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

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	Deliverable D10 WP6
Event name:	THIRD ASSEMBLY SESSION
Type:	On Site Assembly
In situ/online:	in-situ
Location:	Florence, Italy
Date(s):	21st of February to 23rd of February
Website(s) (if any):	https://euroalter.com/do-third-assembly-session/
Participants	
Female:	156
Male:	137
Non-binary:	3
Countries	
Austria	4
Belgium	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3
Bulgaria	1
Croatia	2
Cyprus	1
Czech Republic	4

Denmark	1
Estonia	1
Finland	1
France	9
Germany	11
Greece	23
Hungary	3
Ireland	1
Italy	203
Latvia	3
Lithuania	1
Malta	2
Netherlands	3
Poland	3
Portugal	2
Romania	2
Slovakia	1
Slovenia	2
Spain	5
Sweden	1

Total number of participants:	296	From total number of countries:	27

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

The Democratic Odyssey and its crowdsourced campaign advocate for a "permanent peoples' assembly for Europe", mobilizing a diverse and pluralistic group of actors—including academics, practitioners,

journalists, institutional representatives, and civil society. Inspired by past EU efforts to institutionalize citizen participation, it seeks to go further.

Where?

To make the case, we embarked on a journey with a pilot assembly, engaging in multilingual, transnational deliberations. This assembly travels across different European cities, meeting both in person and online, planting the seeds for deeper citizen engagement at each stop.

Our journey began with Athens, where the first on-site assembly took place in September 2024. This was followed by an online gathering on November 26th, 2024, ensuring continued engagement across borders. The assembly reconvened in Florence from February 21st to 23rd, 2025, marking the second in-person gathering and the third overall moment of deliberation.

When?

The first in-person assembly took place in Athens from September 27-29, 2024, at the start of a new EU institutional cycle, aiming to shape the agenda for the next five years. The second on-site assembly in Florence (February 21-23, 2025) built on this momentum, allowing members to continue their deliberations and draft recommendations from the discussions in Athens, while incorporating new perspectives.

Who?

The pilot assembly began with 230 members in Athens, who committed to participating until September 1, 2025. For the Florence Assembly, we brought 60 participants from the Athens gathering—including 20 ambassadors and 40 transnational members, who are traveling to each on-site assembly.

In addition, we welcomed 60 new members in Florence, selected from among the city's residents. This included a diverse group of individuals, as well as new civil society organizations and global citizens, who helped enrich the deliberative process and anchor it to the local reality.

Beyond the assembly itself, we also engaged the broader public through a cultural event involving local European associations and civil society on Friday, February 21, which brought together over 100 participants, expanding the conversation on democratic participation beyond the core group of assembly members.

In total 296 people participated in the democratic deliberations of the second physical assembly in Florence.

What?

In Florence, the assembly tackled the question:

"What needs to change for Europe to tackle future challenges? And how can we, the people, help better steer the ship?"

This discussion was framed within the broader theme of "A Citizens' Agenda in Times of Crisis: Can We Become Effective Change-Makers?" Participants explored how citizens can play a more active role in shaping policy, responding to crises, and driving democratic innovation at the European level. Through

deliberation, they identified key areas for action and strategies to enhance citizen-led decision-making in an era of uncertainty.

AGENDA - Florence Assembly

Friday, 21st February – Palazzo Buontalenti, Florence - Local onboarding

- Onboarding Part I – Welcoming and Introduction
- Onboarding Part II – Civic Arts: From Athens to Florence
- Onboarding Part III – Sharing Experiences of Crisis & Integrating New Members, with interaction with George Papandreou (former Greek Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, member of Hellenic Assembly, member of Council of Europe), Dario Nardella (MEP, former Mayor of Florence)

