



*Athens, 27 - 29 September 2024*

# EUROPE COMES TO TOWN

The  
Democratic Odyssey's First  
Assembly meeting

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# CONTENTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

---

## OUR COMPASS 10

---

Friday 27th September, afternoon 12

### **From the I to the We**

---

Saturday 28th September, morning 20

### **Democracy in the Eye of the Storm**

---

Saturday 28th September, afternoon 31

### **Negotiating Future Tradeoffs, to 2029 and back**

---

Sunday 29th September, morning 39

### **What Next?**

---

## ANNEX:

*Full text of messages 48*

---

## Our Consortium 51



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Democratic Odyssey aspires to establish 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** first meeting in Athens brought together 200 diverse members from across Europe (22 countries) and beyond, to deliberate on how citizens can improve EU's preparedness for future crisis.

## 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

**Friday (From "I" to "We"):** Assembly established as a collaborative "crew," symbolized by designing metaphorical sails reflecting shared goals.

**Saturday Morning (Democracy in the Eye of the Storm):**

Discussions focused on the fate of democratic involvement in past crises (e.g., COVID-19, climate, migration) to identify lessons, mistakes, and innovations for future challenges.

**Saturday Afternoon (Time Travel):** Participants role-played 2029 crisis scenarios, engaging in cross-sector negotiation between citizens, media, policymakers, and industries, to bring back their message to 2024.

**Sunday (Next Steps):** Reflections culminated in crafting actionable messages and envisioning future assemblies in Florence and Vienna.

# KEY OUTCOMES

**Keep:** Solidarity, digital tools for inclusion, freedom of expression, and grassroots initiatives.

**Change:** Combat misinformation, reduce elitist politics, and improve trust in governance.

**Invent:** Participatory mechanisms like permanent citizen panels, improved civic education, and decentralized policymaking.

# IMPACT GOALS

**Knowledge Impact:** Develop innovative democratic frameworks.

**Institutional Impact:** Collaborate with EU, national and local institutions to integrate citizen input into agenda-setting.

**Political Impact:** Politicise democratic innovation through engaging with conflictual debates on the future of Europe.

**Social Impact:** Empower citizens with new participatory spaces and test best models for scaling (translocalism).

**THE DEMOCRATIC ODYSSEY IS COMMITTED TO  
MAKING SORTITION TRANSPARENT SO ALL CAN  
LEARN HOW IT WORKS**

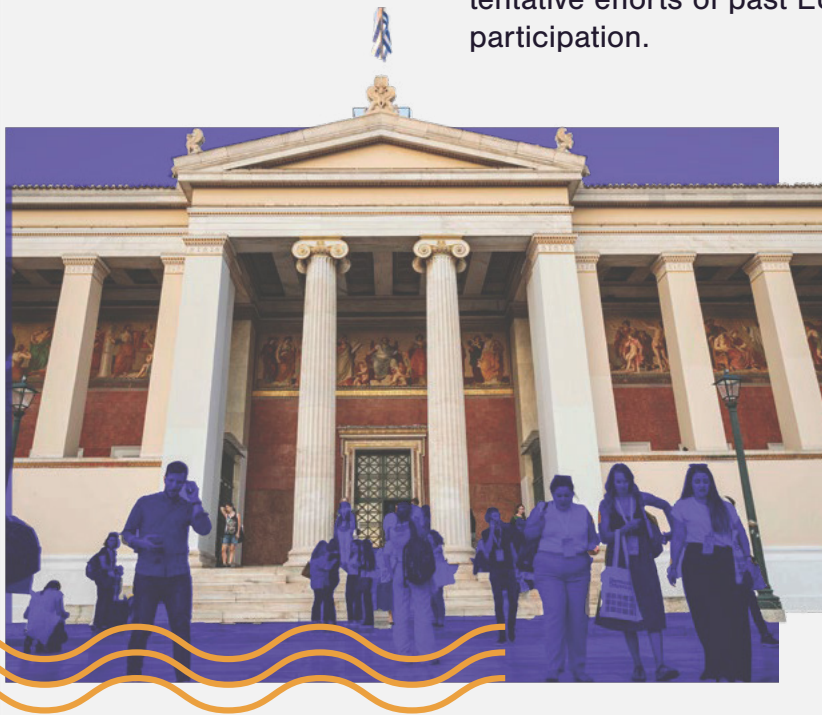
[CLICK HERE FOR OUR VIDEO](#)





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 Athens' tradition of citizen-centric democracy with the potentials unleashed by today's cutting-edge technologies. As a crowdsourced campaign it advocates for a permanent "Peoples' 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.

**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 what's next.



## THE ROAD TO ATHENS


**Why?** The Democratic Odyssey seeks to demonstrate that citizens can shape Europe's future by tackling difficult and controversial challenges together and propose solutions that truly reflect the will of the people. Meaningful participation is not only possible but necessary. Call this a philosophy of radical, participatory democracy. Deliberation is at its heart. Assemblies are formed through random selection of their members and connect with the broader public. Not only does everyone have a chance to participate but once formed the assembly reflects society as a whole. This is the kind of assembly we hope to see in the European landscape.

**Where?** To make the case for this long-term goal, we embarked on a journey with a **pilot Assembly** (our proof of concept), to engage in multilingual, transnational deliberations, traveling to different European cities, meeting both in-person and online and planting the seeds for further citizens' engagement in each port. **First port of call: Athens.** Next: [online and on-site sessions](#), also in Florence and Vienna, through to spring 2025.

**When?** September 27-29th, 2024, a date which also corresponds to the beginning of a new institutional cycle of the EU with a new Parliament and before the hearings of the Commissioners. Our Assembly helps crowdsource the many approaches to democratic resilience in the shadow of crisis, with the aim to take our part in agenda-setting in Europe for the next five years.

**Who?** The pilot assembly will grow over time to 500 members, starting with 200 members in Athens. These members represent a diverse range of backgrounds—transnational, local, and borderless. From a pool of willing members selected randomly, mostly by knocking on doors, sortition followed a range of criteria for wide representation including age, education, social economic, and attitude to Europe. They are randomly selected from 22 countries **from across Europe** including EU candidate countries, and **locally, from Athens and the Attica region, both Greek and non-Greek citizens, including migrants and refugees**. Alumni from previous assemblies are also included, as well as civil society actors to amplify the voices of individuals, movements, and groups that often lack representation in traditional institutions, all through random selection from open registrations. Additionally, we sought to engage global citizens to address their invisibility in society and provide them with a space to be heard. The first 200 members will remain members for a year until 1st September 2025, with new members joining at each landing port.

**What?** This pilot Assembly seeks to demonstrate the potential of a permanent Assembly in tackling the big challenges of our time. Our network of friends of a permanent Assembly, our [Constituent Network](#), engaged in a lengthy deliberative process to select the topic of the 2024/25 pilot Assembly. This followed a preliminary step of identifying the ideal-type criteria for topic selection, which resulted in guidelines for issue salience: the topic ought to be a pressing social issue with political-social impact, and it should also seek to be cross-cutting (tackling multiple themes) and future focused. Across many potential themes and, in fact, uniting most of them, the relationship between crisis and democracy emerged as a shared horizontal concern. More specifically, the question of how past crises reconfigured the relationship between the people and institutions of their city, their country and the EU, as well as relationship with each other across borders. The Constituent Network honed in on the idea that the many crisis we have endured have deeply transformed our democracies, for better or for worse. So they made a kind of bet, based on a strong belief in collective intelligence: that the Assembly Members, once the Assembly would be constituted ahead of Athens, would identify these patterns and come forward with a wide-ranging set of proposals as to how we could tackle them.



So we asked a double question:

*“Reflecting on your experience of recent crises, what needs to change for the EU to overcome future storms? AND: How can we, the people, help better steer the European ship through these storms?”*



ΔΗΜΟΣ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝ

# ΕΠΙΚΕΦΑΛΙΔΑ Η ΑΘΗΝΑ ΓΙΝΕΤΑΙ ΤΟ ΕΠΙΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΜΙΑΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΚΗΣ ΠΡΩΤΟΒΟΥΛΙΑΣ, ΚΑΘΩΣ Η ΠΟΛΗ ΦΙΛΟΞΕΝΕΙ ΜΙΑ ΠΡΩΤΟΠΟΡΙΑΚΗ ΣΥΝΕΛΕΥΣΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ

**THE MAYOR OF ATHENS, HARIS DOUKAS, PUBLICLY  
ENDORSED THE ASSEMBLY AND WROTE TO HIS  
CONSTITUENTS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO  
PARTICIPATE:**

*"This is an important initiative, as the European Union wants to hear our opinion on how different governing bodies across Europe, from cities to the EU itself, should face future crises, based on the experience we had from the multiple crises we experienced recently in Greece (financial crisis, wildfires, floods, unemployment, immigration, etc.)"*

*"I hope for the broad participation of citizens in this important effort to strengthen European democratic institutions."*

*"...Beyond the September Citizens' Assembly session, I hope that this Assembly will help plant the seeds for strengthening citizens' direct participation and Participatory Democracy here at the local level in Athens and its seven Municipal Communities."*

**Democratic Odyssey** 

**You are invited**

to have your say on the future of the European Union as part of the Democratic Odyssey, a project organised by a group of European organisations.

