

Democratic Odyssey

VIENNA

23 - 25 May 2025

EUROPE COMES TO TOWN

**The Democratic
Odyssey's Third
Assembly meeting**

**Our Vienna Assembly meeting was co-funded by the European
Union, the Salvia Foundation and the Berggruen Institute**

REPORT FROM VIENNA

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Executive summary

The Democratic Odyssey is a project campaigning for the renewal of Europe's democratic system by establishing a permanent, transnational People's Assembly for Europe. Inspired by ancient Greek citizen assemblies and leveraging modern participatory practices, this initiative links grassroots democratic innovation with institutionalised citizens' engagement. The pilot Assembly's final meeting in Vienna brought together over 140 diverse members from across Europe (27 countries) and beyond, to deliberate on how citizens can become more involved in decision-making processes and improve the EU's preparedness for future crises by learning from the past.

THE QUESTION WE ARE ASKING THE ASSEMBLY:

What needs to change for Europe to weather future storms?
And how can we, the people, help better steer the ship?

FIND OUT MORE [HERE](#)

KEY THEMES

- **Radical Participatory Democracy:** Assemblies like ours formed through random selection ensure inclusivity and societal reflection.
- **Addressing Crises Collectively:** By focusing on lessons from past crises we can create pathways to 'crisis citizenship' and envision resilient democratic systems.
- **Empowering Citizens:** Our deliberations emphasized civic agency, solidarity, and transparent governance.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES IN THE FLORENCE ASSEMBLY MEETING

- **Friday (Onboarding and Festival 'Democracy is a collective act of care'):** Introduction of new local members to the Democratic Odyssey and collective welcoming moment led by Civic Arts group featuring the traveling tapestry sails. Followed by engaging panel discussions on participation, assemblies and protest.
- **Saturday (From recommendations to Charter):** Group work and deliberations on the concrete steps that need to be taken in order to realize each of the [10 recommendations](#) previously written in Florence.
- **Sunday (Citizens' Charter and Citizen Council):** Finalization of the [Citizens' Charter](#) in groups and presentation in plenary. Election of the Citizen Council that volunteers to stay engaged and follow up on the results of the Charter.

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE VIENNA ASSEMBLY MEETING

The **Citizens' Charter**, a collaboratively drafted document by participants outlining shared principles, values, and concrete recommendations for strengthening European democracy and increasing citizen participation, especially in anticipating and managing crises.

The **Citizen Council**, a body of participants established to **follow up on the Charter**, maintain momentum, and ensure that the Assembly's recommendations are implemented and sustained over time.

REPORT FROM VIENNA

Inspired by the ancient Greek citizen assemblies from over two thousand years ago, and other experiences of assemblies from across the world, the Democratic Odyssey is a modern journey for the revitalisation of democracy at a transnational level, uniting the ancient Athenian tradition of citizen-driven democracy with the potentials unleashed by today's cutting-edge technologies. As a crowdsourced campaign it advocates for a permanent "People's Assembly for Europe" by mobilizing a wide-ranging and pluralistic group of actors, including academics, practitioners, journalists, institutional representatives and civil society groups. We are inspired both by the world-wide grass root participatory democracy movement and the tentative efforts of past EU legislatures to institutionalise citizen participation and seek to go further.

Our first gathering in Athens marked the beginning of this journey, where the Assembly members played a key role in setting the foundations, with the goal of producing a citizens' agenda on the future of the EU. The discussions and ideas shared in Athens have laid the groundwork for a second assembly moment in Florence.

Our second gathering in Florence was the occasion in which citizens from across Europe drafted the first concrete policy recommendations towards a Citizens' Charter for Europe. In Florence, deliberation deepened around democratic dilemmas.

Our final gathering in Vienna represented the culmination of our year-long deliberative journey into a Citizens' Charter with concrete pathways that outline how Europe can become more resilient to crises, more responsive to citizens, and more inclusive in its democratic practices. The Vienna Assembly also established a Citizen Council, tasked with carrying the process forward and ensuring that the Charter's proposals are not only symbolic, but serve as a living framework for change.

Together, these three assemblies have shown that transnational citizen deliberation is both possible and necessary. They demonstrate that when Europeans come together across languages, cultures, and experiences, they can imagine and design democratic innovations that strengthen the foundations of the European project.