Friday, 21st February – Le Murate, Florence - The village for Civic Action
- MAD – Black History Month Guided Tour of exhibitions
- Gallery – Panel: Big Tech, Populism & Free Speech (with Ponte Europa)
- Casa delle Donne – Feminismo Nero Latino Americano
  A conversation with writer Claudileia Lemes Dias and academics on Black Latin American feminism
- Gallery – Documentary Screening: *Food For Profit*
  Investigating the political and economic ties of the meat industry and its impact on society
- Gallery – Panel: Beyond Exploitation – Anti-Speciesism & Climate Struggles
  Exploring the connections between climate justice, animal rights, and democracy
- Gallery – Dinner Break with Free Vegan Food & informal activities
- Gallery – Poetry Slam Performance by Giuliano Logos
- Gallery – DJ Set by Elena Gianetti

Saturday, 22nd February – Palazzo Vecchio - Reconciling contradictions

- Dialogue with Officials & Insights from Athens, including participation of Mayor of Fiesole and city advisory of Florence
- Small Group Discussions – From Crisis Experiences to Difficult Conversations
- Plenary Session – Understanding Trade-Offs in Decision-Making
- Group Work – Exchanging Knowledge and Experiences
- Group-Based Trade-Off Discussions – Reconciling Contradictions & Closing Reflections

Sunday, 23rd February – Florence School of Transnational Governance - Our recommendations

- Registration
- Finalization of Draft Recommendations
- Coffee Break
- World Café – Interactive Discussions on Key Takeaways
- Plenary and closure

Friday 21st February: Onboarding and Public event, 'The village for Civic Action'

The Florence Assembly commenced with two parallel events, each setting the stage for an engaging and inclusive gathering.

Onboarding

On one side, the newly selected Florentine residents—fresh members of the Assembly— participated in a dedicated onboarding session designed to familiarize them with the deliberative process.

During this session, participants received an introduction to the concept of citizens' assemblies, gaining insights into their purpose, structure, and impact. They had the opportunity to meet the ambassadors from Athens—assembly members from the previous gathering—who shared firsthand accounts of their experiences and the key discussions that had taken place. This exchange allowed the new members to understand the continuity of the Democratic Odyssey and how their contributions would build upon previous deliberations.

Additionally, the onboarding session introduced participants to the civic arts dimension of the Assembly. As part of this ongoing artistic initiative, attendees contributed to the creation of the symbolic sails that travel from city to city, visually representing the collective journey of deliberation and decision-making.

A highlight of the session was the presence of Dario Nardella, former mayor of Florence and current Member of the European Parliament. He warmly welcomed the newly selected citizens to the Assembly, engaging in a conversation with them about the significance of their role in shaping democratic participation. His remarks underscored Florence's historical and contemporary importance as a hub of civic engagement, inspiring the participants as they embarked on their deliberative journey.

The village for Civic Action

The *Village for Civic Action* offered a dynamic and thought-provoking program designed to bridge systemic crises with grassroots activism, cultural expression, and political debate. Held at *Le Murate*, the event brought together diverse voices through panels, screenings, and artistic performances, fostering connections between local and transnational struggles.. With an audience of more than 100 people, the event with panels in Italian and English was a strong bridge with the civic local reality of the city of Florence.

Highlights:

- Panel: Big Tech, Populism & Free Speech (with Ponte Europa)
  This discussion tackled the growing influence of big tech on democracy, the role of populist movements in shaping public discourse, and the challenges of safeguarding free speech in digital spaces. Researchers from the European University Institute debated regulation, misinformation, and online political engagement.
- Documentary Screening: *Food For Profit*
  This investigative documentary examined the political and economic structures underpinning the meat industry, exposing its far-reaching consequences on public health, the environment, and labor conditions.
- Panel: Beyond Exploitation – Anti-Speciesism & Climate Struggles
  Bringing together activists and academics, this session explored the deep connections between climate justice, animal rights, and democratic governance. It challenged dominant narratives on environmental action and called for more intersectional approaches to activism.
- Dinner Break with Free Vegan Food & Informal Activities
  An opportunity for participants to unwind, share experiences, and build connections over a plant-based meal that aligned with the themes of climate and social justice.
- Poetry Slam Performance by Giuliano Logos
  World Poetry Slam Champion Giuliano Logos captivated the audience with powerful spoken word performances addressing themes of identity, resistance, and collective action.