You could be one of 200 people selected by lottery to take part in the People's Assembly for Europe in Athens.

Take part and receive €150!

**Reflecting on your experience of recent crises, what needs to change for the EU to overcome future storms?**

The organizers want to hear from YOU.

Join the Democratic Odyssey to let the EU know how it can tackle this topic today and in the future.

All transport to and accommodation in Athens (and possible future venues) will be paid and organised for you.

**TWO EASY WAYS TO REGISTER TODAY**

OR

Scan here to register online or go to [sortition.eu/xxxx](https://sortition.eu/xxxx)

**Text**  
"Yes, Count Me In!"  
To +43 678 907 027 3969

**Did you find this invitation in your letterbox?**

This means we called at your house but you were not at home, so we left this in your letterbox. Everyone in your household who is 16 years old and over is welcome to register. To talk to someone before registering, text "Yes, I am interested, please call me" to +36 123 456 789 and we'll call you back.

Take part and receive 150 EUR. **Deadline to register: 7 July 2024**

**How does a People's Assembly work?**

**Why me?**

The organizers of the Democratic Odyssey want to hear people's opinions on important questions related to the EU – and let the EU know.

**Weekend in Athens:**  
from Friday 27 to Sunday 29 September, 2024.  
(You may also be selected for future meetings online and in person in Vienna and Florence in 2025.)

**We selected your neighbourhood by lottery, from every neighbourhood in the EU.**

**After the close of registration we will select by lottery from all those who registered the members of the People's Assembly for Europe, and you will be contacted if you are selected.**

**We knock on your door to give you this letter and invite you to register your interest. Everyone in your household who is 16 years old and over can register – see below!**

**The group's recommendations are handed to EU decision makers.**

**See [sortition.eu/xxxx](https://sortition.eu/xxxx) for more information.**

**YOUR opinion is important to us.**

**TWO EASY WAYS TO REGISTER TODAY**

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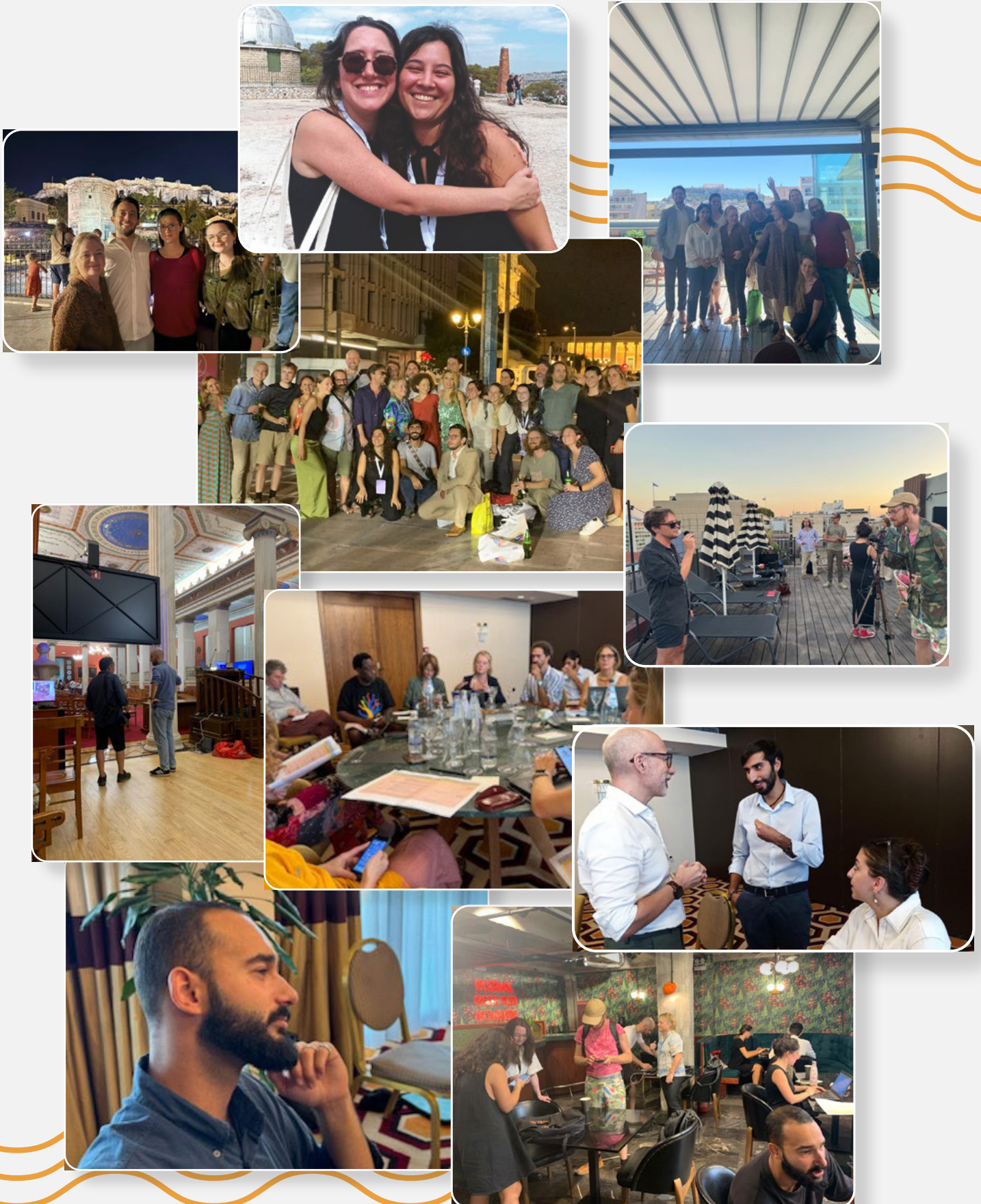
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# THE CREW PREPARES



# OUR COMPASS

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

**DIGITAL PLATFORM:** <https://democratic-odyssey.k8s.osp.cat/>

**WEBSITE:** <https://democraticodyssey.eui.eu/home>

**INSTAGRAM:** <https://www.instagram.com/demodyssey/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D>

**X:** [https://twitter.com/dem\\_odyssey?s=21&t=QtsH8L6EnnWPCZFLucPRbw](https://twitter.com/dem_odyssey?s=21&t=QtsH8L6EnnWPCZFLucPRbw)

**LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/democratic-odyssey/>





# THE STORY IN BRIEF

27 - 29 September

# Friday 27th September, afternoon

## From the I to the We



The **first session on Friday** kicked off in plenary, at the Athens University's Great Hall where we constituted ourselves as an Assembly of trust and deliberation. Assembly members imagined themselves boarding a ship that they would co-design and pilot, including through the crafting of sails reflecting a shared ethos. We explained the buddy system and enacted the crew's journey to convey the debates and agreements that led to this moment in Athens.





## ON-BOARDING

To prepare for the meeting, assembly members were asked which crisis that affected Europe did they experience most vividly? Many, from Greece relived vividly the financial or euro-crisis with its destitute losers and egregious winners, still echoed by the housing and cost of living crisis. Others highlighted what they identify as the ultimate 'crisis': War in Ukraine. But others still lived the so-called migration crisis very directly. It seems that many, across countries, considered the COVID pandemic as the most life-impacting. At the same time, connections were made between the most recent 'flooding crisis' and climate change as an on going existential crisis and later the foreseeable arrival of climate refugees on Europe's shores. Can we democratise democracy in crisis, a member asked?



# POLITICAL BUY-IN

This Assembly is not mandated by an institutional actor. It is instead a 'pilot' serving as a prototype for what a permanent European assembly could look like and produce to help reinvigorate democracy in Europe. In this spirit, it reflects a "theory of change" that combines a grassroots campaign and experiment for this assembly AND a political and institutional buy-in. This buy-in is operationalised through the active engagement of local actors at several levels: 1) committed to using the assembly to plant democratic seeds, 2) reflecting this commitment at the national level 3) and at the European level, not only in Brussels but transnationally, connecting European peoples' agenda horizontally.

In addition to other decision makers, three Greek politicians, representing three levels of government, local, regional and national, listened to the Assembly's launch and expressed their commitment to follow our proceedings and to take its messages into account.

## **Dimitri Keridis**

*Member of the Hellenic Parliament and of its Special Standing Committee on European Affairs. Also Head of the Greek Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly*

## **Christina Kefalogianni**

*Deputy Governor of Attica*

## **Nikos Chrysogelos**

*Deputy Mayor of Athens for Climate Governance and Social Economy*







# THE BUDDY SYSTEM

The composition of the Assembly became the basis for the buddy system created at the launch of the assembly: two Athenian residents to host one non-Athenian, symbolizing Europe as translocal **hospitality**. The local politicians present joined the Odyssey crew in encouraging the members to create these groups of three, where transnational members were adopted by local residents, one Greek, one non Greek. All Greek members of the Assembly living in Athens teamed up with non-Greeks to welcome transnational members. In this way the so-called buddy system reflected very concretely the ethos of the Assembly to combine transnational and trans-local logics.