THE ROAD TO VIENNA

WHY?

The Democratic Odyssey demonstrates that citizens are capable of addressing Europe's most complex and urgent challenges through deliberative democracy. Formed through random selection across the continent, our assemblies reflect a true cross-section of society, a space where everyone has a voice and a stake.

In Vienna, participants brought to completion a year-long transnational journey that began in Athens and continued in Florence, deepening their exploration of how Europe can become more resilient, inclusive, and participatory. Building on earlier discussions, the Vienna Assembly synthesised the collective insights of citizens into the Citizen Charter, a shared framework of principles and pathways for reimagining democracy beyond elections.

This was more than an experiment: it was a proof of concept for a permanent transnational assembly, a democratic odyssey that travels across cities, languages, and experiences, demonstrating that when Europeans deliberate together, they can co-create innovative and feasible responses to the crises of our time.



WHERE AND WHEN?

The fifth and final in-person session of the Assembly took place in Vienna, Austria, from May 23rd to 25th, 2025, marking a key milestone in the journey of the traveling assembly across Europe. Following previous stops in Athens (September 27–29, 2024) and Florence (February 21–23, 2025), the Vienna Assembly represented the third and last physical gathering of the pilot phase. It also built upon the work of the fourth session, held online on April 3rd, 2025, where participants from earlier assemblies reconvened to revisit, consolidate, and further develop the recommendations, particularly those that had taken shape during the deliberations in Florence.

On the first day of the assembly moment, the Democratic Odyssey transformed the historic Funkhaus, once a symbol of fascist control, into an act of love and collective imagination.

WHO?

By the time of the Vienna Assembly, the Democratic Odyssey pilot had grown into a truly transnational community, larger than 300 members from 25 European countries.

The Vienna gathering brought together participants from the previous assemblies in Athens and Florence, including ambassadors and transnational members who have been journeying across all stages of the Odyssey, alongside newly selected citizens from Austria, representing the country's diverse social fabric: residents, migrants, and refugees alike.

Participants were chosen through a combination of sortition and open registration, ensuring diversity in age, gender, background, and experience. Alongside citizens, the Assembly also welcomed civil society actors, researchers, and observers, fostering a dialogue between local voices and European perspectives.

WHAT?

Building on the full range of insights and outcomes from the assemblies in Athens and Florence, the Vienna Assembly aimed to translate citizen-driven recommendations on crisis management and democratic participation into concrete next steps.

The outcomes of the deliberations in Vienna were captured in the Citizens' Charter to Revitalise Democracy in Europe by Navigating Future Crises Together.

The assembly also resulted in the creation of a Citizen Council, entrusted with carrying forward the assembly's message. As such, the Vienna Assembly served as both a milestone in the project and a springboard for a broader communication and advocacy campaign aimed at establishing a permanent People's Assembly for Europe. It demonstrated the feasibility of transnational deliberation on a limited budget and offered a rich learning experience for democratic innovation.

Our Compass

Agenda Setting for Crisis: As a pilot assembly, we are not focused on specific policy recommendations but on exploring democratic responses to crises, which we call "storms." Moments of crises create winners and losers, highlight who holds power, and can be opportunities for more citizen involvement

Rooted in Local and Transnational Democracy: By travelling across Europe, we connect local actions with broader European politics, aiming to bridge the gap between local communities and transnational efforts.

Addressing Long-Term and Absent Voices: We seek to democratize foresight, balancing present needs with future outcomes, and consider how to include the voices of those absent from current debates, like refugees, non-citizens, non-humans and future generations.

A Laboratory for Change: This assembly is an experiment in moving from individual to collective action, aiming to influence democratic practices and the aspirations of institutions and of people alike in facing future storms.

Focus on Democratic Practices: We explore how the EU can better engage citizens during crises, addressing challenges like disempowerment, disrespect, alienation and anger. We consider past experiences, asking what democratic practices should change, be discarded, or institutionalized to improve Europe's response.

Storytelling and Civic Arts: We start with lived experiences rather than experts, using storytelling, civic arts and Odyssey metaphors to bring these narratives to life.

Connecting Beyond Borders: With participants from around 20 countries, we explore how to build transnational connections that empower citizens across Europe, and connect them to each other, beyond just Brussels-led initiatives.

