

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.)

 *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).*

PROJECT	
Participant:	European Alternatives Berlin E.V (EA Berlin)
PIC number:	937396167
Project name and acronym:	[TransEuropa Assemblies] — [TEA Project]

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	[9]
Event name:	Transnational Assembly of Solidarity Across Borders
Type:	Assembly format – talks, panel discussion & group discussions
In situ/online:	online
Location:	Berlin, Germany
Date(s):	17.11.2023 - 19.11.2023
Website(s) (if any):	https://euroalter.com/transnational-assembly-of-solidarity-across-borders/
Participants	
Female:	77
Male:	40
Non-binary:	9
From country 1 [Austria]:	1
From country 2 [Belgium]:	9
From country 3 [Czech Republic]:	1

From country 4:[Denmark]	2		
From country 3 [France]:	4		
From country 4 [Germany]	48		
From country 5 [Greece]	2		
From country 6 [Ireland]:	3		
From country 7 [Italy]:	17		
From country 8 [Netherlands]:	6		
From country 9 [Poland]:	11		
From Country 10 [Portugal]	4		
From Country 11 [Romania]	6		
From country 12[Spain]	10		
From country 13 [Sweden]	2		
Total number of participants:	126	From total number of countries:	13
Description			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
<p>The <i>Transnational Assembly of Solidarity Across Borders</i>, brought together 126 people (77 female, 40 male, 9 non-binary) from and residing in 13 European countries.</p> <p>The online event took place as part of a larger three day hybrid assembly that engaged members of different civil society groups, worker representatives, community organisers, educators, artists and researchers from the field to convene on how to build solidarity across borders, tackle disinformation exchange best practices on how to increase involvement more and specifically more diverse groups of EU citizens and residents in civic participation. The tripartite assembly served to create a space of trust and mutual understanding and offered an occasion for democratic participation and deliberation online as well as in person. The online event focussed specifically on building trust in assemblies as a precondition for</p> <p>Opening up several transformative learning spaces, the tripartite assembly was specifically targeted at citizens affected by unequal social, gender and migrant rights and those in precarious employment conditions, as well as those with lower levels of education. It promoted reflexive learning and was run from a bottom up approach, empowering those who are often excluded or prevented from participation in such deliberative spaces. Overall, the assembly was a rewarding occasion of learning and exchange in Berlin. In the face of the world situation, the methodologies employed offered a safe and trustworthy space for citizens to engage in contemplation and conversation, juxtaposed to the rising climate of distrust that many people experienced over the last period, especially heightened by the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living crisis, the rise in disinformation and the uncertainty and fear induced by ongoing war and injustices.</p>			

Selection of participants for the assembly included our own networks and close collaboration with local partners, associations (including trade unions, migrant workers organisations and civil society groups) and with institutional partners (including the University of Gdansk, University of Siegen and University of Kassel). The diversity of participants recruited for the assembly and the possibility to join in-person and online allowed for an interdisciplinary conversation, cross-sector collaboration and manifested in a fruitful exchange. Besides our existing partnerships and networks in Berlin and transnationally, we advertised the assembly via social media and were able to attract a large number of participants, residing in 13 different EU countries and from a very diverse set of backgrounds, as well as engaging participants from previous TEA assemblies.

Leading up to the European elections in 2024, the assembly was a successful opportunity to bring together those with little access or often excluded from democratic deliberation processes, who at this occasion had the chance to participate fully and engage in conversation with a range of other citizens.

Description of the Event/ Content & Methodology

Hosted in the restored church and well-known community centre and place for assembly and organising, Startbahn in Neukölln, the assembly employed several formats to involve the 126 participants throughout the process and ensure a participatory programme design. The assembly promoted democratic deliberation and addressed the question of how we can organise solidarity across borders. This tripartite methodology allowed participants to deepen their connections, while still benefiting from input from the outside. The tripartite assembly consisted of the following three formats:

- a) The **opening assembly** on Friday afternoon addressed social, gender, democratic rights and touched upon the question of how to establish and further strengthen trust between civil society, academia, non-profit organisations and democratic institutions. It opened with a short input on the rise of disinformation in the EU and then allowed participants to exchange best practices on how to tackle it in their respective countries. This setting laid the groundwork for trust and collaboration in the space, necessary to prepare for the next two stages of the assembly formats. After some initial public interventions, the assembly allowed for small group discussions, which were then fed back to the plenary and later deliberated to create collective learnings and public recommendations.
- b) The **public assembly** on Friday evening included invited community organisers and representatives and was advertised publicly for in-person and online participation. The assembly opened with excerpts from the film "From Here" (USA/GER/2020/89'), which inspired the first round of group discussion on how to build trust and solidarity, amidst the growing climate of distrust and misinformation. The format was run from a migrant rights perspective and included a story-telling methodology in the small groups, led by community leaders, facilitators and protagonists from the movie. The participation of the community leaders not only increased the depth of discussion, but also allowed the groups to engage with EU residents and citizens from very different backgrounds. Further steps in the deliberation process included mapping people's individual journey of democratic belonging and sharing best practices on how to involve more and especially more diverse groups of citizens and residents of the EU to partake in civic engagement. The public event employed mixed methods and alongside some smaller group conversations, also enabled participants to share their concerns and stories with the larger public. This setting therewith promoted a dialogical format and employed methods of a bottom up citizen's assembly. The methodology was previously unknown to most participants but successfully implemented, offering fruitful exchange on policy and practice and encouraged participants to up-take the method in their own civil society contexts.
- c) The **three circles of non-public reflection and deliberation assembly** were used as a methodology to strengthen trust amongst the group and allow for deeper understanding and conversation. With a specifically developed methodology, participants were able to engage on a personal-political question in conversations building psycho-social resilience and trust. This final assembly went into the personal consequences of disinformation and hate campaigns and participants discussed how to not only protect their communities but also build resilience so that more people are encouraged to partake in EU civic spaces. The smaller group formats are of immense importance to allow the group to deliberate more exclusively in a trustworthy setting, delivering more space to negotiate and settle on collective conclusions.

The event was announced as follows:

*Nowadays, we live – beyond the borders of nation states – in a **political climate of general mistrust**, which is expressed not only in resentment towards governments and institutions. There is also increasing hostility against already burned out activists, under-resourced political groups, and civil society in general. At the same time **disinformation** is as present as ever before, leading to disinformation campaigns against civil society actors, while making it harder for citizens to access the*

*knowledge they need. Within times of growing uncertainty and economic volatility it is of great importance to engage with civil society in places of trust, where we can not only strengthen **community engagement and learn from best practises** to deepen democracy in different localities, but also foster social cohesion and build relationships and alliances that can uphold the increasingly fragile networks of democracy.*

*We are excited to dive extensively into the **method of citizens assembly** to give participants a first hand experience of direct democracy, while fostering trust and mutual understanding. Experts from different fields will discuss how to counter disinformation and share best practices on how to involve more EU residents and especially those that are less represented or marginalised in civic participation. In participatory exchange rounds, the audience will not only experience practices that embody democratic liberation but also have the space to vision about what is to be done about the current political climate of mistrust and disinformation.*

*Our **Transnational Winter Academy** under the title »Moving at the Speed of Trust« provides a co-created space for civil society actors, activists and academics to learn from and with each other what it means to build collective trust and solidarity across the intersectional differences within a growing climate of disinformation and distrust. The **tripartite assembly structure** will allow for in-depth analysis of best practices and serve to not only experience democratic methodology but also present a range of **recommendations after the assembly**.*

The outcomes of the small-group discussions and the plenaries led to an intense and fruitful deliberation process on the intersecting dimension of the struggles for social, gender, rights at work and democratic rights across Europe and how all of them are affected by the rise of disinformation. Encountering lived experiences from different participants created an atmosphere of humility, deep learning and listening and opened up perspective for further conversation. The sharing of best practises on how to involve more EU citizens and residents in democratic action were shared and highly appreciated. Although not directly based on the critica of sortition, the participant body was very diverse in terms of age, gender, race, class and social mobility. Creating the aforementioned space of trust was an active attempt to counter disinformation, yet so present in European societies. The setting offered a useful ground for citizens to later contemplate policy recommendations and the role of their community in European democratic processes.

Several participants, local social media outlets and our event partner shared about the event on social media causing traction around the topics of trust, deliberation, identity and belonging.

Participants

The participants were citizens of or residents in 13 EU countries and had a vast diversity of backgrounds. 61% were female, 31% male and 8% non-binary; around 45% were under the age of 32, 60% of the participant group considered themselves as part of a discriminated group, 20% without further education and 30% precariously employed or unemployed. The particular focus on migrant communities and racialised groups actively targeted those often underrepresented, marginalized and with a generally lower voting turnout. Online participation additionally allowed for people to join who have access restrictions, care obligations or for other reasons can not attend in person events.