## THE COMPOSITION OF THE ASSEMBLY: *Combining transnational and translocal spheres*

### NON-GREEK ATHENIAN RESIDENTS

#### EUROPEAN:

Bulgaria 8  
Germany 1  
Poland 1  
Ukraine 11  
Albania 12  
Austria 1  
Cyprus 4  
France 1  
Italy 3  
Lithuania 1  
Romania 7  
Serbia 1

### NON-GREEK ATHENIAN RESIDENTS

#### GLOBAL:

Afghanistan 2  
Burkina Faso 1  
China 1  
DR Congo 2  
Ivory Coast 2  
Egypt 1  
Georgia 1

### CSOS (TRANSNATIONAL AND LOCAL):

Belgium 1  
France 1  
Greece 13

### GREEK ATHENIAN RESIDENTS

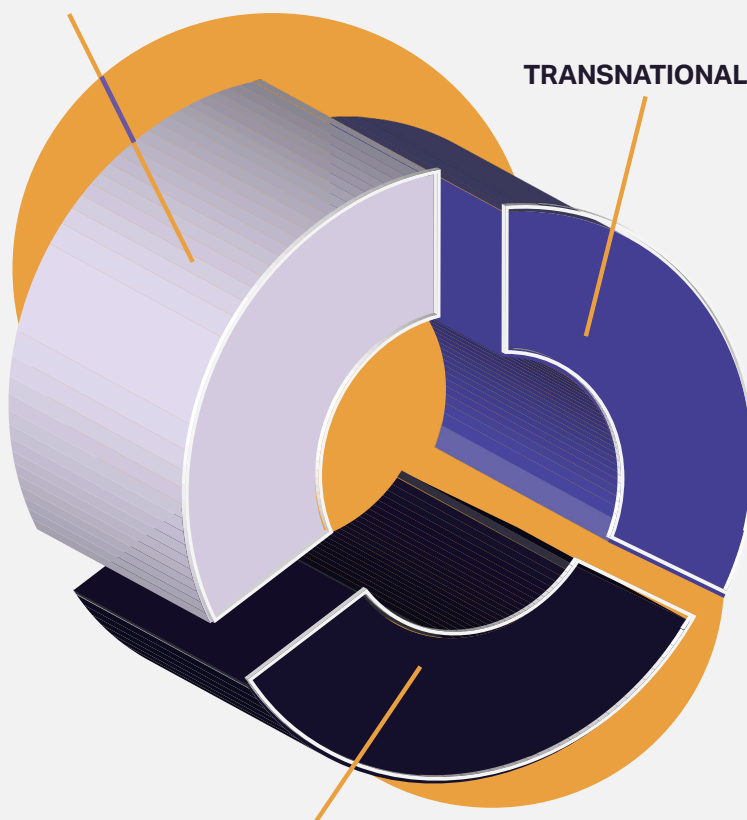
### TRANSNATIONALS

### TRANSNATIONALS EUROPEAN:

Austria 2  
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2  
Bulgaria 1  
Croatia 1  
Cyprus 2  
Czech Rep 4  
Finland 1  
France 2  
Germany 2  
Hungary 2  
Latvia 3  
Malta 1  
Netherlands 1  
Poland 2  
Portugal 1  
Slovenia 3  
Spain 1  
Sweden 2  
Slovakia 1

### TRANSNATIONALS ALUMNI:

Estonia 1  
France 1  
Hungary 1  
Italy 3  
Spain 2  
Sweden 2



205  
people from

44  
countries across the world  
alongside

20 facilitators, a group of more  
than

20 observers and an operational  
team of

10 individuals

### TRANS-NATIONAL + TRANS-LOCAL

*Our travelling assembly has the ambition to connect worlds. It is unique in combining a hyperlocal standpoint (say districts in Athens) with transnational standpoints (citizens travelling from 22 countries to Athens). This is the experiment: can we bring Europe home?*

# THE CREW'S JOURNEY

Once the buddy system was created, the Odyssey crew aimed to convey that this assembly meeting did not fall from the sky. To do so in a fun way, a mini-play, entitled the “crew’s journey” served to introduce the Odyssey crew and shed light on what brought all of us to Athens.

Some of our crew members played their own role going back to 2022, to showcase some of their many debates over the last two years, the disagreements they had and their collective soul-searching as the Odyssey progressively took shape.

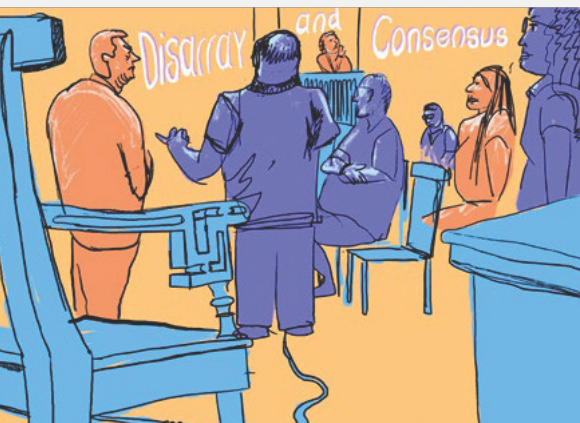
How can we help renew democracy in the EU, they asked at the time of COVID pandemic? If we were to advocate for a transnational assembly, should it be eternal? Would this be a pilot? An experiment? A laboratory? A journey? And what should the project be called? An Odyssey? But how could we appeal to a broader public? Would it help to relate closely to politicians? How were we supposed to tap into our collective emotions? Should we use theater and the arts to conduct our conversation? This in a nutshell is how we arrived at what we are doing today: “a permanent and transnational Peoples’ Assembly for Europe, travelling from city to city”.



## CO-DESIGNING OUR “TAPESTRY SAILS”

Sails will give direction, stability and power to the DO ship. We started with white sails, like a blank sheet. Assembly members were invited to share their own experiences of crises first with their neighbours then in small groups, echoing the conversations started during on-boarding. By cross-pollinating their stories, groups agreed on common mottos to lead the Assembly forward, to be imprinted on the Odyssey’s sails of fabric. Back in plenary, this was shared by a spokesperson from the group.

Many of these messages revolved around hope, even as citizens expressed pessimism about democratic practices during crisis.



*“We are all on one boat - since all is about us the people and our direction - it’s us the people who make the world! For this travel we need a compass showing us four directions: North, the direction of friendship - East, Hope since nothing is possible without hope - West, the world - South, the sea of the ongoing Odyssey.... We also put a tree next to the boat, with birds as the symbols of our love for nature!”*

A Greek citizen from Athens





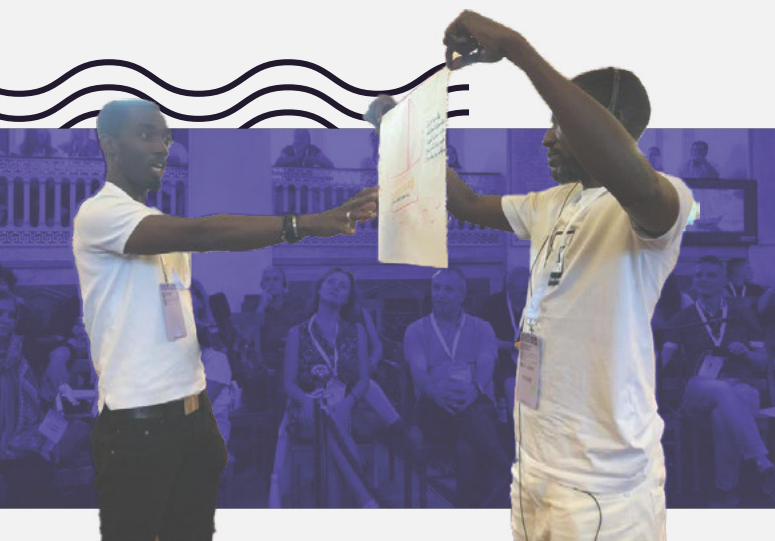




**"BE THE  
CHANCE THAT  
YOU WANT TO  
BE"**

*"Our Democratic Odyssey confronts us with others who try to keep us divided - who attempt to make our lives harder - who don't tell us many things - who overcomplicate things. Our puzzle is to mutually motivate us - to feed us and our families - to take care that everyone is heard, no matter how shy they are! Our mission and message is: Don't give up - let's empower us - help each other - express our emotions, since if we don't violence will come out - let's stay serious and keep moving forward - Communication keeps us united" - brings us together for joint action - to welcome hope, liberty, peace - if we keep going, slowly we'll come together!"*

A Polish citizen from Athens



**"NOTHING  
FOR US  
WITHOUT US"**

*"Our message is about Athens in 2029 - our hope that Diversity is the Future - our dream of a Democracy for All - the need to Decolonize Democracy without which Democracy will not be complete for us, the non-EU citizens!"*

A migrant residing in Athens



# Engaging with Legacies of Democratic Struggles in Freedom Square

Thanks to the support of the City of Athens, after wrapping up the first session, the Odyssey's Assembly Members attended the exhibition "1974 & 1944: Athens Celebrates Freedom" at the OPANDA Arts Center in Eleftherias Park. The exhibition was organised on the occasion of two significant anniversaries for Athens: 50 years since the restoration of democracy in July 1974 and 80 years since the liberation of the city from Nazi occupation in October 1944. After visiting the exhibition, the Members gathered at Eleftherias Park with friends from the Municipality to reflect on past crisis of democracy and on their expectations for the Odyssey.



