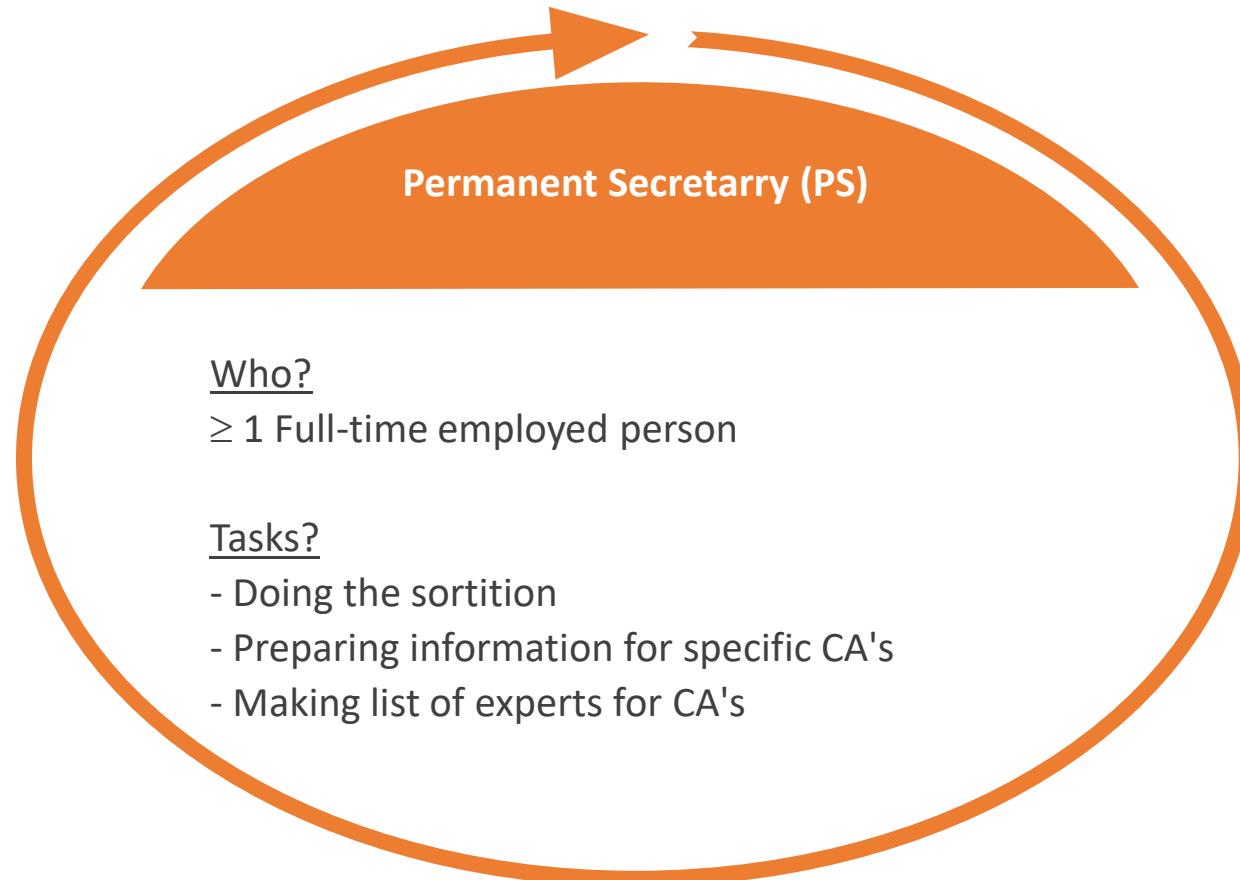
*permanent*

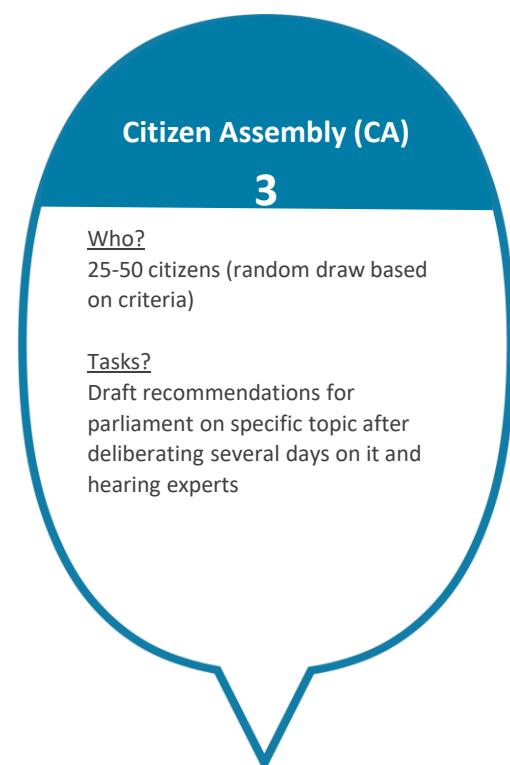
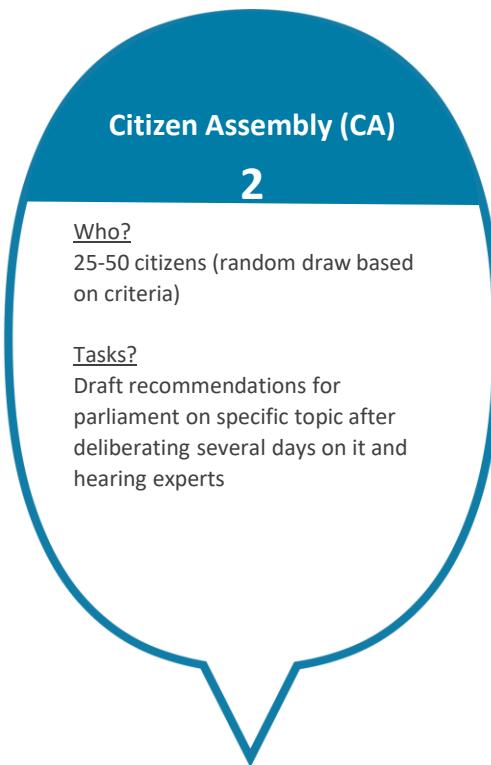
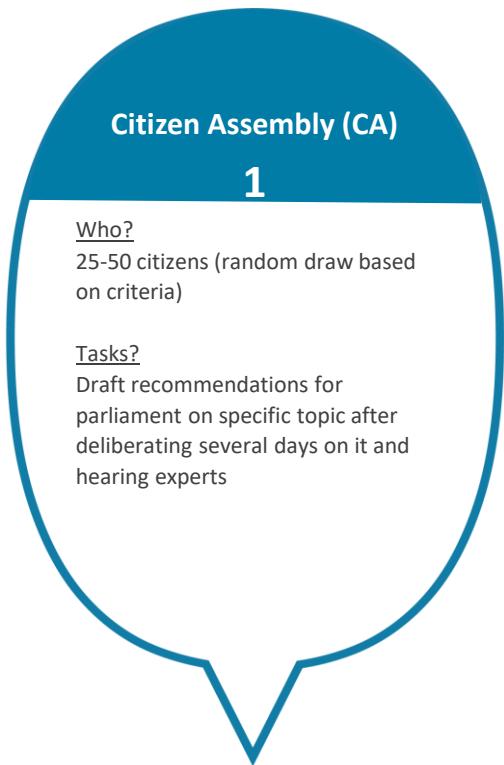
### Who?

- 24 people
- Former members of Citizens' Assemblies
- Advisory members: Permanent Secretariat, DG Ombuds(wo)man, Head clerk of parliament (as observer to liaise with parliament)

### Tasks?

- **Agenda-setting:** Set the agenda for CA's 1x/year
- **Routine tasks:**
  - ° Follow-up CA's recommendations to parliament
  - ° Monitors preparations for upcoming CA's





# Ostbelgien Model

- What will be done with the results of the citizens' assembly?
  - Proposals have to be accepted above a certain threshold by the CA
  - The results will be discussed in parliamentary commissions + Plenary and feedback has been given to the citizens. If proposals are not accepted, motivation is mandatory.
  - This process will be followed-up by the Citizens' Council

Citizens have a vote,  
also give them a voice

Questions & discussion

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