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:	1 - Alternatives Européennes (EuroAlter)
PIC number:	941964479
Project name and acronym:	The Democratic Odyssey - ODYSSEY

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	Deliverable D8 Work Package 5
Event name:	SECOND ASSEMBLY SESSION & EXPERTS ONBOARDING
Type:	Online assembly
In situ/online:	online
Location:	Zoom
Date(s):	26th November 2024
Website(s) (if any):	https://euroalter.com/do-assembly-session/
Participants:	
Female:	116 participants
Male:	81 participants
Non-binary:	6
Greece:	49
Luxembourg	2
Albania	1
France	10
Romania	1
Italy	14
Cyprus	2
Germany	63

Sweden	2
Poland	3
Spain	7
Hungary	2
Austria	16
Netherlands	3
Czech Rep	3
Latvia	2
Slovenia	2
Belgium	10
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1
Estonia	1
Lithuania	1
Croatia	1
Slovakia	1
Portugal	2
Malta	1
Ireland	3

Total number of participants:	203	From total number of countries:	26

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

This report provides an overview of the deliverable 8 (D8) on the second assembly session and the onboarding of experts, outlining key discussions, decisions, and next steps.

REPORT ON SECOND ASSEMBLY SESSION

The Democratic Odyssey and its crowdsourced campaign is advocating for a "permanent peoples' assembly for Europe" by mobilising a wide-ranging and pluralistic group of actors, including academics, practitioners, journalists, institutional representatives and civil society. Inspired by the tentative efforts of past EU legislatures to institutionalise citizen participation, it seeks to go further.

As part of this journey, the Democratic Odyssey launched a pilot transnational assembly, designed to bring together a representative group of citizens in multilingual, transnational deliberations. This assembly is not a single event but a dynamic, evolving process that unfolds across multiple European cities, incorporating both in-person and online formats. Each stage of the journey serves as a stepping stone towards greater citizen involvement, planting the seeds for a more participatory European democracy.

The Online Gathering of November 26th, 2024, was a critical milestone in this process. Following the first in-person assembly in Athens (September 27-29th, 2024), this online session provided an opportunity for assembly members to reconnect, reflect on past discussions, and build momentum toward future deliberations, including the upcoming assemblies in Florence (February 2025) and Vienna (May 2025). The gathering aimed to bridge the in-person meetings, ensure continuity, and further develop the ideas and proposals shaping the assembly's agenda.

This online space was designed to be inclusive and participatory, offering interpretation in Greek and German. It allowed the 203 assembly members, who were selected through a civic lottery, to remain engaged beyond the physical meetings. By leveraging digital tools such as mentimeter and interactive methods, the gathering facilitated meaningful dialogue, expert insights, and collective sense-making, reinforcing the assembly's role as an evolving, transnational, citizen-driven platform.

Participants:

The Online Gathering on November 26th, 2024, brought together a total of 203 participants from 26 countries. The majority of attendees were assembly members who had participated in the Athens Assembly in September. Additionally, the gathering included experts and members of our online pool—a group specifically selected to follow and engage with the process virtually. This diverse mix ensured that discussions were both grounded in the experiences of those who had

deliberated in person and enriched by fresh perspectives from those engaging remotely.

What?

The gathering was structured into two parts:

Part 1: For Athens Assembly Members .

This first hour was exclusively for participants of the Athens Assembly, providing a space to reflect on their experience and reactions to the key messages that emerged from their deliberations.

Agenda:

- ● | Welcome and Introduction
- ● | Our Messages from Athens
- ● | Your Reactions to the Messages

Part 2: Expert Insights & Broader Discussion

For the second hour, the space was expanded to include observers and members of the online pool, widening the conversation and incorporating expert analysis into the discussion.