*The members of the Assembly were warmly welcomed by the President of the Athens City Council, Mr Manolis Velegrakis.*

Saturday 28th September, morning

# Democracy in the Eye of the Storm

On Saturday, the members of the Assembly were divided into 14 smaller groups to revisit lessons learned from past crises in terms of democratic transformation. Members explored many different crises: financial meltdown, floods, fires, foreign refugees at the borders, wars. Stories of empowerment and powerlessness were juxtaposed. Some concentrated their expectations on state powers, others on citizens and neighborhoods. We recognised

that during crises some opportunities open and others close, and asked members to reflect on what of democratic practices should be kept, what should change and what should be invented anew in future crises. Facilitators used various DO angles as laid out in the Compass. While the contents of each discussion remain confidential, the following summary reflects certain key and recurrent factors that arose across the groups.

# OUR LIVES HAVE MADE US "CRISIS EXPERTS"...

The small group discussions started with members reflecting, first on their own and then in increasingly large groups, about their personal experience of crises. Trying to absorb one another's experiences in very different circumstances was often difficult and emotional. In spite of emphasizing different crises, the COVID-19 pandemic was the most common referent. Recurring motifs regardless of the type of crises being discussed belong to both sides of the ledger: lack of control, confusion, disempowerment, frustration. But sometimes, dignity seemed to have been restored. "We found ways to wait out difficult periods, new kinds of solidarity and "taking back control of our destiny". A lot seemed to depend on whether it was possible to connect with others and help each other.





# ...AND TAUGHT US THAT WE HAVE NOT TRIED EVERYTHING YET!



Assembly members then continued their discussions on crisis experience with three guiding questions:

The afternoon session kicked off with an interactive performance from the **playback theatre**.

Through improvisation, the actors brought the personal experiences of assembly members to life playing them back in images, movements and words.

**What went well, and therefore what should be kept?**

**What went wrong, and therefore what needs to change?**

**What could be invented or done differently for future crises?**

We explored how to prepare Europe for future crises by reflecting on our collective experiences and their democratic implications. We recognised the lessons learned from past challenges, the importance of maintaining valuable strategies and the urgent need to find innovative solutions.

The notes taken by the facilitators were aggregated at the end of the session. At first we used an artificial intelligence tool, but soon the crew felt that its summaries failed to convey the rich substance of the discussions.

The summary below is the outcome of this back-and-forth:

# What needs to be kept in future crisis? (What went well)

## Summary:

*We found strength in shared experiences during crises, where empathy, solidarity, and community action often thrived despite institutional shortcomings. Grassroots efforts and civil society became vital, stepping in to support the vulnerable when formal structures faltered. These bonds of mutual aid, along with useful technological adaptations like remote work and digital tools, reminded us of the value of human connection and resilience. Members often welcomed the support of local and national authorities for citizens' initiatives. **These strategies must remain central as we prepare for future challenges.***

The largest chunk of comments, perhaps due to a priming effect of the previous sharing exercise, revolved around **personal reflections, empathy, and mutual empowerment**. Members said that they tried to “make the most of every situation” and that crises allowed them to recognise that “people share the same values and have similar emotions in situations, despite differing opinions on how to improve”. Small circles of solidarity emerged in patchworks and people often showed solidarity with underprivileged groups. “We learnt to better appreciate what we have and to value the efforts of others (e.g., frontline workers during the pandemic).” The COVID-19 pandemic in particular, because it forced people to slow down, led them to consider the responsibility they have for others. The paradox of shared solitude became a lever for collective action. For some, the pandemic was a “turning point” in their lives, sparking realisations of personal **priorities** (spending time with family, having time for hobbies) and societal priorities (material goods decreasing in value as health and relationships become more pronounced).

***“You reconsider priorities in life.”***

## CITIZEN-LED DEMOCRACY?

A relief valve and valuable pillar of support during crises was **community solidarity and civil society action**. Members said that civil society and volunteer organisations “supported society and made it function when the state didn’t” and that it is “important to give space to people who care”. They mentioned NGOs that helped migrants get COVID vaccinations, civil society groups feeding the homeless and helping with administrative burden, grandmothers taking care of refugee children, and echoed again and again the thought that individuals and communities stepped up and assumed responsibility when governments could not or would not help. The best thing, many said, was when these networks survived the crisis.



### *“misery loves company”*

This was not however a celebration of anarchic society. **Successful governance and political responses** were applauded, be it support of EU institutions, information-sharing by governments, digitalisation of bureaucratic procedures, state-provided stations for testing COVID, and giving power to crisis management teams comprised of experts. **Financial adaptations** such as financial support from governments or moratoriums on paying rent or mortgages were also big relief valves. Government action was appreciated when providing a sense of stability and reliability but tellingly, many said that they themselves had to be accountable to one another.

### *“it was my Responsibility too”*

**So were technological adaptations** were also mentioned, mainly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. New digital businesses, remote working and teleworking, increased digitalisation, and simplified bureaucracy due to more modern, digital solutions are what members wish to see in the future.

Some mentioned the **environmental benefits** of crises, such as decreased pollution during the pandemic, “peace and quiet”, and people becoming more responsible, more aware of climate risks, and learning how to help (e.g., recycling). But the crisis upon us today, namely war at our borders, although most often mentioned by members from the east of Europe, was also seen as an environmental disaster.

Finally, some members wished to keep the **effective and helpful media and communications practices** they experienced, including through the use of public personalities advocating vaccination. But for the most part, the media was viewed as a negative force.







# What needs to change? (what went wrong)

## Summary:

*Since crises affect everyone differently, the Democratic Odyssey's way of bringing together local residents with residents from abroad was particularly effective in highlighting ways in which a good thing for some turned out to be bad for others. We also recognized significant shortcomings in governance and communication, where political interests overshadowed public needs, leaving many feeling unheard or manipulated. The pandemic exposed the dangers of misinformation and a lack of transparency, deepening mistrust. Economic disparities and systemic failures placed unfair burdens on essential workers, marginalized groups, and the youth. And governments were too often not accountable enough. We must address these flaws to rebuild trust and avoid repeating the same mistakes*

**Government failures and resulting mistrust** has deeply affected our Assembly members like the people at large. They were rankled for not being consulted by those in office and felt that state-of-emergency measures were used to overlook laws and hollow out democracy when it was actually not necessary. *What must change? Crisis as a pretext to grab power.*



Politicians, as they saw it tend to “play the blame game” during crises, sparking hate and turning people against each other. Such fearmongering gave people a sense of injustice, either because they were on the receiving end of the fear or because they did not like to be manipulated. *What needs to change? Blaming the wrong ones.*

Many spoke up to voice their distrust of their government when it comes to competence, the economy, energy - let alone their bodies and health. There was also a general impression that government officials are self-serving, manipulative, and do not have truly good intentions. *What needs to change? Either government ethics or citizen naivité.*

*“Politicians give the impression that they listen, but this is just marketing”*

**Ineffective crisis response and discrimination** related to government failures tended to be attributed to a lack of care from governments towards their constituents regarding their mental health and developmental consequences for children. The list of grievances is long: Pandemic frontline workers underappreciated and inadequately supported, migrants being disregarded or purposefully put in danger, pharmaceutical companies exploiting the moment

for greed, and governments refusing to rein them in or to cooperate with each other internationally to mitigate shortages, misinformation shared with ill intent, forced vaccination. *What needs to change? Care culture from grassroots to go to the top*

The **failure of communication** between societal actors, either directly or through the media, also rankled many. On the one hand, members pointed to how they lacked information about important topics such as vaccines or their rights. On the other hand, they realised that the abundance of misinformation, pouring in from social and traditional media leads to a lack of trust and divisions. *What needs to change? The lack of defense against misinformation.*

Our members also see **economic and infrastructure failures** all around them: abandoned infrastructure, uncontrolled economic benefits for perpetrators of climate change (e.g., fossil fuel companies) or beneficiaries of COVID-19 (e.g., pharmaceutical companies), war, material struggles, and poor-quality education made Assembly members feel insecure, anxious, and unsafe. They said they saw people becoming more introverted and selfish. *What must change? We must ask what could correct infrastructure failure*

### *“We lost our humanity”*

Assembly members recognised that people living through crises were not passive beings above criticism and reflected on what led to **societal divisions and mistrust**. Because people did not adequately reflect on their privileges and failed to empathize with those disproportionately affected by crises, they could indulge in noncooperation and sometimes even take advantage of others, ignoring science, healthcare professionals or experts. Many members were struck by how the manipulation for political gain of our volatile and fragile emotions - like anger and fear - increased tensions between groups (vaccinated vs unvaccinated, wealthy vs poor, majorities vs minorities). *What needs to change? The alienation between these groups that was stoked up by politics*

But how? Ultimately, many members were worried about a **loss of political engagement and cooperation**. Older members were especially concerned that young people do not care about politics (at local, national, or European level) and that those interested would lose interest and start feeling disconnected and frustrated. *What needs to change? Find more ways to sustain political engagement.*







# What could have been done differently (or invented?)

## Summary:

*Assembly members offered a plethora of suggestions for what could be invented to face future storms. Messages for policymakers, community leaders and other citizens alike. All in need of more exploration in the next Assembly meeting. Overall, we envision a Europe where crises are managed with transparency, inclusion, and public participation. A more democratically resilient Europe in the eye of the storm. Direct democratic engagement, such as assemblies and referendums, and stronger civic education could help counter misinformation and ensure accountability. Communication must prioritize accurate information and open dialogue to restore faith in our institutions.*

Most prominent was a widespread sense that **politics had not kept up with the ways we change individually and in our society**. “There needs to be change in our political systems through methods of democratic participation” many said. “We want more opportunities for citizens to be involved in policymaking and politics than just casting a vote every few years.” To start with, many thought that to have a say in and vote about smaller problems more frequently would make sense, ranging from a smarter recourse to referenda, to online engagement, to local community activism, and more collective decision-making in places of work. There even was a suggestion for voting on what kind of rights should be prioritized over other rights during crises. **Voting, deliberating, acting: how do they relate?**

**“Politicians should include citizens in decision-making, A top-down decision making system is old fashioned”**

Many assembly members argued one way or another that **government accountability during crisis management** could not be ensured if it had not been prepared **beforehand**. This is especially true for **climate change** of course, a view that was not only expressed by the younger members. Most participants agreed that we need to imagine what could happen before it happens, as crises like climate or migration or health are linked.

