



# KNOCA

## Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies

KNOCA BRIEFING NO.8

### **DESIGNING THE FOLLOW-UP TO CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES: EMBEDDING RECOMMENDATIONS WITHIN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Frederik Langkjær and Graham Smith

September 2023

**This a draft Briefing that will be finalised after the KNOCA workshop Designing Follow-up to Climate Assemblies on 27 September 2023**

*KNOCA is a European-based network that aims to improve the commissioning, design, implementation, impact and evaluation of climate assemblies, using evidence, knowledge exchange and dialogue. KNOCA documents climate assembly practice, identifies and disseminates best practice for impact and shapes future trends. You can find us and join KNOCA at <https://knoca.eu/>*

## 1. Key Insights

- How public administrations and other institutions and stakeholders can best organise their follow-up to the recommendations of climate assemblies has not received the same level of attention as how to organise and support effective citizen engagement within assemblies.
- This lack of understanding of how to design and implement follow-up has had a material effect on the translation of Assembly recommendations into the policy making process.
- Some assemblies – for example, Scotland’s Climate Assembly – have put significant resources into follow-up but still had problems landing Assembly recommendations over the long term.
- Making sure that political support and administrative structures are in place with clear lines of responsibility and accountability is critical.
- Members are often the best advocate for their recommendations and thus should have a clear role (with capacity building support) in the follow-up process

## 2. Recommendations

- More detailed guidance is needed on how to design the follow-up to assemblies within public administrations.
- Commissioners and organisers of assemblies need to put as much effort and resources into designing and implementing follow-up as they do on citizen engagement with the Assembly.
- Follow-up needs to involve both process and policy experts from public administrations and civil society and clear roles for different political institutions and stakeholders.
- Political support is required for defined follow-up structures and processes that remain in place for at least two years after the Assembly.
- Regular moments of accountability and monitoring are needed to ensure better integration of Assembly recommendations.

## 3. Introduction

Climate assemblies are producing recommendations that could enable more robust climate policy and governance. However, a weakness in the model is that these recommendations typically do not land effectively within commissioning authorities. By failure to “land” we mean that procedures and structures are not place to ensure that the recommendations are taken seriously and considered within decision making processes. A story from a KNOCA workshop emphasises this point well: the first time a public official knew of a climate assembly organised by their administration was when the citizens’ report landed on their desk with a number of recommendations suggesting major changes in their area of policy. They did not react well to the unexpected proposals!

In most political contexts, it is too much to expect that recommendations will be directly translated into policy – very few authorities are willing to give that sort of power to a citizens’ assembly. But we can expect that assembly recommendations are given due weight and consideration by the bodies that have commissioned the assembly. The danger is that otherwise commissioners may “cherry-pick” those recommendations that fit with existing policy and strategy (Font et al 2018). This requires processes and structures to be in place – in other words, follow-up needs to be judiciously designed if assemblies are to be *embedded* within the policy development and decision-making of public administrations (Bussu et al 2022).

While a number of publications offer guidance on how to design and implement a citizens’ assembly, almost no guidance exists on how to design and implement the follow-up process – guidance on how the

commissioning authority can organise itself to integrate citizens' recommendations into its decision-making processes. For example, the OECD's good practice principles for deliberative processes includes accountability, defined as:

There should be influence on public decisions. The commissioning public authority should publicly commit to responding to or acting on participants' recommendations in a timely manner. It should monitor the implementation of all accepted recommendations with regular public progress reports. (OECD 2020: 118)

However, such exhortations are not accompanied by specific guidance on how accountability should be organized within administrations.

This Briefing is a first step in the development of KNOCA guidance on designing follow-up to assemblies. It begins by considering why this aspect of assembly practice can be challenging. We then turn to a more detailed analysis of an example of designing follow-up: Scotland's Climate Assembly (SCA). We have chosen to look at one example in some depth to tease out key elements. And we have chosen the SCA because it is the national assembly that put most resources into follow-up. We then draw out lessons from other assemblies to clarify elements of the design of follow-up. The Briefing ends with some initial thoughts about good practice and guidance.

Note that in this Briefing, the attention is primarily on the internal roles and responsibilities of the public authority that has commissioned the assembly. Other bodies will often need to be involved in the follow-up to deliver on assembly recommendations (this could be public agencies, multi-sector partnerships, the third sector and community sectors, private sector organisations, etc.). The inclusion of other stakeholders in the delivery of recommendations and how this affects the follow-up process is currently beyond the scope of this Briefing but will be picked up in future KNOCA work.

#### **4. Why is follow-up a challenge?**

A simple answer to the lack of consistent follow-up is that most practitioners, officials, activists and academics working in the field have primarily focused their attention and energy on the assembly itself – the implications of different ways of organizing citizen engagement. Through KNOCA's learning calls and workshops, two very practical challenges to effective follow-up have consistently emerged. First, assemblies are often organised in haste, with limited preparation time. Under such circumstances, the design and delivery of the assembly takes priority with limited time to consider follow-up. Second, for those responsible for organising the assembly, their involvement ends with the publication of the assembly recommendations. The contracts of practitioners are typically only for the delivery of the assembly. Their responsibility ends once the citizens' report has been delivered. Similarly, the public officials who are responsible for delivering the assembly are not always directly responsible for the policy processes affected by the assembly recommendations. The governance bodies established to oversee the assembly process are often disbanded when the assembly ends its work.

At the same time, our knowledge base on how commissioners integrate recommendations is lacking. While our understanding of how to run the citizen engagement element of an assembly effectively has increased dramatically, our collective understanding and practice about how best to organize public administrations to receive and respond to recommendations is lacking. This is a considerable knowledge gap, particularly if we hope to improve the extent to which assemblies generate significant shifts in climate policy and governance.

At times, follow-up will be limited because of a lack of political will on the part of commissioners. But on many occasions, follow-up is limited because organisers have not had the time, resources or guidance to think through the implications of running an assembly and how their administrations’ procedures and structures need to be adjusted to respond effectively.