Agenda:

- ● | Welcome
- ● | Our Messages from Athens
- ● | Analyst Reaction to Athens' Outputs
    - ○ Richard Youngs, senior fellow at Carnegie Europe and professor of international relations at the University of Warwick, provided an expert perspective. Drawing from his latest book, *Democratic Crossroads: Transformations in Twenty-First-Century Politics*, he contextualized the themes discussed in Athens within broader democratic trends.
- ● | The Road to Florence

The discussions

Part 1: For Athens Assembly Members

The session began with a review of the Athens Assembly by a member of the coordination team, followed by a presentation summarizing key outcomes categorized into three themes: *What Needs to Be Kept, What Needs to Change, and What Needs to Be Invented.*

- What Needs to Be Kept: Participants highlighted the resilience of grassroots solidarity during crises. Civil society, mutual aid networks, and digital adaptations were identified as crucial. Crises were seen as moments that strengthened community bonds and appreciation for frontline workers.
- What Needs to Change: Governance failures, lack of citizen consultation, and misuse of emergency measures were central concerns. Participants called for a culture of care, stronger mental health support, better crisis preparedness, and transparent communication to combat misinformation.
- What Needs to Be Invented: Discussions emphasized expanding political participation beyond voting. Proposals included more frequent political mandate reviews, permanent citizens' assemblies, and greater government accountability through participatory democracy.

After the revision of the discussions from Athens, participants gave their feedback via Mentimeter reaffirming these key insights. Among the elements that should be maintained were freedom of speech, citizen engagement, participatory democracy, and grassroots efforts. Calls for change focused on improving accountability and transparency, strengthening international cooperation, enhancing crisis preparedness, and combating misinformation. The discussion underscored the need for a more inclusive, democratic, and proactive approach to governance in Europe.

Part 2: Expert Insights & Broader Discussion

During the second part of the gathering, Richard Youngs, senior fellow at Carnegie Europe and professor of international relations at the University of Warwick, provided an expert perspective on the topic of democratic crisis.

He argued that global democracy faces three major transformative crises: climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and geopolitical tensions. These crises are reshaping politics worldwide, making crisis management the new normal. Democracy must reinvent itself to demonstrate that it is the best-equipped system to handle these challenges.

His key points were:

1. Crisis and Democracy: While crises have fueled democratic citizen initiatives like the Democratic Odyssey, they have also strengthened authoritarian tendencies. Some governments have used crises to centralize power, and public support for authoritarianism has grown.
2. Fragmented Citizen Initiatives: Many new democratic initiatives focus on specific issues rather than reshaping democracy as a whole. A shift from "democracy by action" to a broader democratic vision is needed.
3. Diverse Forms of Participation: Citizen assemblies are just one of many forms of democratic engagement. The challenge is to connect different forms of participation—local organizations, social movements, and assemblies—to maximize impact.
4. State-Society Cooperation: Stronger state capacities in crisis management must be integrated with citizen participation. Democracies must balance swift governmental responses with transparency and inclusivity.

His speech was followed by a question and answer section:

Participants raised critical questions about how to effectively convey messages from democratic initiatives to those in power. The discussion emphasized the importance of engaging in media outreach and ensuring that findings from assemblies like the Democratic Odyssey reach decision-makers in a meaningful way. There was also a broader reflection on the evolving role of the state, particularly in the context of crises. While some noted that states have been expanding their powers in response to economic challenges, the pandemic, and climate emergencies, concerns were raised about the declining trust in government, particularly in Western countries. The discussion highlighted the fine balance between strengthening state capacities while ensuring they remain accountable, transparent, and democratic.

Another key issue was the resilience of democracy in times of crisis. The conversation acknowledged that states of emergency often allow governments to assume greater control, sometimes at the expense of democratic principles. The challenge lies in ensuring that democracy is not sidelined during crises but rather reinforced through participatory mechanisms and citizen engagement. A related point was the perception of democracy and politics among the general public. Many people distrust politicians and shy away from political discourse, yet they are eager to contribute to society in practical ways. This disconnect underscores the need to link democratic participation with tangible, everyday concerns, demonstrating that democracy is not just about institutions but about collective problem-solving.