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The Story in brief: 23-25 May

Day 1 (May 23rd, 2025): “Democracy is a collective act of care”

The first day of the Assembly focused primarily on onboarding the newly joined local members, followed by a public cultural evening held in collaboration with the Wiener Festwochen.

Onboarding

The evening began with a separate onboarding meeting for the Vienna residents joining the Democratic Odyssey for the first time during which they were welcomed and introduced to the project and its deliberative nature. They were then joined by the transnational members and the ambassadors from the Athens and Florence assemblies for the collective onboarding led by the Civic Arts group. This gave the Viennese members the opportunity to interact with the members from previous assemblies who shared firsthand accounts of their experiences and the key

discussions that had taken place in Florence and Athens. Together, they continued the Democratic Odyssey tradition of the symbolic sails that have been traveling from city to city as part of the Civic Arts artistic initiative, visually representing the collective journey of deliberation and decision-making.

“Democracy is a collective act of care”

The onboarding was followed by two key panel discussions: “Rethinking Participation” and “Assemblies from the Margins.” The first featured speakers from the Wiener Klimateam (Viennese Climate Team) and the European Capital of Democracy initiative, offering reflections on innovative approaches to civic engagement. The second gave a platform to three activists from the Serbian student protest movement, who attended the assembly in person, alongside a representative from the People’s Parliament of Rojava, highlighting grassroots democratic practices in challenging contexts.

The program continued in the garden of the Funkhaus where participants got to interact more with each other: first on their own while enjoying a free meal and drink and then during the “Democratic Olympics”, the second Civic Arts programme of the evening, which followed a particularly interactive approach as it invited participants to discuss many different topics around concepts like democracy and love in informal and dynamic group settings in the garden. The evening concluded on another artistic high note with the musical performance “Love is a verb” by artists Lan Rex, Rojin Sharafi and ÆNGL which presented music as an act of resistance and an expression of love.





Day 2 (May 24th, 2025): From Recommendations to a Citizens' Charter

The Vienna Assembly fully kicked off on Saturday morning when all participants came together for the first plenary session in the ceremony hall of the FH University of Applied Sciences Vienna. The welcoming part of the session was led by the Civic Arts group which presented a performance alluding to Austrian history and famous personalities as well as a video summarizing the Democratic Odyssey journey so far. Participants were then sorted into groups, in each of which the local members welcomed their international assembly partners to Vienna. The aim of this opening was to foster a stronger connection between Vienna-based participants and transnational members, laying the groundwork for their collaboration in the crucial group work that followed, where they would debate and agree on the final version of the Citizens' Charter.

The assembly members were assigned to ten different groups, in which they would each deliberate on one of the ten recommendations from the previous assemblies. The aim of the Vienna group sessions was to further refine these existing recommendations and focus specifically on the way they could be implemented in practice. Each group consisted of one facilitator to moderate the debates, a diverse mix of ambassadors from previous assemblies, Vienna residents and transnational members, a note-taker and - if required - a whispered interpreter.

Upon familiarizing themselves with the overall nature as well as the specific goals of each of the recommendations, participants were given the opportunity to actively discuss and comment on the principles and guidelines previously completed in Athens, Florence and online. This ensured that the final recommendations included in the charter are, therefore, the product of a dynamic process that has been influenced and shaped by a multitude of different people and their perspectives. The participants were then tasked with identifying the precise ways through which their recommendations could be practically implemented which sparked a series of engaging discussions throughout the assembly day. The day finished with an especially symbolic moment, a gala dinner that all participants were invited to, held in the Vienna city hall.

Day 3 (May 25th, 2025): The Citizens' Charter and Citizen Council

Sunday marked the final step of both the Vienna Assembly and this chapter of the Democratic Odyssey. Participants reconvened in the morning within the same working groups as on Saturday, engaging one last time with their proposed pathways toward a more democratic and crisis-resilient Europe. The day culminated in a final plenary session, where each group presented its outcomes, which were then integrated into the concluding version of the Citizens' Charter.