But the follow-up to assemblies is not necessarily easy to design and implement. As Lukas Kübler and colleagues (2022) at Co:Lab suggest, deliberative processes demand that public bodies work differently. Established administrative and bureaucratic logics place a premium on hierarchical accountability, specialised expertise and routinisation of tasks. Deliberative processes require public authorities to provide resources and expert input to support citizen deliberation and to be open to considering recommendations developed by citizens that may run counter to current policy and ways of working. Quite simply, we often have a clash of logics between public governance and deliberative processes.

At the same time, those officials and politicians who are commissioning and organising an assembly may be far removed from the parts of the administration that will be required to respond to recommendations of a process that they have not be involved in commissioning (Bottin and Mazeaud 2023). Ownership of the assembly may not be shared across a public authority which is often a highly complex organisation that works in policy silos with different political and administrative priorities. Additionally, the follow-up process requires a commitment over time – for many months and even years after the assembly. This can be challenging given annual budget cycles and the impact of electoral cycles that can bring in new political actors that were not responsible for the assembly in the first place. Public administrations are a complex landing place for recommendations from climate assemblies.

## 5. Scotland’s Climate Assembly: an example of designing follow-up

Scotland’s Climate Assembly has been chosen as a case study because of all the national climate assemblies, it arguably had the most developed follow-up process. It was not perfect – as we will discuss below – but it provides insights into the roles that different actors can play in helping to embed the assembly within a public administration. The case study draws on interviews and a design workshop with civil servants who have been involved in assembly processes in Scotland as well as from KNOCA workshops where Scotland’s Climate Assembly has been a subject of discussion. The KNOCA website provides a short introduction to Scotland’s Climate Assembly and links to relevant resources.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1. Elements of the follow-up to Scotland’s Climate Assembly**

The **Climate Change Act** required a government response to the Assembly within 6 months.

The Assembly **Secretariat** was composed of seconded civil servants with experience of working within and across Scottish Government. During the Assembly, the Secretariat negotiated with government to continue after the assembly had made its recommendations. Among a number of activities post-assembly, the Secretariat publicised the recommendations through networks within the administration and amongst relevant stakeholders; organised meetings for assembly members with key politicians (within and beyond government), the parliamentary Net Zero committee and public officials; provided capacity building for members of the assembly for those meetings; organised an additional (eighth) Assembly weekend to consider the response of government to their report and recommendations; developed a Civic Charter for civil society organisations, businesses and other stakeholders to support the

<sup>1</sup> <https://knoqa.eu/scotlands-climate-assembly/>

Assembly's report. The Secretariat was disbanded two months after the eighth weekend when no further funding was made available at the end of the government's financial year.

The **Stewarding Group**, the Assembly's advisory body composed of different stakeholders (including representatives of political parties, industry and environmental bodies and experts in participation and deliberation) was also retained for nine months after the Assembly produced its recommendations. It supported the Secretariat in disseminating the report and recommendations.

The **Expert Group** that had worked alongside the Assembly provided its assessment of the official government response to inform the deliberations and decision making during the additional Assembly weekend.

The **Sponsorship Team** from the Climate Change Division was responsible for organising the official government response. It already knew it would play this role before the Secretariat was in place and some of the Secretariat were drawn from the Division. One of the members of Secretariat transferred back into Sponsoring Team after the Assembly reported. The Sponsorship Team engaged with around 30 directorates responsible for policy areas covered by Assembly recommendations. Ownership of the follow-up process by the Sponsorship Team lasted until Weekend 8 of the Assembly at which point it became the responsibility of individual policy teams across government.

The relevant **Minister** agreed the role of the Sponsoring Team and signed off the official government report. Two ministers attended the additional weekend to formally receive the response from members.

**Parliament** received the Assembly report followed by a plenary debate. The Net Zero parliamentary committee tabled responses to the Assembly report which continues to inform its scrutiny work

**Assembly members** met with ministers and officials (with support from Secretariat). An additional Assembly weekend was organised so that members could produce its Response to Government.

In many ways, the SCA follow-up can be seen as exemplary. The government was legally committed to respond to the Assembly's report within 6 months. The Sponsorship Team with responsibility for organising the government response to the Assembly's report was in place before the Assembly began its work. The Secretariat and Stewarding Group that are typically disbanded at the end of the Assembly were kept in place to promote the report and to build the capacity of members to engage with public officials and politicians. The members not only engaged with policy actors to explain their recommendations, but reconvened as an Assembly for an additional weekend to respond to the government report.

But even with these quite sophisticated structures and processes, limitations emerged. First, because of the Covid pandemic, the Assembly was delayed which meant that it missed the relevant climate policy cycle. No dedicated resources were then available to integrate its recommendations. Second, while the Climate Change Act specified a government response to the Climate Assembly's recommendations within 6 months, it had nothing to say about what happened afterwards. It did not specify long-term responsibility for action or any further accountability mechanisms. Once the government had made its official response, the Sponsorship Team within the Climate Change Division no longer had responsibility to coordinate the government's activities. Responsibility now rested with individual policy teams in the areas where the Assembly had made recommendations but with no requirement to report or monitor their actions. Two months after the eighth weekend, at the end of the financial year, the Secretariat and Stewarding Group were disbanded. At that point, no actor within the administration had overall responsibility to coordinate

government action and no monitoring processes were in place. Unwittingly, Weekend 8 had become a de facto end point to the process. Third, parliament as a whole and the Net Zero committee in particular was unclear about its own role in the follow-up process.

Policy actors closely involved with Scotland's Climate Assembly offered a series of reflections and suggestions about how the follow-up process might have been strengthened.