All levels of governments (local, national, and EU) are to be **more** professional, not guided by narrow sectional interest but by care for the **infrastructures we share**. This requires **accountability** for their actions, especially in times of crises. A few members insisted on more **mandatory** accountability such as a more frequent review of political mandates, even every two years. **Mandatory accountability: an option worth exploring?**



Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that they had accepted to take part in the Odyssey's first assembly, many members were inspired by the logic they were themselves involved in, and found it hard to imagine real accountability without **direct citizen engagement**. They called for more deliberative democracy and citizens' assemblies, and **even a permanent citizens' assembly for Europe**, the goal of the Democratic Odyssey itself.



To be sure, most groups raised such a prospect but they seemed to **understand assemblies in different ways**, from big jury-type bodies to a 4th branch of government. Some called for advisory councils, others to let citizens decide the baseline for policies, others for assemblies with actionable outcomes. *How do we imagine such a permanent Assembly?*

*“Democracy shouldn’t be just about voting for other people, it should be about us acting ourselves”*

Members actually discussed extensively what would be the most **desirable conditions for this to happen**, mostly in the form of questions:

What does “cultivating a critical mindset” or “access to reliable information” really mean? How can one both suggest that democratic practices are a constant power struggle and that we need to plan way in advance for democratic crises management? If democracy requires more open risk assessment, should this be a responsibility of the EU in health and other domains, or a local responsibility?

Members called for improved **civic education** for all age groups **and critical thinking** as a way to **combat disinformation**. This means **teaching media literacy** through education and training on democracy - especially in schools. *But is this a European prerogative? How do we design curricula that address multi-level democracy?*

We may be discussing “Europe” but many members craved more **community-driven** solutions and said the European management of crises requires **local engagement** and decentralised policymaking. *How do we aggregate such local actions into a European approach?*

*Build tomorrow today!*

A widespread call: without more **transparency** from all decision makers, there will never be trust! Members stressed especially communication on budgets and spending. It would help if policymakers planned future spending with citizens, creating spaces especially for young people to be involved in political



institutions. *But how can this be organised beyond small towns?*

*“more transparency about how money from our taxes is spent ”*

Many more messages were floated in small group discussions: the need to focus on small businesses; holding the private sector accountable to be a fair actor; improving the justice system to fight corruption; governments should not be allowed to stop commercial exchanges; a universal basic income should be introduced in Europe (or not?); the voting age should be lowered, even for some down to the age of 10; focus on addressing crises of health care systems.

#### SHOULD WE AGREE TO DISAGREE, OR DISCUSS FURTHER?

Many conversations highlighted not only different concerns but also differing opinions held by participants regarding the questions listed above. A common thread could be found, encapsulated in this question: are governments always the only solution? While some believed that governments did their best in unprecedented times, others were much more critical, expressing deep mistrust. Many members seemed interested in the trade-off between **government action and individual freedom** even while favoring one side or the other. Some argued **for more collective responsibility, other for more personal liberty**. Others called for cooperation between individuals, worried as they were about the limits of individual freedoms when it comes to vaccines, financial risks or reckless production of carbon emissions. The thread would be picked up in the afternoon.



# Preliminary conclusions through collective intelligence: a summary of what to keep, change, invent

So in the end, how did we start to address the question of our assembly? “Reflecting on your experience of recent crises, what needs to change for the EU to overcome future storms? And, how can we, the people, help better steer the European ship through these storms?”

In thinking about what to **keep** in order to cope with future crises in Europe, members emphasized communication and how it can better serve our collective decision making: freedom of expression, ensuring that many channels of information and quality media available to citizens, and through good communication building trust between governments, media and citizens. Members also wished to continue education and training efforts for children and adults to combat misinformation and understand democratic practices. This would help continue to foster a sense of solidarity among people living in Europe. They also wished to keep making efforts to save resources, recycle, and focus on sustainable and equitable growth. Their futures included digitalisation: they wanted bureaucracy to be streamlined via modern technology and to keep developing technological solutions that support all of the goals listed above.

*“It is more what unites us than what separates us.”*

In thinking about **what needs to change**, it is not surprising that the members of the assembly often talked about how the worst traits of humanity can emerge in times of crisis. One group said we should avoid “fighting each other, acting as if we were isolated individuals, guided by selfishness, stealing resources from one another, and running away from our responsibilities”. They were concerned about the deterioration of democracy and the emergence of dictatorships and misinformation, corruption, manipulation and “bad politics and bad administration.” Tied to this was a genuine disdain for elite politics and non-transparent governance and media. They also were critical of tunnel vision, of the excessive focus on present problems, to the detriment of investing in the future we want.” They further suggested banning or taxing plastics, and promoting recyclable and quality products to avoid wasting resources. The final pain point that emerged was the loss of jobs to technological advancements or other developments.

The next step was to establish **what is to be invented anew**. Some spoke of an ethic of the common good: a system that is based





on solidarity, togetherness, education, and dialogue, opening up new and better channels to listen and connect with one another - amongst and between citizens, media including social media, industry, and policymakers - thus emancipating citizens and empowering all to dream, act, anticipate, and face future crises together.



An inclusive, participatory democracy where people are engaged with their societies and regularly in contact with their representatives



How to spread solidarity, empathy, open-mindedness, and involving psychologists to build emotional intelligence



New ways for residents to contribute to policy-making in crises in each specific area, at the local level, with the help of deciding about economic justice, who should pay more and who should get more



A better plan for managing future crises, and communicating that plan to citizens



More focus and resources for the health system and prepare the health system for future crises



More meaningful public discussions so that everyone has the chance to be heard



Improving civic education (about politics, society, economics, societal systems, rights) and making people aware of their political agency, including instruments to enact their rights through engagement and participation



A permanent citizens' assembly to bring fresh ideas and monitor human rights



A legal procedure for inclusive legal processes to prevent crises in the future



Consultations with local communities



A rotating body of citizens dedicating time and getting paid to be part of decision-making, thereby representing the global citizenry.

# Saturday 28th September, afternoon **Negotiating Future Tradeoffs, to 2029 and back**



As lessons started to emerge from the morning discussion, they helped us connect all these group discussions with one another and re-gather as a “we”. This moment inspired a ‘BIG BANG’ moment that happened next: our **time travel** five years ahead to the beginning of the next EU **legislature**, in the middle of an **explosion of intersecting crises**: the **crisis of 2029**, a hundred years after the 1929 crisis which shook the world! Scenario simulation, role play and playback theater allowed us to engage in what we can call



“democratizing foresight” and project ourselves into this near future in a non-technical way. We then all returned to **2024** and offered a **message from the future** to our current selves: **what can we do now, that will makes tackling such a storm easier in 2029?**







Consider the case of an Albanian expat who was shot at while crossing the Greek border and has struggled to find healthcare, friendship, and stability in his new home - but has remained persistent and hopeful throughout and now works as a driver. Assembly members were respectful and inspired, but in some cases, they pushed back against the notion that migrants would not be treated well in Greece.

### FORESIGHT THROUGH TIME TRAVEL: THE CRISIS OF 2029

We were now a re-constituted “We”, in all our diverse experiences and yet, with a shared sense of our humanity. The Assembly members were now ready for a collective time travel. Why? Because if we are trying to ask what will make our democracies resilient it can help to imagine ourselves coping in the future. How do we build future scenarios? First by agreeing on a time horizon, in our case 2029, not only a symbolic date but also the moment when a new EU Parliament and Commission will be taking over.