Many of the participants are active members of their local communities, partake in civil society activities and advocate for social, gender and migrant rights. The diverse demographic of the assembly brought their lived realities and daily challenges to the assembly. While these experiences certainly enriched the discussion, they also revealed a vast range of differences in approach and best practices among the participants. Further needs around the practical solutions and their implementation in the different countries differed. The target group benefited from the transnational participant community of the assembly, which generated a vivid interaction among the audience and enabled a first-hand experience of transnational democracy. The format allowed people to listen to each other's stories and personal accounts, before going to an abstract level of how to tackle injustices systemically. Especially on the topic of disinformation this personalised approach ensures that agency is maintained and people do not get disillusioned or paralyzed by the complexity and at times difficult circumstances and routes to address disinformation campaigns.

Challenges

Challenges included different levels of English, a variety of backgrounds (not enough knowledge to adequately adapt to context and situate particular experiences among the audience), and the diversity of needs of the group. With a more context specific approach to some lived realities, the formats and methodologies of deliberative participation could have been further explained and embedded in the experiences of participants. Some participants for example had very detailed accounts of countering

disinformation in their locality, while others were relatively new to the topic. Creating a space of trust stood as a central pillar of the assembly, while at the same time also being one of the key challenges, as the consequences of the climate of distrust and misinformation spread widely.

Future Activities

European Alternatives thrives from a lively network and this assembly increased the community outreach and partnership to new stakeholders in the field. Participants were invited to a follow up community gathering in the late winter of 2023 and other events in 2024.

Invitations for further events and TEA assemblies will be shared, alongside other workshops and events hosted by European Alternatives. Most participants joined the newsletter and many expressed active interest in EA’s journal and in joining future activities, such as the annual Transeuropa festival led by European Alternatives. Specific actors of the assembly will be invited to contribute to EA’s upcoming campaign around the European elections, while others will be invited to the final TEA assembly to share their experiences from the methodology and encounter in Berlin. All the activities aim to further:

- monitor and promote CSOs participation in the EU democratic participation spaces
- raise awareness about civic engagement specifically amongst under-represented communities
- defend climate justice for all

Policy Recommendations

The three policy orientations to be taken forward to the next assemblies (in summary):

i) promote deliberative and public spaces of trust (like citizen’s assemblies) where civil society groups can start engaging in and/or strengthen their democratic practice and learn from the challenges and solutions in other European regions. Especially within the polycrisis and amidst the rise in disinformation, public spaces are necessary to re-establish trust in democratic institutions and amongst citizens. These deliberative spaces should always focus on creating trust between participants to allow for everyone to speak. Inspiring formats that actually serve the needs of the communities can be used as an outreach tool to include a more diverse audience.

ii) support underrepresented civil society actors (precariously employed or unemployed, migrants, refugees and youth) to participate in deliberative processes (like citizens assemblies) to rekindle trust in democratic institutions and civil society, eventually uplifting voter turnout and community engagement rates. The aforementioned (i) public spaces should strongly focus their outreach and engagement on the underrepresented population. Many of these citizens and residents have strong community network ties and can mobilise their community towards community and civic engagement. The political potential of aforementioned groups should not be underestimated and rather fostered through supporting participation supporting multi-language participation, childcare and financial travel and participation support.

iii) strengthen the civil society awareness on mechanisms of democratic participation to counter the spread of paralysis and uncertainty caused by the rise in (mix)-disinformation campaigns. This would heighten CSO awareness of existing initiatives and fuel agency, instead of fostering a climate of mistrust and working in silos where groups do not feel heard or connected.

Those recommendations for [building a permanent citizens assembly were compiled into a Blueprint](#), as the basis for a crowdsourced document and as a stimulus for further public debate. Ultimately, with this crowdsourced strategic blueprint we hope to demonstrate why and how to institutionalise a fully-fledged European Citizens’ Assembly that empowers European civil society and is a permanent asset of Europe’s democratic future. It therefore call on citizens as well as European democratic civil society to contribute to this strategic effort: to reflect on their discursive practices, to re-conceptualise their role - actual and desired - in European democracy, and to imagine citizens’ assemblies as democratic innovations that put novel, inclusive transnational democratic practices on the political stage.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE

1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).