Saturday 22nd February: Reconciling contradictions

Opening

The first day of the Florence Assembly brought together over 200 participants at the historic Palazzo Vecchio, marking a powerful start to the deliberations which were supported by interpretation in English and Italian. The opening featured a Civic Arts play, setting the stage for an engaging and symbolic beginning.

Niccolò Machiavelli welcomed participants in a theatrical introduction inspired by *Waiting for the Citizens*. As he gazed toward the horizon, a small group of Greeks arrived by boat on the Arno River, symbolizing the connection between Athens and Florence.

The gathering continued with an interactive exchange between Greeks and Florentines, blending humor and historical metaphors linked to the Medici and the Odyssey. A key symbolic moment took place when a bottle was passed from Athens to Florence, containing the messages from past assembly members to honor the continuity of deliberation across cities.

The session then shifted into a buddy system, pairing local and international participants to foster connections. Groups were formed—Italians, non-Italians, and transnationals—encouraging discussions and interaction. The children closed the scene with the phrase: *"We are ready to sail together."*

Following the theatrical and symbolic opening, the assembly transitioned into a series of discussions with key officials, reinforcing the connection between deliberative democracy and institutional decision-making.

Several high-level representatives engaged with participants, offering their perspectives on local and European governance:

- Laura Sparavigna, advisor of the city of Florence emphasized the city's commitment to democratic participation and civic engagement.
- Cristina Scaletti, Mayor of Fiesole, shared insights from a smaller-scale municipal perspective, highlighting the importance of local deliberative processes.
- Susha Vladimir, representing the European Commission, provided a broader institutional view, discussing the significance of citizen assemblies in shaping EU policies.

The deliberative themes

After the discussions with officials, the assembly split into 10 thematic groups, each focusing on a key issue that would be explored over the next two days. To provide continuity in the deliberative journey, each group began with insights from the Athens Assembly, shared by the ambassadors who had participated in the previous gathering. These reflections helped contextualize the discussions, highlighting key learnings, unresolved questions, and experiences from Athens that could inform the work in Florence.

The trade offs

The deliberations throughout the rest of the day revolved around several core themes. Participants engaged in discussions on key trade-offs in crisis governance. These deliberations were facilitated by co-facilitators, note takers, whispered translators, and observers.

Below is a summary of the key tensions that emerged:

TRADE OFF	TENSION

1. Government Powers vs. Citizen Power	A. Strengthening executive government powers and resources for centralized top-down crisis management to ensure timely and responsive crisis prevention, intervention, and mitigation. VS B. Responding to citizens' demand for more influence and decentralized, bottom-up local citizen agency. Strong governments act quickly in crises since control and centralization are needed in times of emergency. But without citizen involvement, decisions they make may not reflect people's real needs and preferences.
2. Citizens' Involvement in Immediate Crisis Response vs. Long-Term Planning	A. Emergency action, combined with election cycles and political competition, calls for prioritizing short-term, high-visibility responses. VS B. Foresight and strategic planning reduce long-term risks and costs. Deeper, systemic action is needed to prevent future crises.
3. Trusting Leaders vs. Keeping Them in Check	A. Governments must act decisively in crises, and citizens who have elected them must trust them and let them do their job. VS B. Without oversight, there's a risk of overreach or mismanagement. Should we reinvent radical accountability mechanisms?
4. Referenda & Polls vs. In-Depth Public Debates	A. Direct democracy can involve mass participation on difficult issues that politicians avoid. VS B. Deliberative assemblies offer deeper