The Citizens' Charter: to Revitalise Democracy in Europe by Navigating Future Crises Together

The final collective charter of the Democratic Odyssey travelling assembly consists of 10 pathways calling upon European publics, politicians, civil servants and institutions to enact change in order to - democratically and collectively - navigate the turbulent times we are currently experiencing as well as preparing for potential future crises. Each pathway is headed by a slogan that is then elaborated on in its principle vision, an explanation of what needs to change (embodying the Athens spirit), a consideration of the tensions within this principle (the Florence spirit) and finally the steps necessary to achieve these ambitions (Vienna spirit). The table below presents each pathway, its principle and the steps as formulated in its final version by the assembly members in Vienna.

depth and diversity of the trade-off discussions and the commitment to shaping a resilient, inclusive future for Europe.



ANNEX: COMPLETE OVERVIEW OVER THE CITIZENS' CHARTER AND ITS STEPS

PATHWAY	EXPLANATION
Pathway 1: “Being involved is also our responsibility as citizens!”	<p>Principle: Active citizenship cannot be coerced: it must become a widely acknowledged right. Participation should not be limited to elections or occasional consultations. Emergencies should not be a pretext for a few decision-makers to ignore the citizens, the very ones affected. Our society and our future are our responsibility. Drawing on our life experiences, expertise and dreams, we can all contribute to decisions made before, during and after crises. Whatever our background, whether we are nationals or not. Even if no one likes to give up power, authorities empowered by civil society and citizens will thrive. Together they can invest cleverly in civic spaces, infrastructure and processes at every opportunity and every level, local, national, supranational. Use us as democratic turbo-batteries!</p> <p>Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a toolkit inspired by the DO methodology to convey the idea of citizen assemblies and raise awareness. First, these toolkits should explain why it is important, based on this Charter, and explain the cost of non-democracy and the value of participation. Second, it should include “how” to do it by providing concrete plans for local ambassadors (suggestion on how to create, recruit, facilitate training, and how to reach out the public) 2. Establish a network of local ambassadors and initiatives to branch out and spread the idea and thus create a bigger flotilla for Democratic Odyssey. This includes a network of local ambassadors in each country. This network should be made of not only individuals but also schools, businesses, CSOs and

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	<p>other organisations. This will create a movement that will support training in school and universities. It will also help create local festivals etc</p> <p>3. Promote an Erasmus for participation (find a name like “DEMUS”) that will enhance cross national exchanges to attend each other’s participatory processes, events. This programme will have meetings once a year – where to be discussed, like European capital of democracy or presidency of the EU etc.</p>
<p>Pathway 2: “Our Money, our Choice!”</p>	<p>Principle: Spending of public money should be decided with the participation of the people, to ensure that everyone is taken into account, to limit the influence of special interests, to mobilise collective intelligence, cultivate learning, and build trust. Participatory budgeting has been tested in many places, now it should become mainstream across Europe at all levels including whether to spend or to tax. It is important to receive and implement public feedback on how to raise money (e.g. taxes). Budgets must be transparently posted on the web and accessible to all people. If not, authorities need to give us good reasons why not. If budget committees, panels, and assemblies were set up in many different ways across the continent to allocate our collective resources - that would be the people in action!</p> <p>Steps: <u>Education:</u> People need the tools for a better understanding of public finances. Therefore, educational systems need to integrate classes on public budgets in school curriculums and offer voluntary courses for</p>

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	<p>adults (both online and offline). These should include gamified approaches and also be integrated in people's workplaces.</p> <p><u>Information:</u> People need to be better informed about budget spending. This includes online platforms with accessible information (in easy language) and targeted information campaigns for different target groups (using traditional and new media). Public authorities should send annual budget information via different communication channels and organize localised information events. Information should be curated by (scientific) expert bodies.</p> <p><u>Transparency:</u> People need transparency in public budget spending. Hence, it needs to be clear how public money is spent by whom and why. This information needs to be standardized and easily accessible across Europe. Moreover, there should be regular evaluations about the impact of past budget spendings by independent experts. These reviews should also include feedback by citizens and affected groups as well as recommendations on how to adapt spending strategies.</p> <p><u>Participation:</u> Participatory budgeting processes should rely on randomly selected volunteers who have no conflict of interests and be transparent. Moreover, citizen budget committees should regularly inform and meet with the general public for feedback. This can be done in physical public spaces that exist at all levels (e.g., libraries). Additionally, governments should regularly conduct representative surveys on budget priorities and offer vouchers (e.g.</p>