## **GAMES TO DEMOCRATIZE FORESIGHT**

*We cannot change the world all at once, but we can change the way we think about the future to be ready when the world changes. In Europe as elsewhere, the field of strategic foresight allows for collectively imagining and planning for the future by building resilience for all sorts of scenarios which involve difficult trade-offs in the present. But the game belongs to “specialists.” Can citizens be a better constituency for the future than politicians? Why not radically democratize such time travel of the mind? This is the ambition of the Democratic Odyssey crew: to build on the collective intelligence of the Assembly members and their lived experiences to initiate a habit of democratic foresight, bringing it everywhere - from schools to neighborhood to the workplace.*



In order to make this time travel a collective projection, facilitators **elicited a collection of hypothetical headlines** imagined by participants:

Anti-microbial resistance: How the bugs are going to kill you

Global drought, no more water

West equals the EU and USA, the rest is more

Third World War knocking on the door

Water just for 5 day

A world of artistic intelligence

Deepfakes used in misinformation wars

Terrorist countries disappear from the map

Disappearance of bees

Tomorrow, the first permanent citizens' assembly includes Europe and Russia

Nuclear war, who will push the bottom first

Immortality: pills to live forever

Robots have replaced humans

Conspiracy theory added to the constitution

The rich have migrated to mars

Dictators left and right

European Union dissolves

Parliaments and representative systems abolished

Free coffee for everybody

Last politics replaced by AI

Xenophobia: I feel like a stranger in my own country

Hunger and famine on Earth

Citizens' conscience and power

Five countries in the Pacific have disappeared underwater

EU does not accept members to be divided like Cyprus

Food has been replaced by pills

The era of AI

The Atlantic converter has collapsed, runaway global warming on

Spread of infertility, no more young people

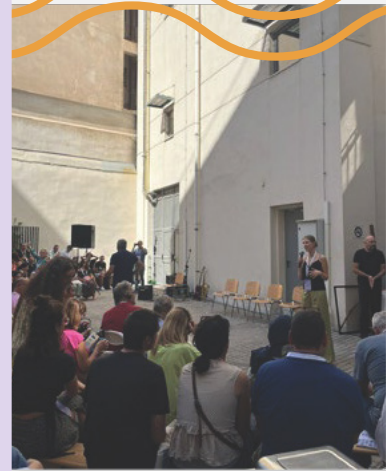
Finally, peace in the world



Gathered back in the same groups created in the morning session, the members were beamed through time in the midst of a **2029 poly-crisis combining these headlines** in a baseline scenario.

## THE SCENARIO:

2029: a new wicked crisis is unfolding. This is a tipping moment. The world is on the brink of a complete climate catastrophe, leading to water scarcity and large global flows of migration, especially with climate refugees at the boundaries of Europe. A new waterborne virus combined with stricter border controls in many parts of the world, has resulted in overflowing refugee camps and human rights concerns. Strident inequalities in human well-being define this crisis moment, with many countries facing rising food, energy, and housing prices, rapidly affecting the most vulnerable people in societies. To top it all, social media amplify resentment and conspiracy talk, and tensions between countries stoke fears of generalised war. EU countries seem incapable of agreeing on a strategy.



## THE ROLES:

The assembly members were asked to take on the role of one of four characters:

- > Media representatives who need to navigate a complex information environment, balancing profit and responsibility to ensure quality reporting.
- > Industry representatives who need to consider their role in society and to consider if they limit their calculations to their financial bottom lines or tap into their social responsibility.
- > Citizens must explore how they can participate in managing the current crises, leveraging their lived experiences.
- > Policymakers who need to make decisions on multiple trade-offs and political priorities, taking into account the views of all other actors.

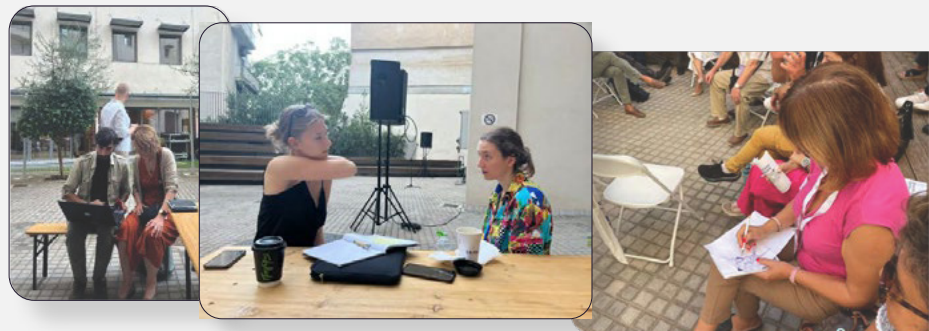


Those with the same role discussed their priorities in dealing this 2029 crisis scenario, before gathering for a 4-way role play to engage with each other's 2029 priorities and negotiate interim solutions.



### ***Urgent Adaptation - Long term imagination***

Upon returning to their original groups, members debriefed about their findings. Their task was to use their insights from time travel to come up with recommendations to send back in time to their selves of 2024: this is how we could navigate the 2029 crises better! These recommendations would serve as a guiding message for future Assembly meetings. They followed the model set up in the morning session: what to keep, what to change, and what to invent. Facilitators explained that the recommendations were not final, and that there would be ample opportunity to refine them both in Athens and in future meetings.

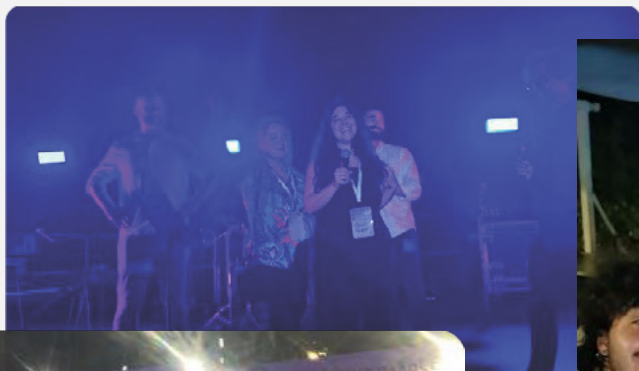


After a break, the Assembly gathered in plenary to listen to all the recommendations, and to make a first judgment on whether the resulting texts were in a presentable state or required further work. Note that members were not asked to evaluate how much they agreed with the recommendations, but rather how finished and ready for submission they were. Via Mentimeter, members could rate the completeness of the recommendations. The full text of the recommendations and the Mentimeter results can be found in the Annex.

***End part: Members decide which messages are most advanced and which require more work.***



## Democratic Odyssey is locally embedded: A Democracy Festival at the heart of Athens in Klatfthomos Square

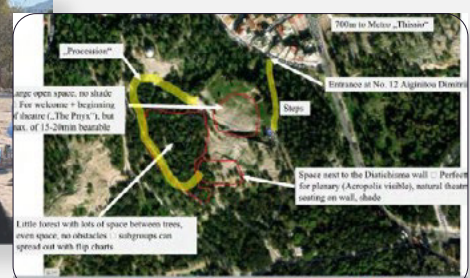




# Sunday 29th September, morning **What Next?**



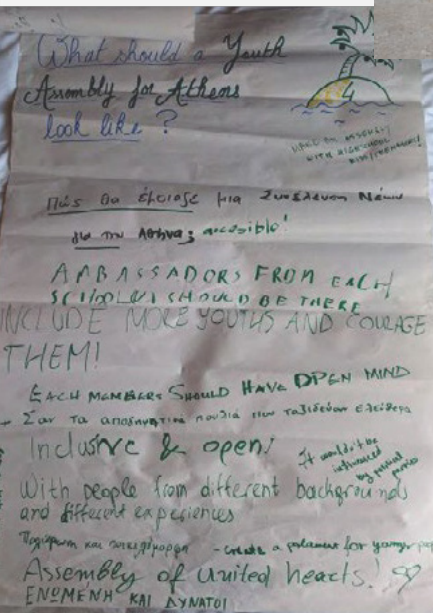
We continued to build on themes explored on Saturday, entering our final Athens moment by reflecting on where we stood. That is, on the hillslopes of the Pnyx, where Athenians gathered and took collective decisions for 200 years. We tested our messages and intuitions from Saturday to imagine the specific “better worlds” in different places and contexts that our messages may bring about - specific islands drawn from members’ focus the day before. By the end we were inspired to send our messages in a bottle, catch wind in our tapestry sail, and exchange promises and commitments about the next leg of the journey for the Assembly meeting in Florence (February 7-9 2025, to be confirmed) and Vienna (April 2025) as well as for democratic steps in Athens.





## ISLANDS OF DEBATE: WHAT NEXT?

The culmination of our conversations orbited around four themes and what we called “islands”, islands where our ships can stop for a while to reflect on fundamental questions. Members of the assembly were invited to move to different islands and contribute through discussion, in writing and in drawing. Members were inspired by the ancient practice of pinning amendments under pebbles.



## THE YOUTH COUNCIL

The founders of the Youth Council facilitated a conversation with thirty fellow younger members, aged between 16 and 29, and interested in being part of the Youth Council. They expressed their eagerness to be heard and promote new ideas on issues such as the environment, human rights, or housing. And they pledged to create the Youth Assembly or Council in the next weeks in collaboration with both the Municipality and the Region of Attica.