- **Regular and longer reporting.** Weekend 8 became the de facto end point because the 6-month response was the legislative requirement. A 6-month timescale for reporting captures the context of urgency of the climate crisis but it is too soon for much material policy development and implementation. A longer time frame for reporting may help to better embed recommendations but could come at the cost of losing momentum, support and credibility. Rather than a single reporting moment, regular reporting points could have been established. Assembly members proposed a bi-annual Climate Score Card, although this was not specific to monitoring the impact of their report, but rather the provision of “clear numerical and measurable targets based on areas of greatest impact on climate change”.
- **Clear responsibility for action.** Regular reporting on take-up of the Assembly recommendations needs to be accompanied by clear responsibilities for specified policy actors to coordinate action across government. Named civil servants or teams need to be given ownership of relevant recommendations with reporting on progress built into existing procedures. Action teams could be established to respond to specific thematic sets of recommendations, with membership drawing in stakeholders from beyond government where their participation is necessary to achieve progress.
- **External monitoring.** An Accountability Board could be established to review progress, drawn (for example) from the Stewarding Group, the Evidence Group and members of the Assembly.
- **Timing of assembly.** A clear relationship between a climate assembly and relevant policy cycles is needed. The Assembly was imposed on government by parliament (itself under pressure from civil society to add an assembly into the new Climate Change Act) and was not timed to coincide with internal policy cycles and particular policies that were already under way. The delays caused by the pandemic meant the assembly was even further out of sync and no resources were made available to support integration of recommendations by policy teams.
- **Clear role for parliament.** Parliamentarians and parliament as a corporate body need more clarity about their role post-Assembly. Government is typically the funder and main respondent. Only the Irish assembly process has a clear role for parliament. For the climate report from the Citizens' Assembly 2016-18, a cross-parliamentary committee was established to consider the Assembly's report. The Committee report (accompanied by the Assembly report) was then considered by government. Positively, it means that those citizens' recommendations that are also supported by the Committee will have even more weight behind them. But it is also a potential veto point where lobbies are able to exert influence. For example, the more radical Assembly proposal for taxation of greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural activities were not supported by the Committee under extensive pressure from the powerful farming lobby.
- **Balancing independence and impact.** Tensions exist between the central role given to (seconded) policy officials in the organisation of the Assembly (the Secretariat) which helped to embed the Assembly into administrative processes and perceptions of independence (see KNOCA guidance on governance structures and practices, Carrick 2022). This is a difficult balance since the further the

assembly is organised from those who may have to implement its recommendations, the less opportunity for policy impact.

- **Ensuring process and policy specialisms.** Integrating both process and policy specialists from the civil service and civil society into governance, sponsorship and monitoring roles can help the translation from recommendations to policy inputs. Policy experts need to come from across the administration. If a single policy team is seen to “own” the Assembly, this can undermine acceptance and support across policy silos.

## 6. Comparative analysis: Elements of a follow-up process

We now bring our case study of Scotland’s Climate Assembly into conversation with the follow-up to climate assemblies at the national level in Austria, Denmark and Spain. We also draw lessons from the deliberative committees and recently established permanent climate assembly in the Brussels Capital Region. The last two cases are included because they are institutionalized or permanent assemblies, representing a further development of the assembly model. Details of the cases and summaries of the interview data can be found in the Appendix.

In this section we draw our insights in relation to the following aspects of follow-up:

- Commitment
- Responsibility
- Preparation
- Organization
- Monitoring
- Timing and continuity
- Political support
- Stakeholder involvement

### 6.1. Commitment to follow-up

The national climate assemblies were established in different ways: as part of political agreements, parliamentary resolutions or laws, which for the most part did not mention whether and how the commissioning authority was committed to follow up. When explicit commitments are made, typically this does not specify precisely which parts of the authority are responsible for coordinating action and how they are to work with other relevant parts of the administration and stakeholders.

In the cases of Austria, Spain and the first phase in Denmark<sup>2</sup>, commitments were only promised orally, generating criticism and frustration. Only in the cases of Scotland and the Deliberative Committees, did the establishment of the assemblies explicitly mention the follow-up, in the Climate Change Act and the rules of procedure of the parliament, respectively. These formal directives ensure that relevant civil servants are in place from the beginning of the assembly process with clear responsibilities to respond to the recommendations. But in none of the climate assemblies at the national level was the concrete structures and procedures of the follow-up clarified publicly.

---

<sup>2</sup> Unique to Denmark’s Climate Assembly it ran in two phases. Before the second phase, the Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities issued a concept note, which stated that the minister and parliamentary committee for climate would respond to the recommendations based on an inter-ministerial assessment. See annex for more information.

All the climate assemblies analysed in this report were commissioned by the government, including the permanent one in Brussels, which is why it is not possible to say whether commissioning by parliament could have created a stronger commitment. The climate recommendations of the Irish Citizens' Assembly 2016-18 were considered by a special parliamentary committee, whose report was then delivered to government and helped shape the Climate Action Plan and subsequent legislation. In the second phase of Denmark's climate assembly, the parliamentary committee for climate vaguely committed to respond to the recommendations, which resulted in a short report.

### *6.2. Responsibility for following up*

In all the climate assemblies studied, government civil servants are responsible for coordinating and writing up the government response. However, the character of this responsibility is affected by (i) whether other actors such as an independent secretariat or assembly members are involved in the follow-up, and (ii) the level of political support that the assembly has from ministers (discussed below in section on political context).

In Scotland, the Secretariat continued its work after the assembly had delivered its recommendations which meant that they could actively promote the recommendations and act as a sounding board for the government as it developed its understanding and response to the recommendations. Continuity was also enhanced by a member of the secretariat transferring into the sponsorship team of civil servants responsible for coordinating the response. In the permanent Climate Assembly in Brussels (which at the time of interview had not completed its first annual cycle), it is foreseen that a follow-up committee of previous assembly members will monitor the work of the civil servants responsible for the response, and in the Deliberative Committees it is the independent secretariat that coordinates the follow-up process.

### *6.3. Preparation of follow-up*

In the cases where the commitment to follow up is clear and made up-front, the preparation of the follow-up appears more structured. For example, the Scottish civil servants made a project plan for how to deal with the citizens' report a couple of months before the recommendations landed, which was approved by the relevant minister. In other national cases, a significant amount of pressure is placed on the responsible civil servants to interpret and operationalize the follow-up themselves because it is not been clarified beforehand.

Several cases were negatively affected by external factors creating uncertainties and complicated preparations, such as delays caused by COVID-19. In Austria a new climate governance structure was in development but had not implemented before the recommendations landed which meant that a more ad hoc response was necessary (more reflections on this in the below section on timing).

In some cases, civil servants spent time and resources on raising awareness of the Assembly and its recommendations across the administration, which appears to improve the input from other ministries. For example, the Sponsorship Team in Scotland worked hard to get as many of their sector contacts along to participate in the observer sessions organized after each assembly meeting.