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	as part of the income taxation) which individuals can use to distribute budget to NGOs and other good causes.
Pathway 3: “Nothing About Us Without Us”	<p>Principle: If democratic citizenship is our basic right, the outbreak of a crisis should never be an excuse for a powerful elite to grab power or silence opposition. If spaces for debate are created upstream, people can use them to mobilise when the need arises. Even in the midst of a crisis, there must always be ways for people to participate, assemble, protest, imagine innovative ways to engage in vital decisions and make themselves heard. Only in these ways can problems be highlighted, bad policies be corrected and good policies adopted.</p> <p>Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education on civic participation, transparency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As well as implementation in all areas of everyday life such as: civil associations, (vereins), schools level, adult learning centre, senior centres • bringing the topic directly into the community by volunteering, talking to organisations etc • Rights and duties are core values in society. There is a common belief in liberal society but not everybody is fully conscious of their rights and duties. • Education and enlightenment is important along with care, trust and transparency. This requires a change or additions to the education system. 2. Synergies (to include ALL SECTORS / stakeholders: civic, public admin, schools, indigenous communities, academic research, universities, governments,

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	<p>trade unions etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map the relationships between the stakeholders • research what is already done in building civic collaborations • Build an open / ongoing list of contributors, contacts, bodies, institutions... (sponsors of DO to provide their contacts - as a starting point to connect with possible partners) • Reach out to the Democratic Odyssey's consortium list: • Obtain a list of roles in each organisation • Find out which projects they worked on in the past and currently. • research which roles within the teams have the capacity to provides services • map each organisation's membership of networks, initiatives and other consortiums. • Search for existing written strategies and documents that are already covering topics in the charter and matching these documents with open calls for funding. • Search for synergies and inspiration outside Europe for global best practices, to avoid Euro-Centrism and be inclusive of the transnational citizens and residents. • Be present, going to conferences networking etc • Add synergies segment to digital platform for transparency • For interests, founding • Who does this work?: EUI - research, European Alternatives - implementation and advocacy. Citizens for Europe, Mise en Public - Implementation of assemblies with institutions

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	<p>3. Advocacy and Legal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of advocacy spectrum: research pathways through commission or parliament, what is the correct way or both? Once research is done then move to the next step. • comprehensive EU wide legislation on member state level. • Member states to choose level of what should be implemented to leave some sovereign authority to states • Second part is the establishment of a people's assembly at the EU level which acts as an oversight body • Where to get the funding for this? Research needed to fund resources and advocacy • People's assembly should have representation of marginalised communities in addition to randomised. <p>4. Local Assemblies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU should express recommendations to municipalities on implementing assemblies at region and local level • Mapping the different European capitals of culture, sports, ecology, youth... and the winner needs to implement assemblies • EU to allocate some funds to municipalities dedicated to assemblies
<p>Pathway 4: "Educate to Anticipate"</p>	<p>Principle: Being ready to tackle crises calls for a commitment to maximise democratic competence for all, at all ages, in ways that allow intelligent and empathetic conversations across countries and</p>

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	<p>languages. Learning is the name of the game, so we can all be empowered in advance to be prepared to think and act during crises and involved in collective learning afterwards. Empathy can be learned and practiced collectively in various public spaces and moments. Scenario making and foresight must be democratised in order to disrupt old habits. Civic education for future-thinking holds the promise of European collective intelligence.</p> <p>Steps: In order to prepare the population for future crises we want to introduce education reform that includes international united guidelines. These include teaching democracy, policy and rights, debating and discussion training, active listening for understanding issues from different perspectives. This should be implemented by/ through national governments, the EU level, People's Assemblies at the EU level, Neighborhood Assemblies, Civil Society Organizations and learning from current innovators.</p> <p>To engage in the wider public we want to create spaces for discussion that include face to face workshops, community events and online platforms (including AI). Our spaces are open to all. We want to provide events that are age-inclusive and reach out to people in rural areas, include marginalized people and are multi-lingual.</p>