	participation and informed discussion, leading to better decision-making but requiring time and commitment.
5. Technology-Driven Participation in Crisis Management vs. Human-Centered Engagement	A. Digital tools enhance crisis management through speed and accessibility. VS B. In-person engagement fosters trust, resilience, and community bonds.
6. Relying on Centralized Management in Brussels vs. Transnational Democracy	A. EU institutions should handle transnational crisis. VS B. More direct engagement between citizens across borders is necessary to build mutual understanding and cooperation.
7. Collective Security vs. Individual Autonomy	A. Collective measures ensure societal security during crises. VS B. Restrictions on individual freedoms risk alienation and overreach.
8. Focus on Local Action vs. Translocalism	A. Local engagement ensures crisis responses are tailored to specific contexts. VS B. Translocal networks foster solidarity and mutual learning beyond national borders.
9. Inclusivity vs. Efficiency in Decision-Making	A: Expanding inclusivity in decision-making processes through participatory mechanisms like citizens' panels and assemblies

	VS B. may slow down the implementation of crisis responses due to the complexity of consensus-building - might make decision-making more democratic but also more time-consuming.
10. Transparency vs. Complexity	A, Making governance and policymaking processes fully transparent is the fundamental ground for democratic engagement. Participants demanded transparency in budgets, crisis management, and decision-making to build trust. VS B, But transparency may overwhelm citizens with information or expose sensitive strategies. The complexity of issues like climate change, health crises, and economic inequality may make full transparency impractical.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in vibrant discussions, navigating these tensions and sharing perspectives from their diverse backgrounds. The exchange of ideas set the foundation for the next phase of deliberation. After the assembly concluded for the day, facilitators continued working on synthesizing the discussions, identifying key points, and structuring the themes that would inform the recommendations to be developed in the following sessions.

Sunday 23rd February: Our recommendations

On Sunday, participants began the day at Palazzo Buontalenti, the headquarter of the School of Transnational Governance attached to the European University Institute. They received a welcome and overview of the process in their groups, followed by a check-in round to reflect on the previous day's discussions. Each trade-off facilitator presented the outcomes and adjustments from Saturday's deliberations. The groups then worked on finalizing their recommendations, reaching agreement on their proposals.

After this session, the members of the assembly engaged in a World Café session to evaluate and refine the recommendations developed by different groups. Participants moved through three rounds of

discussion, where facilitators presented their group's recommendations, and others provided feedback. Facilitators rotated between tables to gather diverse perspectives.

To conclude the morning session, all participants gathered in plenary for the final presentation of the recommendations. Each group shared the refined proposals, integrating the feedback received during the World Café discussions. This collective moment allowed participants to see the full spectrum of ideas, acknowledge common ground, and highlight key areas of debate. The session set the stage for the next steps in finalizing the assembly's outcomes.
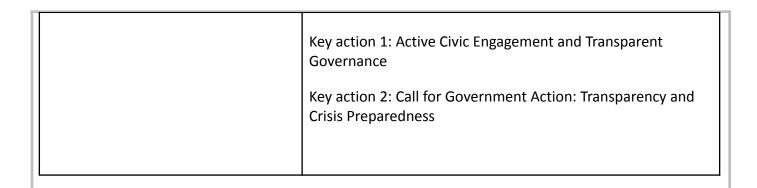
Our recommendations

During the plenary session, each group presented their refined recommendations, marking a key milestone in the deliberative process. While these proposals reflect the collective insights of the Florence Assembly, they are not yet final. An online gathering and a dedicated feedback session will offer all assembly members—including those who were unable to attend in Florence—the opportunity to review and further refine them. The recommendations will then be formally adopted at the next assembly in Vienna.

Below is a non-exhaustive table summarizing the recommendations for each trade-off. Some groups put forward a comprehensive set of recommendations, while others outlined key action points related to their main proposal.