# The message of the Assembly

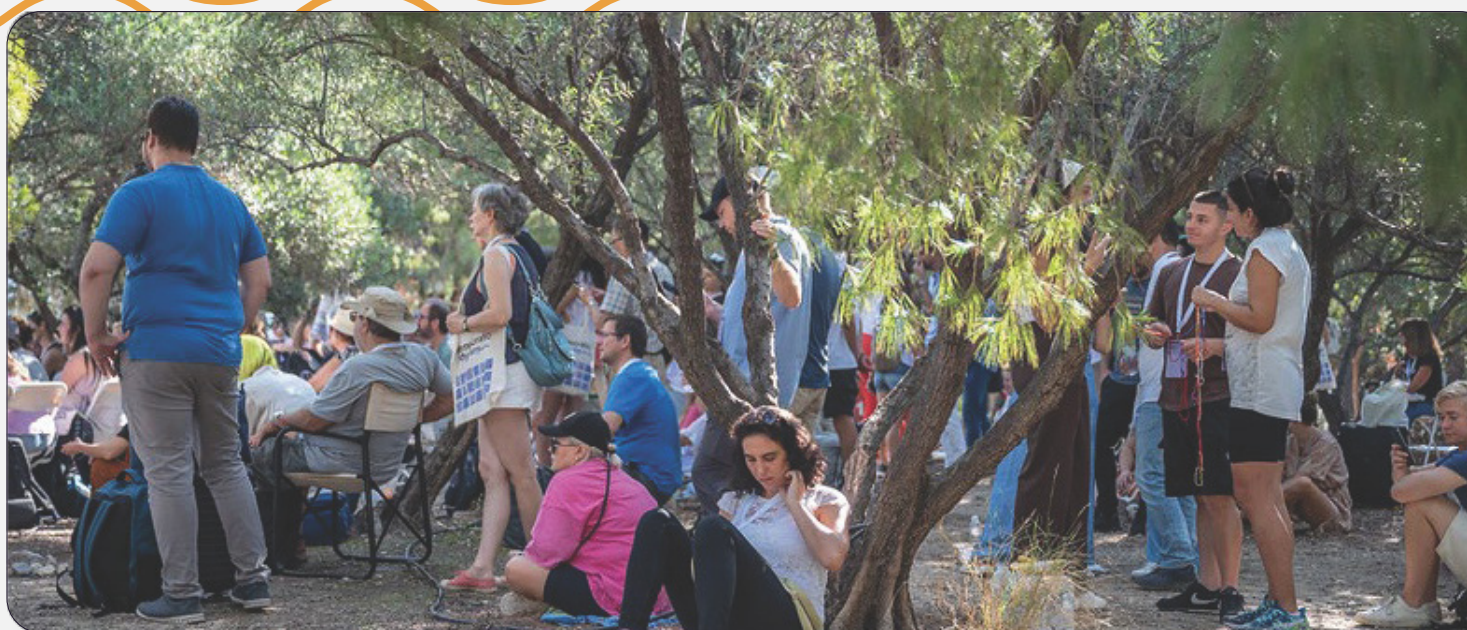


Reflecting on a draft text generated from the most advanced messages ranked on the Saturday afternoon, assembly members proposed additions, changes and further issues for development to the overall message of the Assembly. The text was available in English and in Greek, and participants making proposals for changes wrote them on paper, put them over the text held by a pebble, and others could support the suggestions by adding more pebbles.

## The agreed message:

Our people's assembly has met in the first port of its Democratic Odyssey: Athens. We seek to invent a permanent assembly that allows more participatory democracy via regular and transparent deliberation between people, and involving policy makers, scientists, industry and journalists, that leads to concrete commitments and actions at local, regional, national and transnational levels and more cultural integration. We believe this assembly can contribute to better planning for future crises, build trust, interdependence and promote the equality, liberty, education, health and wellbeing of everyone.

*Our power is connection !*





**"How can this transnational Peoples' Assembly support the implementation of their own recommendations but also those of other peoples' assemblies at all scales?"**

**"How can other peoples' assemblies find their voice and be heard in this transnational Peoples' Assembly?"**

**"How will this transnational Peoples' Assembly promote, share and integrate co creative innovations in democracy inside and across other people's assemblies at other scales?"**

**"How do we create links across national, regional and local scales?"**

***Further issues to address in the future of the assembly included issues of organisation, of scales of impact of the Peoples' Assembly, and its connection with other assemblies.***



*If your has participating in this assembly changed you?  
Why has it been a valuable experience for you?*

*This was a chance to express our own Swedish positions*

*Först blev jag en bit skeptisk eftersom jag är en*

- When you have the experience of other people you around some perspectives*
- I was skeptical because the young people are very depressed about their future*
- It has been valuable to hear about the issues and crises in other countries*

*I really enjoyed my participation. I met people who were passionate about democracy. I learned a lot about the world and thought about what democracy*

*It was the first time I took part in a "social experiment"*

*I understand that democracy is a difficult thing and everyone should just do something to make it work better in our society*

*I understand that democracy is a difficult thing and everyone should just do something to make it work better in our society*

*I understand that democracy is a difficult thing and everyone should just do something to make it work better in our society*

*Konst har varit en del av demokratins historia*

- Demokratins historia har varit en del av demokratins historia*
- Demokratins historia har varit en del av demokratins historia*
- Demokratins historia har varit en del av demokratins historia*



### **SETTING OUR SAILS TOWARDS NEW DESTINATIONS**

Throughout the morning messages and mottos were imprinted on our sails before they were lifted to symbolise our collective journey moving forward.



### **THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ASSEMBLY**

“When people have the opportunity to really listen to one another, that’s where we co-create the best ideas and solutions.”

### **OBSERVERS FOR ONGOING EVALUATION**

The Democratic Odyssey project benefits from a group of observers who provide regular assessments of the process and help improve the experiment on an iterative basis. Observers came from across Europe as well as from countries around the world including Chile, India, Turkey, South Africa and the United States. We hope this can help build a global network of Democratic Odyssey assemblies, as well as corresponding networks of evaluation. Among others, Damien du Preez wrote a [testimony about the Athens meeting](#).





## COLLECTIVE AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Democratic Odyssey acknowledges the growing wave of Artificial Intelligence (AI) being deployed to support deliberative processes, as well as the justified concerns for transparency, explainability, accuracy and fairness, among other issues. DO recognises the transformative potential of using technology to both harness and empower collective intelligence. We seek to test its deployment in specific areas of design for a permanent People's Assembly for Europe, incrementally. During and after Athens, we have done so in two ways:

- ***Aggregation and recognition:***

We have used an AI-powered aggregator to summarise the notes from sub-group note-takers, so as to get a specific sense of shared Assembly themes but also a better understanding of minority views that were brought up. This has helped the facilitators put together the parts of this report that summarise the Athens debates.

- ***Advocacy from Assembly Members to the public:***

We have also deployed an AI software that enables participants to write a letter to whichever stakeholder they deem most impactful, including fellow citizens, with a message from the Assembly and through very simple inputs. This has minimised their need to work on the multilingual drafting of the text, enabling them to work more on the substantive requests, proposals and calls for action. The results will be made available to the public.

In the coming months and years, the Democratic Odyssey will continue to assess how to best deploy other AI-based technologies, with uses ranging from multilingual interpretation, to hybrid facilitation, all the way to digital platform-wide aggregation.



Listen to an AI-generated podcast about our Athens moment

**DON'T MISS OUT—CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE!**



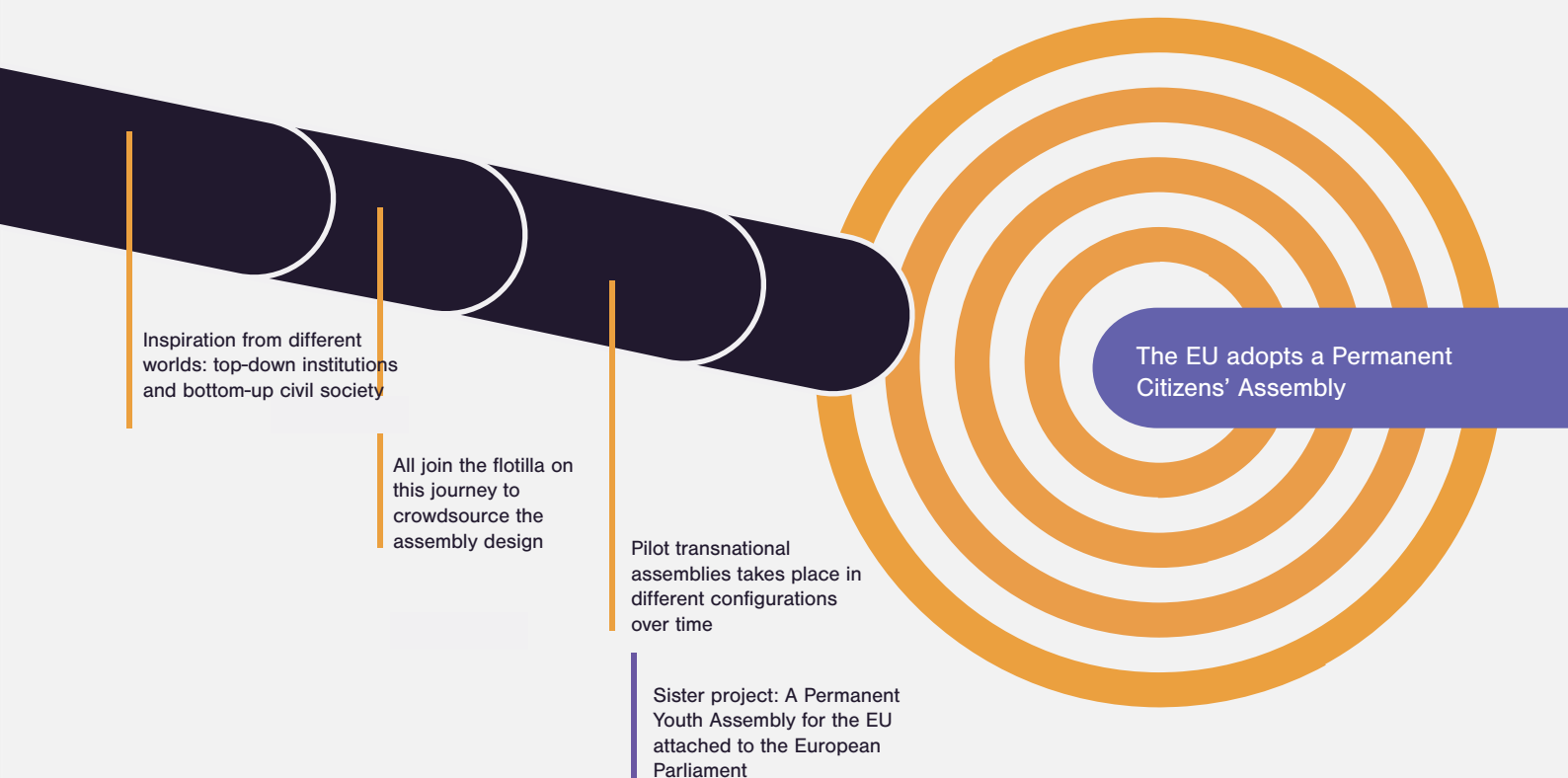
Random hat-draw of Athens Ambassadors to Florence by the youngest participant