#### 6.4. Organisation of follow-up

In all cases, assembly members presented their recommendations to ministers and parliamentarians<sup>3</sup>. In some cases, a series of presentations have been arranged with multiple ministers, stakeholders, and representatives from other levels of governance (regional and local). For example, in Spain, members met with a large number of regional actors and different stakeholders over a number of months, and in Scotland, members met with a number of ministers and cabinet secretaries.

Common to all cases, the civil servants responsible for coordinating the response began by reviewing the recommendations in order to familiarize themselves with their content and identifying the ministries with relevant competencies in the areas of the recommendations and the extent to which recommendations aligned (or not) with current policy (e.g., if they or similar policies had already been implemented; whether up-coming policies could integrate recommendation; etc.).

Following this review, the civil servants coordinating the follow-up reached out to other ministries for more detailed inputs for the government response. How this was structured and executed varies across cases ranging from questions as to how the recommendations fitted with existing or up-coming policies (Austria, Denmark, Spain) through to what it would take to implement the recommendations in terms of, for example, costs, technical means, and policy instruments (Scotland).

The quality of inputs from ministries and policy teams varied. Where policy teams were provided with spreadsheets that laid out a pre-defined format for responses and where effort had been made in to raise awareness of the assembly across government (and thus to increase buy-in), responses tended to be more extensive. In Denmark, by contrast little effort was made to raise awareness across government. As such policy teams were confused about the type of input they were expected to give.

In Denmark and Scotland, the ambition for the assembly was to connect to the revision of the national climate action plans (in Denmark it was explicitly part of the remit; in Scotland it was not). However, delays because of COVID-19 meant both assemblies missed the relevant point in the policy development cycle. In Denmark the recommendations were more or less decoupled from the climate action plan – in the second phase of the assembly, the aim of contributing to climate action planning was taken out of the remit, meaning that some of the recommendations ended up being irrelevant or outdated. In Scotland, the delay meant that no explicit funding was allocated to implement recommendations, which may help explain some of the participants' dissatisfaction with the government response. The delay in Scotland also meant that the recommendations were handed over to a new government, as the assembly concluded its work just before a general election (see section below on timing).

In most cases, the government response was presented at a public event with the assembly members present and able to offer comments. This was not the case in Denmark, where the Parliamentary Committee for Climate simply authored a response in which it endorsed several of the recommendations which were already incorporated in political agreements and indicated that it had considered several of the recommendations in previous hearings.

---

<sup>3</sup> See annex for a description of the organisation of the follow-up in the deliberative committees, which differs from the other cases.

### *6.5. Monitoring of the follow-up*

In none of the cases analysed has the government established a systematic monitoring mechanism of the way in which recommendations have been dealt with over time (e.g. adopted, adapted, rejected, etc.). The French government has created a webpage which updates government responses to the Convention's proposals, although its accuracy is contested [URL]. Typically, no specific funding is ringfenced for monitoring. Scotland followed the French example and organised an additional assembly session where members passed judgement on the government response (required within 6 months under the Climate Change Act). But, after completing the official response, civil servants coordinating the government response were no longer tasked with this responsibility. Examples of sporadic monitoring do exist. In Denmark, the government and parliament have committed to evaluating the climate assembly in 2023, considering whether it should be institutionalized. In Austria, the civil servants revising the National Energy and Climate Plan have been tasked with integrating the recommendations where possible and the citizens formed an association to push for the effective consideration of recommendations. In Spain, the Ministry of Climate intends to monitor the response to recommendations and possibly issue follow-up reports, although this has not been decided at the time of writing.

In the institutionalized cases, more systematic monitoring takes place. In the Deliberative Committees, the administration of the parliament is required to track the relation between the recommendations and new legislation and inform the members of the Deliberative Committee about the progress of the recommendations. In the permanent Climate Assembly, it is part of the design to establish a follow-up committee of citizens tasked with monitoring the recommendations in collaboration with the secretariat.

### *6.6. Timing and continuity*

In all national climate assemblies, timing proved critical in terms of embedding assembly recommendations within the administration processes. In some cases, the assembly was not planned in relation to any specific policy process. Assembly members were generally not made aware of existing or up-coming policies and so often generated overlapping recommendations. In other cases, the organization of the assembly process took into account policy and implementation processes but was badly timed. In both Denmark and Austria, the timing of the assembly caused uncertainty about roles and procedures within the administration, damaging the relevance and salience of the recommendations. The impact of the COVID-19 delay in Denmark meant that the assembly could not feed into the climate action plan. Organisers tried to come up with a (sub-optimal) alternative process for how the assembly could provide inputs. A seminar was organised with the Parliamentary Committee for Climate after the first phase of the assembly, but organisers never succeeded in creating a feedback-loop. In the second phase the connection to the plan was removed from the remit. In Austria, the recommendations were expected to feed into a new climate governance structure, including a new climate cabinet. But because the new structure was not implemented in time, the recommendations were fed into a defunct climate committee, which could not consider them formally. Similarly, in Scotland the Assembly missed the cycle of the climate action plan due to COVID-19 and the delay meant that the assembly ended just before the general election, as such handing over its recommendations to a government and ministers that had not commissioned the process, potentially lowering the level of political ownership.

Ensuring continuity is challenging when changes in the administration, government and parliament occur – whether this is changes in personnel or structures. For example, in all assemblies, the follow-up process ended more or less with the government response, after which civil servants were no longer responsible for coordinating activity. In no cases were resources allocated to either support implementation or monitoring

of recommendations after the official response. However, most of the recommendations require long term commitment and will take time to implement. This raises the question of the best timing for government response and what it should entail. So far, the government responses at the national level have been given within 6 to 12 months after the recommendations were delivered, often creating an artificial end point to coordinated administrative and political consideration of the recommendations.

While there are good reasons for giving assembly members a response or feedback relatively quickly after they hand over their recommendations, it will oftentimes be beneficial not to put all resources and energy into this response, but to allocate administrative resources to ongoing coordination, consideration and potential implementation of recommendations over the course of a couple of years, e.g. by establishing a governmental legacy team, and giving assembly members, stakeholders and the broader public regular updates on progress.

The challenge here is how to embed continuous political and administrative commitment to longer-term coordination, action and monitoring. This may point to the need for cross-party support for an assembly so that civil servants feel that there is broad political support for ongoing work. This was not the case for some national assemblies – for example, in Austria one of the government coalition parties was at times actively hostile towards the assembly. In Brussels, civil servants responsible for the permanent climate assembly are actively working with government and parliament to build cross-party support for the institution, raising the chance that it will be codified by law.