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<p>Pathway 5: “Collectivity and self- organization are our power”</p>	<p>Principle: Whether in acute or permanent crises, people increasingly come together to take their destiny in their hands. Autonomous communities are precious and need to be empowered, from energy communities to feminist and intergenerational housing collectives, from farmer-consumer cooperatives to virtual communities and social enterprises. But we must encourage these communities to be not only autonomous but also democratic, accessible, connected and coordinated between themselves and across borders.</p> <p>Steps: Encouraging in-person meetings and assemblies empowering and connecting people and communities on different levels: local, national, and international, ensuring two way interactions between the different levels. Local councils can share knowledge within the community, encourage storytelling for individuals and groups to share their experiences and perspectives.</p> <p>Advocacy groups which train community members to advocate for their rights and interests, including an info kit combined with a digital platform to prepare residents for cases of emergency.</p> <p>After getting the attention of the local authority there needs to be a deliberate space for that official to meet with members of the citizens advisory group and made available such a location or provide funding to rent such a space.</p>

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	<p>At the local level an online platform will operate with certain topics (schools, environment, immigration etc) where a group of randomly selected citizens will issue a proposal and offer a solution in order to vote for it. Every two years officials set an online evaluation form of the work they have done to fix the problems.</p> <p>This will be part of a bigger collective fora easily formed in platforms for sharing common interest, empowering people and communities through education using peer-to-peer collaborative networks, with direct exchange of information among users. The online spaces need a designated person of the municipality to oversee the platform.</p> <p>This will be a combination of online and offline civil engagement on the local level across Europe and to start organized and constant communication between communities we create a pilot project that would consist of 2 parts.</p> <p>The first part would combine a row of offline conferences that take place in 3-5 (randomly selected) communities from different regions in Europe and the second a digital platform connected to it. There communities could share their experiences on the problems and the ways they tackle them, embracing similarities and differences. Topics should be defined bottom-up by the communities themselves. And build a base for the future cooperation.</p>

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<p>Pathway 6: “If People relocate, democracy must follow”</p>	<p>Principle: The mobility of people, whether they are of EU nationality, or not for whatever reason, is a human right and phenomenon. Internal mobility is at the heart of the EU identity, where free movement and equal rights are guaranteed to all EU citizens and where non-EU mobility upholds our solidarity principle. However, the EU is also about people who do not relocate. We must democratically debate the relationship between people who move and those who don't. Democratic participation, which includes participation and decision-making processes, should be guaranteed to all, no matter where they come from or their nationality, on the condition that they can participate in democracy and, therefore, be considered an equal political actor with rights and duties. At the same time, all levels of governance must counter structural discrimination of people without citizenship of the country of residency, including (but not limited to) migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, expats, or stateless individuals, both EU and non-EU nationals. Local communities play a vital part in the welcoming process of people coming from elsewhere. Regulations, policies, and infrastructures must be implemented locally for them to achieve equal participation in social and political life.</p> <p>Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a citizens assembly which include the voices of migrants and people in mobility and those impacted by this phenomenon. • Lower administrative burdens for migrants and people in mobility to access their rights. • Feedback loop between different authorities who

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	<p>decide over e.g. migrants visa processes. This process should be transparent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a Media Independent “Authority” to oversee the depiction of people in mobility and prevent hatred speech through ‘watch-dog’. • Every person who pays taxes in an area or is registered as resident (no matter which residency-status (Aufenthaltsstatus) they have) has the right to vote on the community and local level. • Develop a welcome package for each country, outlining participation opportunities, rights, and responsibilities for new residents. • strengthen local services (welcome services, job-orienting/social services...)in communities where migration levels are high to diminish social insecurity concerning the topic. • In the EU we need a synergy between the central institutions and the local community who care about “moving people”. • Reforming the educational system implemented by civic education, civic EU education, empathy education and education to step in someone’s shoes. • ‘Democratic Onboarding’ - Educate about rights, duties, democracy for people from abroad. Gamification, nudging and compensation for expenses/time. • Representative on an institutional local level for “migrants/moving people”.
<p>Pathway 7: “Transparency is non-negotiable”</p>	<p>Principle: If it affects us, we deserve to understand it. Complexity is no obstacle. Transparency is a prerequisite for participation, trust and accountability,</p>

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	<p>and therefore of democracy. People themselves should be able to decide how much complexity and detail they want: the science, open data and arguments behind decisions must be publicly available. When politicians make decisions that affect all of us, whether about the economy, health, education or war and sacrifice, these should be widely debated with citizens within and across countries.</p> <p>Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a culture of transparency: by embedding transparency principles, values and practices in education for all ages, teaching what transparency is, how to recognise it, essential political and social literacy to understand information, and practices to promote transparency. This education should also be for civil servants and people working in positions of authority. 2. Learn from best practices: We should promote a mapping of all actors working on transparency across society at all scales of Europe, research, collect and learn from best practices, and ensure these learnings circulate amongst all governmental, media, public and private entities which have transparency obligations. An independent EU monitoring body with citizen involvement could ensure this circulation of knowledge and training, monitor and inspect implementation and propose intervention or new regulation where necessary. This body could be connected with the Fundamental Rights Agency, European Media Pluralism Monitor, European Labour Authority amongst others.