TRADE OFF	RECOMMENDATIONS
Executive Power vs. Citizens' Power	Recommendation 1: Enhance Autonomous Deliberative Communities Recommendation 2: Counteract Extremism by Mobilizing Collective Intelligence Recommendation 3: Empower Citizens for Crisis Preparedness
Citizens' Involvement in Immediate Crisis Response vs. Long Term Planning	Recommendation: Strengthening Citizen Involvement in Crisis Response and Long-Term Planning

Trusting Leaders vs. Accountability	Recommendation: Institutionalizing Citizen Assemblies for Trust & Accountability
Direct vs. Deliberative Democracy	Recommendation: Strengthening Citizen Participation in Decision-Making Before Decision-Making: 1. Empower Citizens – Provide skills, spaces, and processes for active civic engagement (e.g., participatory budgeting). 2. Use Deliberative Processes – Involve citizens in shaping protocols and strategies, particularly for rights-based trade-offs and hard choices. 3. Enable Direct Engagement – Use referenda, online consultations, and calls to select between proposed strategies. During Decision-Making: Ensure shared responsibility among all actors, with citizens acting as "watchdogs" to maintain institutional accountability through mixed engagement formats. After Decision-Making: Conduct evaluations with citizens to assess the effectiveness of decisions and reconcile polarizing views, incorporating lived experiences.
Digital Tools vs. Human Centered Approach	Recommendation: Democratizing the EU AI Office
Relying on centralized management in Brussels vs. Transnational democracy	Recommendation: Strengthening Transnational Democracy for Crisis Response Key Action 1: European Citizens' Petitions with Legislative Impact Key Action 2: European Citizenship for Migrants

	Key Action 3: System of Permanent European Citizens' Assemblies
Collective Security vs. individual freedom	Recommendation 1: Establish Permanent Crisis Citizen Assemblies at the Local Level
	Recommendation 2: Establish a Permanent EU-Level Citizens' Assembly for Crisis Decision-Making
	Recommendation 3: Establish a European Civic Alliance for Transnational Crisis Action
	Recommendation 4: Introduce Participatory Budgeting at the EU Level for Crisis Response
Localism vs. Translocal	Recommendation: Crisis Response in Welcoming Migrants
	Key Action 1: Establish Citizen-Led Welcome Committees
	Key Action 2: Strengthen Awareness and Communication Campaigns
	Key Action 3: Foster Multi-Level Cooperation & Bottom-Up Approaches
Inclusivity vs. Efficiency in decision making	Recommendation: Balancing Inclusivity and Efficiency in Decision-Making
	Before the Crisis: Participatory Prevention & Decision-Making
	During the Crisis: Citizen Monitoring & Transparency
	After the Crisis: Evaluation & Continuous Improvement
Transparency vs. Complexity	Recommendation: Empowering Citizens for Democratic Participation

	Key action 1: Active Civic Engagement and Transparent Governance Key action 2: Call for Government Action: Transparency and Crisis Preparedness

The Florence Assembly concluded on a high note, with participants demonstrating a deep commitment to inclusive, democratic decision-making. Over the course of the discussions, diverse perspectives were exchanged, thoughtful recommendations were crafted, and a strong sense of collective purpose emerged. The energy and dedication of everyone involved underscored the importance of transnational collaboration in tackling pressing challenges. As we look ahead to the next steps—refining these proposals and preparing for the Vienna Assembly—the momentum generated in Florence will serve as a powerful foundation for meaningful democratic change.

The Florence assembly was [featured in over 9 media outlets](#) both nationally and internationally.

NEXT STEPS

The next steps in the Democratic Odyssey process will begin with an online gathering on April 3rd, where we will finalize the recommendations and present them to all assembly members, as well as select new ambassadors to participate in the Vienna Assembly.

Later in April, a feedback session with politicians and civil society organizations will provide an opportunity to refine the outcomes based on their insights.

Finally, the Vienna Assembly, taking place from May 23rd to 25th, will serve as the culminating moment to approve the recommendations, draft a manifesto/civic charter, and hold a final ceremony with policymakers to endorse the results.

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