#### *6.7. Political support*

The political context of a climate assembly is crucial to its follow-up. For example, the level of political support affects civil servants' room for manoeuvre and the character of the government response. In cases where political support is strong, the follow-up can be more extensive and potentially more progressive. For example, in Scotland the civil servants explored what it would take to implement the recommendations, and the government response was approved by the relevant minister. In the Brussels Deliberative Committees, the recommendations lead to hearings, reports, legislation etc. enabled by the heightened political support for the process. In cases where there is a lack of political support, the follow-up is more limited and conservative in character. For example, in Denmark, Austria, and Spain, the civil servants explored the fit between the recommendations and existing and up-coming policies, and in Denmark and Austria, the responses were from the administration rather than the executive.

A factor that affects the level of support is broader political tensions and public criticism. In Denmark, for example, the first phase of the assembly was criticized in the press for the lack of governmental commitment to respond and for the narrowness of the remit. This affected the decision to change the follow-up for the second phase, disconnecting the remit from the climate action plan and committing to an inter-ministerial assessment. In Austria, the process was criticized by members of one of the parties in government, which limited the possibility of a political response – hence the choice of issuing an administrative response.

The follow-up is also affected by the level of engagement of the parliament. In Scotland, the committee for Net Zero, Transport and Energy invited the assembly members to present their recommendations, asked the government for a ministerial statement in parliament explaining the government response, and invited assembly members to another meeting after the government response. In Denmark, the parliamentary committee for climate had seminars with assembly members and asked the government for a status report on how they treated the recommendations of the first phase. In all the cases studied, the engagement of

parliament is to some extent voluntary. It is not something that the government civil servants responsible for coordinating the response see as related to their responsibility. It is only Ireland where parliament has a more significant and defined role. The mandate of the recent Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss explicitly requires a special parliamentary committee to consider the recommendations and to send a report to the government.

In sum, the effectiveness of any follow-up process requires consideration of the variety of relations between political actors, i.e., between the administration and the government, between the parties within government, and between government and parliament.

#### *6.8. Stakeholder involvement in the follow-up*

In some cases, stakeholders have been involved to the extent that they received the recommendations and meetings were arranged where they met with assembly members who presented and discussed their recommendations. Stakeholders have included representatives from other levels of governance (regional and local) who may have responsibility and competence in delivering outcomes. In no cases have stakeholders been involved in giving a formal response to the recommendations or influencing the government response significantly. In Scotland, stakeholders were part of the Stewarding Group which supported the Secretariat in promoting the Assembly recommendations. The Secretariat also developed and promoted a Civic Charter for civil society organisations, businesses and other stakeholders to support the Assembly's report

### **7. Towards guidance on designing follow-up**

The main learning from this Briefing is that much more attention needs to be given to the design of the follow-up process to climate assemblies. We have developed fairly sophisticated understandings of how to organise climate and other citizens' assemblies. This needs to be matched with a more sophisticated understanding of how to embed assemblies within the work of public administrations such that their recommendations are taken seriously within climate governance. Otherwise, we will continue to be disappointed by the extent to which assembly recommendations affect decision making.

While more developed guidance from KNOCA on follow-up will be forthcoming, for now we can point to key elements that need to be carefully considered when commissioning and organising a climate assembly at whatever level of governance:

1. Ensure that responsibilities, structures processes and timelines for follow-up within the commissioning public authority are explicitly laid out before the assembly starts its work.
2. Resources need to be allocated and political support in place to ensure that follow-up can have impact and that this impact can be monitored. Those responsible for leading the follow-up process need to have the necessary political support to ensure that other policy teams across the administration take the recommendations seriously in their work.
3. The assembly should be timed and designed with relevant policy development cycles in mind.
4. Public reporting on follow-up should take place in both the short (3-6 months) and longer term (1-2 years) since policy development and implementation takes time.
5. A defined team should be responsible for coordinating the government response over time throughout the follow-up process. This team should be established before the assembly starts its work (so that they can follow the process) and be made up of policy and process specialists. Increased ownership is achieved if membership is drawn from a range of ministries and policy

teams that have competencies relevant to the assembly mandate and is led by an official with significant standing across the administration.

6. Awareness raising across the public administration is necessary during the assembly process so that policy teams know that recommendations may be coming their way and so can be prepared.
7. A reporting system needs to be put in place that makes explicit how policy teams across the administration are expected to regularly update progress and how the coordinating team and those monitoring the process can follow developments.
8. Policy teams need to map recommendations against their existing policies and commitments and identify how recommendations can be integrated and where recommendations clash with existing policies.
9. Elected politicians should provide clear and public justifications where recommendations are to be modified or abandoned as part of the regular reporting of progress.
10. The civil servants involved in organising the assembly and the advisory board and evidence group should stay in place after the Assembly has reported to help disseminate the recommendations and support assembly members.
11. Members of the Assembly when given support and resources can be the best advocates for their recommendations. Capacity building training should be provided to enable engagement with politicians and policy officials after their report has been published.
12. An additional Assembly weekend 6 to 12 months after its report has been published should be organised so that the Assembly can review government action.
13. An independent Accountability Board should be established to review progress over time, drawn from, for example, the advisory and evidence groups that supported the Assembly and members of the Assembly.

When we think about climate assemblies, we should pay as much attention to the structures and processes of public administrations surrounding the assembly (before, during and especially after) as we do on supporting the work of the citizens within the assembly.

## **8. Future Network Activities**

This initial exploration of the follow-up on climate assemblies indicates the diversity of practice and the extent to which this element of citizen engagement is underdeveloped. In order to develop more robust practices and strengthen our knowledge of how follow-up processes can be better designed and implemented, the following activities are suggested:

- Development of KNOCA guidelines for civil servants and practitioners on how to design and organise follow-up on the assembly recommendations
- Further research and events on the how to gain political and administrative buy-in and commitment to sustained follow-up
- Further research and events on the roles and responsibilities of parliament vis-à-vis government
- Further research and events on how to integrate other bodies beyond the core institutions of the state into the follow-up process of assemblies. Not all recommendations can be delivered directly by government or parliamentary action. This should include, for example, public agencies, multi-sector partnerships, the third and community sectors, private sector organisations.
- Further research and events on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in monitoring the fate of recommendations

## 9. Research Methods

The briefing is based on desk research, document analysis, design workshops with civil servants and nine semi-structured interviews primarily with civil servants but also a few convenors and parliamentarians involved in the assemblies in Denmark, Scotland, Austria, Spain, and Brussels in the period of January-February 2023. The case study draws on insights from a design workshop organised in Edinburgh in March 2023.