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	<p>3. Promote a free, plural and investigative media as an important source of transparency, anti-corruption and public understanding: by promoting and protecting investigative journalism, reinforcing professional ethics in the media, and requiring full transparency of ownership and commercial interests of media and social media platforms.</p> <p>4. Increase resources and interest for anti-corruption prosecution and long term monitoring of assets and interests of anyone who held public office and responsibility with life long legal responsibility</p>
<p>Pathway 8: “Care is at the heart of democracy”</p>	<p>Principle: Care is empathy, communication, equality and action. It is an act of giving and receiving between people, from people to institutions, and from institutions back to people. To care is to act to fulfill the needs of others, and it starts with listening to each other and be-listened, just like democracy starts with caring for and about each other. Too often in crisis public authorities and bureaucracies seem not to care about people, acting on the basis of utilitarian values instead of empathy. Care culture, emotional awareness, and bodily experience must be at the heart of a resilient and healthy democracy.</p> <p>Steps: Supporting the diffusion of a care-culture and rebuilding social connections between people. Acts of Care from people to people should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting engaged in more volunteering work, notably to bridge social divides with the most margin-

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	<p>alised (youth, elderly, migrants, poor, women, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing people closer together and re-establish dialogues to create connections and empathy through bottom-up, community-based citizens' dialogues like citizen assemblies <p>Caring for our democratic institutions by acting constructively and using one's voice to keep our institutions accountable. Acts of Care from people to institutions should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting of course, but also setting up permanent communication channels and feedback loop mechanisms for people to give feedback to their institutions, and hold them accountable in a constructive and positive manner, in the form of a transparent platform, thus giving citizens the possibility to act as active and constructive citizens. <p>Listening and showing respect to people's needs, and communicating clearly. Acts of care from institutions to people should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing and enforcing regulations to mainstream and empower Citizens' Assemblies and referendums as tools to listen to citizens' needs and set the political agenda, especially on social and care-related issues. • Communicating more transparently, clearly and using less technical wordings to adapt to citizens' language and communication needs, by establishing a function of "translator" coming from the people, as opposed to an official government spokesperson, to act as a bridge between institutions and citizens.

ANNEX: COMPLETE OVERVIEW OVER THE CITIZENS' CHARTER AND ITS STEPS

PATHWAY	EXPLANATION
<p>Pathway 9: “Harness Technology, unleash collective intelligence”</p>	<p>Principle: Technology can be anti-social and manipulative if it is controlled exclusively by private interests, corporations or disruptive powers, and if it fails to pay attention to the many biases embedded in data-sets and algorithms - especially those processed by generative AI. But if it is democratised, it can be a powerful tool for our collective intelligence and contribute to countering extremism. Grassroots grown platforms embodying democratic design and operating standards should be encouraged and resourced. Within state, corporate or not-for-profit organisations, there should be no social spaces without democratic control.</p> <p>Steps: <u>Educate AI use</u> As AI technology grows faster, it creates a lot of questions and fears that we need to demystify and make people feel comfortable using it by educating them on the use of its basic functions. For this, map user issues with AI use :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a possibility to rate AI responses and comments and comments possibility to be able to report some answers including biases and any other forms that would be forbidden by the law • Add a transparent platform needs to be introduced where EU-citizens can look up the issues with AI. <p><u>AI Office and EU AI</u> Ensure AI Office is representative of the European citizens, with the addition of different minorities and nationalities. This office will be responsible for creating an AI toll that avoids the biases of other similar tools.</p>