Finally, the conversation touched on the role of participatory democracy, particularly citizens' assemblies, in countering populism and aiding politicians in decision-making. Assemblies can provide a structured space for discussing complex issues, helping to navigate difficult political decisions that elected representatives may hesitate to address directly. Examples were given of how citizens' assemblies have been successfully used in the past to tackle contentious topics, reinforcing the idea that democratic engagement can serve as a valuable tool for both citizens and policymakers alike.

REPORT ON EXPERTS ONBOARDING

Experts Onboarding

In the context of the Democratic Odyssey, we onboard experts with a granular approach to enrich the Assembly process with informed perspectives while ensuring their contributions align with key deliberative moments and simultaneously convey the pluralism of public discourse. This approach allows experts to provide insights that are both timely and relevant. The European University Institute team and the broader DO team have conducted multiple briefings to familiarize experts with the Assembly's progress, ensuring they are well-prepared to engage effectively with citizens and across different Work Packages.

The onboarding of experts focused on gathering expertise from relevant actors from civil society, academia, think tanks and applying this to our methodologies in preparation for the online assembly moment (WP5) on the 26th of November 2024 and further webinars and assembly sessions.

In particular, the Democratic Odyssey team has onboarded:

- Richard Youngs, senior fellow in the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, based at Carnegie Europe.
- Hanspeter Kriesi, part-time professor in the Department of political and social Science at the EUI and Principal Investigator of the SOLID project
- Olivia Lazard, environmental peacemaking and mediation practitioner as well as a researcher.
- Albena Azmanova, writer, scholar and political commentator interested in social justice and political judgment, the rise of new ideologies, and democracy's troubles with capitalism

Richard Young intervened during the online Assembly moment, on the basis of his most recent publication, "Democratic Crossroads: Transformations in Twenty-First-Century Politics", informing participants on how democratic systems can find ways to adapt to contemporary challenges. Hanspeter Kriesi and Olivia Lazard interventions took place on the 28th of January 2025 in a webinar related to

¡EU institutional functioning during crisis'. The other experts will contribute to future assemblies and the Deliberation Academy as part of this project.

Additionally, the team has onboarded:
- Manos Tsakiris, Professor of Psychology at the Department of Psychology, Royal Holloway, University of London where he directs the Lab of Action & Body
- Claudio Radaelli, political scientist specialised in public policy
- Jonathan Kamkhaji, post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Florence School of Transnational Governance of the European University Institute.
- Ingeborg Niestroy, Project Coordinator of the EU Horizon 2020 project REAL-DEAL: "Reshaping citizen deliberations for the European Green Deal"
- Ehoud Shapiro, scientist, entrepreneur, artist, and political activist who is Professor of Computer Science and Biology at the Weizmann Institute of Science
- Jonathan Moskovic, expert in democratic innovation and citizen participation
- Paul Blokker, Professor of Law University of Bologna
- Michele Fiorillo, Citizens TakeOver Europe
- Karolina Wigura, Associate Professor, University of Warsaw
- Jana Ahlers, head of education at European Alternatives
- Tony Venables, Founder of ECIT foundation and of ECAS
- Suzana Carp, Climate Specialist, Board member ECIT foundation
- Tony Czarnecki, Futurist, founder of Sustensis
- Giovanni Allegretti, Senior Researcher at the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, coordinator Phoenix Horizon project
- Caroline Paulick-Thiel, strategic designer Politics for Tomorrow

This deliverable aims at bringing together a diverse group of experts specializing in the obstacles and enablers of democratising crisis response in Europe, as well as the intersectional challenges posed by polycrises. The group consists of members of the Democratic Odyssey's Constituent Network and beyond- academics, think tanks professionals, civil society representatives, policymakers, and private sector stakeholders with relevant expertise. From this pool, individuals have been carefully selected to ensure their valuable input informs and enhances the Democratic Odyssey process.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).