## 10. Bibliography

Bottin, J. and Mazeaud, A., 2023. The deliberative public servants: The roles of public servants in citizens' assemblies, in Reuchamps, M., Vrydagh, J. and Welp, Y. eds., *De Gruyter Handbook of Citizens' Assemblies*. De Gruyter, pp.337-348.

Bussu, S., Bua, A., Dean, R. and Smith, G. 2022. Embedding participatory governance. *Critical Policy Studies*, 16(2), pp.133-145

Carrick, J. 2022. *Governance structures and practices of climate assemblies*. KNOCA Briefing No.6. <https://knoca.eu/governance-structures-and-practices-of-climate-assemblies/>

Font, J., Smith, G., Galais, C. and Alarcón, P. 2018. Cherry-picking participation: explaining the fate of proposals from participatory processes . *European Journal of Political Research*. 57 (3), pp. 615-636.

Kübler, L., Molinengo, G. and Arzberger, M. 2022. Towards collaborative governance: Why innovation in deliberative democracy and the public sector must go hand in hand. *FSDS Winter Newsletter: Deliberative democracy and the just transition: from one-off activities to embedded participation* <https://www.fdsd.org/collaborative-governance/>

OECD. 2020. Innovative citizen participation and new democratic institutions: Catching the deliberative wave, Paris: OECD

## Appendix

This Appendix summarises the findings from each of the interviews with policy actors involved or close to the follow-up processes adopted in different climate (and other) assemblies.

### Denmark's Climate Assembly

The assembly was established in December 2019 and ran in two phases from October 2020 to March 2021 and again from October 2021 to December 2021. The inter-ministerial assessment of the recommendations of the second phase was published in March 2022. For more information see <https://knoca.eu/denmarks-climate-assembly/>.

#### *Commitment to follow up*

Denmark's Climate Assembly was established in a political agreement leading up to the climate change act. It ran in two phases and for each phase, the Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities issued a concept note establishing the framework of the assembly.

In the concept note for the first phase, it was stated that the assembly would feed into the national climate action plan and present its recommendation at a seminar in the parliamentary committee for climate. Moreover, the follow-up on the assembly would depend on the concrete recommendations, thereby making it optional for the minister and the committee to respond directly to the citizens' recommendations. The parliamentary committee, however, did state its intentions to discuss the recommendations and publish these discussions in a separate report.

In the concept note for the second phase, it was once again stated that the assembly would present its recommendation at a seminar in the parliamentary committee for climate. In addition, the note said that the recommendations would be assessed by relevant ministries and considered in the government's Committee for Green Transition constituted by the Ministers of Climate, Taxation, Agriculture, Transport, Research, Business, and Environment. On the basis of this assessment, the minister and the parliamentary committee would respond to the assembly.

#### *Responsibility for following up*

As part of the governance structure of the assembly, the Ministry of Climate acted as secretariat, which was why it was also their responsibility to coordinate and write up the inter-ministerial assessment. On the other hand, the ministry and parliament collaborated on organizing the parliamentary seminars and the committee was responsible for issuing its own response.

#### *Preparation of follow-up*

Because of COVID-19, it was difficult to prepare the follow-up. Originally the first phase was planned to have an orientation after the first meeting of the assembly and a three-hour seminar with the minister and the parliamentary committee after each of the following assembly meetings to feed into the national climate action plan. But because of the delay, the assembly process did not fit the policy development cycle. Alternatively, the organisers arranged a seminar after the first meeting, but never really succeeded in creating a feedback-loop. In the second phase, the connection to the climate action plan was removed. Moreover, the presentations of the assembly were organized with a short notice. In the first phase, the seminar was followed up by a second seminar in person because a lot of the members of the parliamentary

committee were absent at the first one. In the second phase, the seminar was meant to be held face to face but was postponed because of the pandemic.

Regarding the ministerial follow-up, the ministry did not know whether and how they would follow up on the first phase. However, they ended up making an inter-ministerial assessment, which was never published. In the second phase, the ministry spent the two-three months by which the parliamentary seminar was postponed preparing the inter-ministerial response.

#### *Organisation of follow-up*

As mentioned, the members of the assembly presented their recommendations at parliamentary seminars with members of the committee for climate and the Minister of Climate after both phases with an additional seminar in the first phase.

Moreover, the Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities ended up making an inter-ministerial assessment of the recommendations in both phases, in which they categorized the recommendations one by one according to whether they

1. Were taken into account in the implementation of government policies
2. Would be assessed in relation to up-coming policies
3. Were judged as irrelevant for up-coming policies

The categorization was accompanied by comments of approximately 100 words from relevant ministries and was inspired by the government's work with the input from the so-called climate partnerships in which the private sector provided climate policy recommendations.

In making the assessment, the Ministry of Climate identified relevant ministries and asked them for input. In this process, there was some confusion around the format, status and purpose of the assessment across the ministries. In total, 10 ministries contributed.

In addition to the ministerial assessment, the parliamentary committee wrote a report stating that the committee endorsed several of the recommendations which were already incorporated in political agreements with the government and that the committee had considered several of the recommendations in hearings about different issues. Finally, the report noted that the committee awaits the government evaluation of the process, which will provide the basis of discussions concerning future CCAs.

#### *Monitoring of the follow-up*

There was no monitoring of the recommendations, the government's assessments and the parliamentary report as such. As mentioned, however, the climate assembly will be evaluated as part of the evaluation of the Climate Change Act in 2023. Among other things, government and parliament will consider whether it should be institutionalized.

#### *Stakeholder involvement in following up*

In both phases, no stakeholders were involved in following up on the recommendations.