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PATHWAY	EXPLANATION
	<p><u>ANTITRUST regulation</u> In order to shelter the market and thought processes from monopolization we need to implement anti-trust regulations so that companies cannot hoard functionalities.</p> <p><u>Data protection</u> The dynamic nature of digital technologies and AI asks the data protection to be constantly reviewed by specialized teams ,ex. N04B, in order to be a relevant legislation that strikes a balance between technological innovation, fundamental rights protection and a rigorous accountability system for those using data.</p> <p><u>Sustainability</u> Life cycle analysis on AI technologies show that they are not sustainable enough. Technically we are working on the optimization of all processes involved, developing a cycle economy, based on renewable energies and efficient use and reuse of raw materials. On the other side, we need stronger regulations, ex. Big companies must be forced to be responsible by leading the way towards the 100 percent sustainable AI.</p>
<p>Pathway 10: “Not everything has been invented yet”</p>	<p>Principle: Last but not least, this Citizens' Charter lays the foundation for a permanent Peoples' Assembly for Europe of randomly selected citizens. The EU and public authorities should open the space for the creation of such a standing body. It would be itinerant, with membership by rotation. It would be regularly convened by the members themselves, while locally embedded and serve as a bridge between EU institutions and the broader public.</p>

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PATHWAY	EXPLANATION
	<p>Steps:</p> <p><u>Participation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants of the Citizens' Assembly should be EU residents over 18 years old, regardless of their nationality, who spend at least one year in an EU country. Participation is mandatory with certain exceptions (e.g. illness, parents of children with special needs, caregivers). Politicians and public officials are not allowed to participate, in order to avoid conflict of interest. <p><u>Funding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Assembly should be funded from the EU budget. The participants receive daily allowances and reimbursements for travel and accommodation. Ensuring full financial transparency during the Citizens' Assembly and two years afterwards by providing public financial reports. <p><u>Organisation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Citizens' Assembly would take place in person during the weekends (with work justification if needed). The mandate of the Assembly lasts one year and meetings are organised approximately four times per year. As part of the Assembly, the participants would receive training on deliberation and consultation with experts on the topic they are discussing. The experts should be selected in a way that they represent different views on the topic. For transparency and inclusion, website of the Assembly and social media accounts would be created and the Assembly meetings would be livestreamed to the general public.

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PATHWAY	EXPLANATION
	<p><u>Procedures and rules</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EU institutions suggest a list of topics which are policy priorities, the Assembly participants can add new topics and they make the final decision. The final result of deliberation is legally binding. • Managerial board would be established with a mandate of 5 years, consisted of academia/experts in deliberative democracy, CSOs and representatives of Assembly participants. • 300 participants would be selected by sortition and represent the demographic characteristics of the EU population (gender, age, education, profession, region, ethnicity, language, etc.). <p><u>National Assemblies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a recommendation for organising citizens' assemblies on national levels and providing guidelines.

Conclusions

The Vienna Assembly marked the culmination of the Democratic Odyssey's pilot journey, a celebration of democratic imagination and courage.

Across three days of deliberation, artistic expression, and collective learning, participants demonstrated that Europe's democratic renewal is not only necessary, it is already happening. They showed that citizens, when given time, trust, and space, can meaningfully deliberate across borders and differences, crafting shared visions for Europe's future.

The Assembly's message was clear: democracy must become a continuous and collective practice of care, rooted in everyday life, not confined to elections or institutions alone.

Through this process, participants reaffirmed the power of transnational deliberation, not as an abstract exercise, but as a living experiment that unites people across languages, experiences, and generations.

The Citizens' Charter, endorsed in Vienna, reflects this spirit: ten pathways for democratic resilience and shared responsibility in times of crisis. The Assembly also established a Citizens' Council to carry the work forward, ensuring the journey does not end here but evolves into a sustained movement for democratic renewal.

NEXT STEPS

Following Vienna, the Democratic Odyssey transitions from experiment to movement.

The Citizens' Council will work to advance the Charter's principles, engaging with institutions and civil society to anchor a Permanent People's Assembly for Europe. The campaign now invites citizens, policymakers, and movements alike to make the travelling People's Assembly permanent. This is not just about isolated assemblies — it is about building a continuous European democratic space, where people regularly come together to deliberate, co-create, and act on shared visions.

Join this European journey for a Permanent European People's Assembly, and help make it a reality.

- Donate
- Read the Citizen Charter
- Explore our E-Book: *Should a Citizens' Assembly Complement the European Parliament?*





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