# What Next?

In this 2024-25 pilot Assembly cycle, the journey continues with two Assembly meetings online (26 November and spring 2025) and another two assembly meetings on-site, the first in Florence (February 2025) and a final one in Vienna (spring 2025). This will consolidate our “proof of concept” for a permanent and transnational Peoples’ Assembly for Europe which is, in other words, our methodology for how it should be organised once permanent. While this is contingent upon appropriate resources being mobilised, our goal is for the Assembly to repeat this journey with new members in the second half of 2025, through to 2026 and beyond, as our campaign for a permanent People’s Assembly suggests. All is to be contextualised in a broader vision for how the different dimensions of impact already outlined, would play out on a broader timeline towards institutionalisation and embeddedness:

## A DEMOCRATIC ODYSSEY: TOWARDS A PERMANENT EUROPEAN CITIZENS’ ASSEMBLY?



The Assembly meeting in Athen was a first step in this journey. They produced a message for the broader public, which we have presented in this report and will continue to showcase to EU, national and local institutions, as well as civil society actors and other stakeholders. Simultaneously, they also developed messages for the next Assembly meetings online, in Florence and Vienna. There, the DO Assembly will be tasked with owning these preliminary orientations and connecting them with the new participants that will join the process in the new localities we will travel to. The Assembly will grow to be one of 500 people, which will turn the initial “messages” into final “recommendations” at the end of this first cycle. In the spirit of democratic respect the Assembly members will address these both to the public sphere and to policy makers, toping for responsiveness, ambition and commitment to move forward.



## WHAT IMPACT?

### **Knowledge impact:**

By putting forward a structured proposal for both (i) promoting a more pluralistic and crowd-sourced epistemic debate; and (ii) testing some of the methodological design elements developed against a 'proof of concept' assembly.

### **Institutional impact:**

We are collaborating with MEPs, Council members and key figures in the Commission to discuss how the Odyssey's campaign could feed into future EU-organized Citizens' Panels.

### **Political impact:**

By gathering strategically in September 2024, after the EP elections and before the new Commission convenes, we will synergize with the political calendar to make our sortition and deliberation process visible, ultimately demonstrating the agenda-setting potential of a future Peoples' Assembly for Europe.

### **Social impact:**

Simultaneously, we will be empowering European citizens by opening up new spaces for direct political participation through a large-scale popular campaign and collaborations with journalists, activists, artists and cultural actors from the film and theatre industries.



### **GETTING DECISION MAKERS ON BOARD**

The Athens moment also saw the participation and endorsement of Former Prime Minister George Papandreou, member of the Greek Parliament and General Rapporteur on Democracy at the Council of Europe, as well as Nicolas Farantouris, Member of the European Parliament. George Papandreou's endorsement propelled the Democratic Odyssey's messages towards Strasbourg, while Nicolas Farantouris commended the DO's collaboration with EU institutions such as the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.



The democratic odyssey is working with both institutions in tandem.





# ANNEX:

## *Full text of messages*

### GROUP 1

*To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend to:*

#### **Keep:**

communicating with one another, in a friendly, fun, collaborative and happy way, making efforts to save resources and recycling products, preserving our rights to freedom of expression and to education in order to be equipped to fight misinformation.

#### **Avoid:**

fighting each other, acting as if we were isolated individual guided by selfishness, stealing resources from one another, and running away from our responsibilities, not listening to one another because of our different interests, ages, languages, or even worse, manipulating one another, spreading fake news and misinforming citizens, focusing excessively on the problems of the present to the detriment of focusing on solutions for the future, dreaming about the future we want excluding industries since they are part of the solution.

#### **Invent:**

an ETHIC OF THE COMMON GOOD: a system that is based on solidarity, togetherness, education, and dialogue, opening up news and better channels to listen and connect with one another - amongst and between citizens, media, including social media, industry, and policymakers - thus emancipating citizens, and empowering all to dream, act, anticipate and face future crises together.

### GROUP 2

*To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend to:*

#### **Keep:**

solidarity and support at the local level to reinforce education and training for children and adult and reinforce the common funding mechanism for cooperation at the EU level

#### **Avoid:**

deteriorating of democracy and the emergence of dictatorships

#### **Invent:**

an inclusive, participatory democracy where people are engaged with their societies and regularly in contract with their representatives

### GROUP 3

*To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend to:*

#### **Keep:**

freedom of speech through quality media

#### **Avoid:**

corruption, bad politics, bad admin, manipulation

#### **Invent:**

how to spread solidarity, empathy, open-mindedness, psychologists to build emotional intelligence

#### GROUP 4

*To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend to:*

**Keep:** amplify and promote experiences of democratic practices in schools.

**Avoid:**  
wasting resources - food, water, trees, seas by banning plastics or taxing it hugely, promoting recyclable and quality product, by supporting collectives of citizens

**Invent:**  
new ways for residents, to contribute to policy making in crisis in each specific area, at the local level.

Prepare a culture of togetherness and sisterhood in normal times, to be resilient in a storm, by leading a simpler life, increase personal responsibility, respect diversity, have the tools not to panic and learn to share.

#### GROUP 5

*To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend to:*

**Keep:**  
the concept of moral responsibility of everybody by encouraging collective engagement

**Avoid:**  
elitist politics and precarisation

**Invent:**  
to improve civic education (about politics, society, economics, societal systems, rights) and make people aware of their political agency, including instruments to enact their rights, through engagement and participation

#### GROUP 6

**To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend** that policymakers build trustworthy relationships between governments and people, establish progressive tax systems, and focus on sustainable and equitable economic growth.

#### GROUP 7

*To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend to:*

**Keep:**  
open spaces for citizens to have a voice (like citizens' assemblies)

**Avoid:**  
making the same mistakes and perpetuating individualism

**Invent:**  
a way of making more inclusive, satisfying decisions, before crises happen; using lessons from the past and assessing the real risks of the future. It is more what unites than what separates us.

## GROUP 8

*To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend to:*

**Keep:** interdependent communication and collaboration.

**Avoid:**

exclusion of citizens and other stakeholders from policy processes and avoid bureaucracy because it creates inequality.

**Invent:**

- a permanent citizens' panel to bring fresh ideas, and monitor human rights
- a legal procedure for inclusive legal processes to prevent crises in the future
- consultations with local communities
- more transparency of media

## GROUP 9

*To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend to:*

**Keep:**

- Showing solidarity with one another, and taking (personal and collective) responsibility
- Simplifying bureaucracy with modern technology, and to keep developing digital/ technological solutions
- adapt to new circumstances on psychological, professional and social levels

**Avoid:**

- losing jobs because of tech advancements or other developments
- spread of mis-information and lack of transparency
- restriction of freedoms without understanding why
- creating discrimination
- avoid tunnel vision, forgetting about other parallel problems

**Invent:**

- organizing public discussions so that everyone has the chance to be heard
- state should provide seminars to advance people's skills so they're equipped to manage change
- more focus and resources for health system, and prepare health system for future crises
- moving toward more direct democracy, more people involved in decision making
- have a better plan for managing future crises, and communicate that plan to the citizens
- think about individual and collective well-being (material and spiritual)
- more direct democracy

## GROUP 10

*To cope with future crises in Europe we recommend to:*

**Keep:**

- the many channels of information
- thinking holistically and build trust between the actors time to create bigger vision for the future

**Avoid:**

- that news become propaganda
- all the things we do not really need and the mindset which led us to this crisis

**Invent:**

- a body for citizens to check if media is really free
- a body where citizens will be rotating and dedicating time and get paid in different ways to be part of decision making and so represent citizens in this process



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