### *Main challenges and lessons learned*

One of the challenges of the assembly was its remit and the conditional commitment to respond. There was some criticism in public of the assembly from the beginning that its remit was too tight in the sense that it had to feed into the climate change plan and respect some principles of the climate change act. For example, that the assembly had to take into consideration healthy public finances, cost-efficiency, employment, sustainable business development, Danish competitiveness, and Denmark as an international role model. Moreover, stakeholders criticized the minister for not wanting to commit to respond. This criticism and discussion affected the way in which the civil servants acted, as they were very aware of the independence of the assembly not wanting to intervene. It also meant that the remit of the second phase was broadened, which, however, caused some frustration among the citizens and politicians, as they spent time on recommendations that had already been implemented.

Relatedly, the roles and responsibilities were not clear enough. First, tasks and responsibilities were moved from the Ministry to the convenor of the assembly from the first to the second phase. Second, the expectations of the members of the parliamentary committee had not been managed, and they did not know what to expect from the recommendations. In the opinion of the chair of the committee, the committee should have stated what they wanted from the assembly, which should have fed into the remit so that the citizens knew what the parliamentarians needed from their side. In general, the assembly would have benefited from having a purpose that was clear to all actors involved.

### **Scotland's Climate Assembly**

The assembly was established in September 2019 and ran from November 2020 to March 2021. The government response was issued in November 2021 and the assembly members had a follow-up meeting in February 2022. For more information see <https://knoqa.eu/scotlands-climate-assembly/>.

#### *Commitment to follow up*

Scotland's Climate Assembly (SCA) was established by the Climate Change Act 2019, which says that the Scottish Ministers must, within 6 months of receiving a copy of the report, publish a statement setting out how they intend to respond to the recommendations made in it.

#### *Responsibility for following up*

As part of the governance structure of the assembly, the government established a sponsor team with civil servants from the Domestic Climate Change Division, which became responsible for writing up the government response. The team was staffed by three civil servants – one team lead, a senior policy advisor, and a policy official – who has 20% of their time earmarked for the assembly. During the writing of the response, the team was scaled up so that almost four civil servants were working full time on the assembly.

#### *Preparation of follow-up*

During the assembly process, the sponsor team sought to raise awareness across the Scottish Government from official to director level by reaching out to all the different boards, forum, and directors. For example, the team tried to get as many of their sector contacts along to participate in the observer sessions organized after each assembly meeting so that they were aware of the recommendations coming and how

they had been developed. Moreover, the team briefed the ministers after each assembly meeting and went to the board of directors to gain support before the recommendations landed.

A couple of months before the assembly ended, the sponsor team started developing a project plan for how to follow up on the recommendations, which was approved by the minister and defined into two aspects: i) what to do before the recommendations were published, and ii) what to do afterward. However, it was limited what the team could do before, because they did not know the number of recommendations and their content. The plan was built around four aims:

1. To fulfill the statute of requirement of the climate change act, simply issuing a response.
2. To signal a commitment to deliberative democracy, as the First Minister's party the Scottish National Party had made a manifesto mentioning future assemblies.
3. To build support for difficult decisions to meet the Scottish emission targets.
4. To raise public awareness about climate issues.

#### *Organisation of follow-up*

Once the recommendations were published, members of the assembly met with the leaders of the Scottish political parties in parliament, including the First Minister, to present their recommendations. Later, separate meetings between assembly members and the Net Zero, Energy, and Transport Committee and the First Minister, respectively, were organized.

In organizing the writing of the government response, a member of the secretariat who had been close to the assembly process and its members transferred to the sponsor team to support the follow-up. The sponsor team also used the secretariat, which was still running during the follow-up, as a sounding board to test whether their response felt sufficient.

In executing the above-mentioned project plan, the sponsor team decided to respond systematically to each recommendation, which was why they started making an excel sheet with all of them. Then they divided the recommendations internally in the team and identified 30 different relevant Deputy Directors and for each of them a person at the official level that they assigned as leads to the different recommendations in the sheet. Hence, the sponsor team ended up collaborating with 60 different people across government in total. In the sheet, the team gathered inputs from the different directorates on questions such as what it would take to implement the recommendations taking into account barriers (e.g. the devolved powers between Scotland and the UK), costs and time scales. Once the sponsor team had collected all the inputs, they wrote the response and cleared it with the ministers before it was published.

Initially, it was the idea that the recommendations should feed into the climate change plan in which the government accounts for how it is going to meet its emission targets. Because of the delay caused by COVID-19, however, the recommendations missed the cycle, which meant that the sponsor team knew that there would be no funding to implement the recommendations from scratch. Instead, they had to tie the recommendations into existing policies in their response and say that they would do a feasibility study and potentially implement the recommendations in the future

In addition to the written response, the sponsor team arranged nine meetings between August and December 2021 where assembly members - supported by expert leads who had provided evidence to the

assembly - met with 9 cabinet secretaries and 11 ministers. Before the meetings, the sponsor team went through the recommendations with the ministers' staff to prepare the ministers.

#### *Monitoring of the follow-up*

Once the government had given their response, an 8th and last meeting of the assembly was organized at which the members wrote a response to the response.

Besides this meeting, there was no monitoring of the recommendations put into place. The sponsor team was dissolved after the response, which is why it is up to the sector teams to use the recommendations in future policies. Consequently, there has been nobody to push for the recommendations as a whole after the response.

#### *Stakeholder involvement in following up*

As mentioned, the Secretariat was still operational during the drafting of the government response. Among other things, they supported writing of a civic charter supporting the recommendations, which was signed by a great deal of stakeholders. The Secretariat also partnered with a variety of stakeholders to arrange a number of sectoral events reflecting on the assembly recommendations. In addition, the Secretariat made sure that the recommendations were visible at COP26, which took place in Scotland in the drafting stage of the government response.

The sponsor team limited the stakeholder engagement during the drafting of the response and mainly interacted with the Secretariat and through them the members. Stakeholders such as environmental NGOs had an interest in the recommendations and were able to share their views through the usual routes.

Finally, ahead of publication of the response, there was a bit of stakeholder engagement to make sure they had sight of the response.

#### *Main challenges and lessons learned*

It was a major challenge to integrate the recommendations into the existing policy cycle. Both because the assembly was delayed but also because it takes time to implement policies. Maybe it would have been helpful to have two years instead of six months to reply. Alternatively, the government could have ensured resources for establishing an assembly legacy team pushing for the recommendation across government and a budget for implementing them.

Moreover, it might have been helpful to the implementation of the recommendations if they had assessed in terms of their emission reduction potentials and costs. However, that is also difficult because a great deal of the recommendations takes into account other benefits than emission reductions.

#### **Austria's Climate Assembly**

The assembly was established in March 2021 and ran from January to June 2022. The administrative response was issued in November 2022. For more information see <https://knoea.eu/the-austrian-citizens-climate-assembly/>.

### *Commitment to follow up*

Austria's Climate Assembly was established by means of a parliamentary resolution stating that the citizens' recommendations should be submitted to the Climate Cabinet and National Climate Committee for discussion. It did not mention anything about an official response. However, at the opening of the assembly in January 2022, the Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, Leonore Gewessler, promised to respond to the recommendations.

### *Responsibility for following up*

In the parliamentary resolution establishing the climate assembly it said that the Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK) was responsible for organizing the assembly. This entailed being responsible for the response to the citizens' recommendations, which ended up being an administrative response from BMK with contributions from six other ministries.

### *Preparation of follow-up*

The preparation of the follow-up to the citizens' recommendations was difficult to manage due to uncertainty.

First, BMK presupposed that the response to the recommendations would be tied to a new cross-level governance structure for climate protection as laid out in the before mentioned parliamentary resolution. According to the resolution, a Climate Cabinet should have been established with members of the federal and provincial governments accountable for finances and compliance with the reduction path as well as responsible for implementing the Climate Action Plan. It was imagined that this cabinet should have been obliged to consider the recommendations. However, the new governance structure still has not been put into place at the time of writing.

Once BMK realized that the new governance structure would not be established in time for receiving the citizens' recommendations, close to the end of the assembly process, the civil servants had to come up with an alternative procedure for how to respond. At this point, the BMK pursued an option of getting assistance from the environment agency to do a more or less scientific evaluation of the recommendations assessing their CO<sub>2</sub> savings, energy impact, etc. that would be used as a basis for discussing the response with the other ministries. However, once BMK had the final recommendations they realized that such an assessment did not make sense and that the response had to have a policy-character.

Apart from the uncertainty around the procedures and character of the response, the BMK put some effort into preparing the other ministries for the citizens' recommendations by arranging an information session close to the end of the assembly.

### *Organisation of follow-up*

Once the citizens' recommendations landed, BMK arranged a presentation of the recommendations in the National Climate Committee, which was established by the former climate change act and should have been replaced by the new governance structure. The committee includes ministers, members of parliament and stakeholders. Here, the recommendations were discussed. However, the committee does not have any procedures for making formal statements.

Afterward, BMK initiated a process in which they reached out to ministries relevant to the recommendations and asked them to fill out an excel sheet with five to six questions concerning the

barriers and opportunities for implementation, the legal basis for potential implementation, CO2 effects, cost efficiency and the like. However, the ministries did not really use this sheet. Instead, they sent documents with prose commenting on the recommendations in terms of what they were working on, what was possible, and what they had in pipeline, which meant that the inputs did not have a consistent format. Due to this, BMK did not follow the structure of the excel sheet when drafting the response but synthesized the inputs into a comprehensive qualitative response.

Before BMK's response was released, it was sent to the citizens who met with some of the organizers and scientists involved in the assembly process to go over it and prepare feedback for the event where the response was released. At the event, the citizens discussed the response with the Minister for Climate Action. The citizens and the Minister also met for an online follow-up meeting to discuss further where the Minister stressed that the response was an administrative response acting as a basis for starting a political discussion. Finally, BMK ensured the citizens' participation in a conference with the ministers from the states where they discussed the recommendations.

#### *Monitoring of the follow-up*

There is no monitoring of the recommendations and their implementation as such. However, the National Energy and Climate Plan is currently being revised and, in this process, the inter-ministerial working groups have been tasked with integrating the recommendations wherever possible. There are no civil servants who were involved in organizing the assembly process who are part of these working groups.

At the state level, the communication agency connected to the assembly arranged meetings with presidents from all states and citizens from their states. At these meetings, the recommendations were handed over in some states the citizens have meet with representatives from the state to discuss implementation.

#### *Stakeholder involvement in following up*

BMK deliberately did not involve anybody outside the administration in the follow-up process. They did discuss the option of involving stakeholders but decided not to.

There were no attempts from stakeholders to try to influence the process either. It was only after the response was release that they reacted by sending out press releases.

After the citizens handed over their recommendations, they formed The Association of the First Austrian Citizens' Climate Assembly who had a weekend with two civil society engagement officers of the assembly funded by the European Climate Foundation who supported them in forming working groups and thinking about financial issues, communication and outreach. The association is pushing for the implementation of the recommendations and have arranged several meetings with ministers and parliamentarians at both federal and state level.

#### *Main challenges and lessons learned*

As already indicated, one major challenge to following up on the climate assembly was that the new governance structure that the recommendations was supposed to feed into had not been implemented. Thus, the follow-up would have benefited from having such a formal framework clearly stating what the government has to do.

Moreover, the climate assembly was characterized by a tense political environment. Currently the Austrian government constitutes a coalition between the conservative Austrian People's Party and The Greens. Throughout the assembly process, the climate assembly was tightly associated with BMK and the Minister of Climate Action who is member of The Greens while some members of Austrian People's Party questioned the process. Thus, the climate assembly had a weak government mandate, which played a role in the response being an administrative response from the BMK and not a political and common government response. Relatedly, the different ministries' inputs to the response were rather conservative in the sense that they mostly included reflections on whether and how they were working on the recommendations but not necessarily how they could implement recommendations that were not part of their work programs. In other words, the follow-up process could have benefitted from a stronger political commitment and more imagination in terms of how the recommendations could potentially be implemented, which could have maybe been strengthened by having more formal reporting mechanisms between ministries and ministers and involving other ministries earlier in the process.

### **Spain's Climate Assembly**

The assembly was established in May 2020 and ran from November 2021 to May 2022. The government response is planned for June 2023. For more information see <https://knoca.eu/the-spanish-citizen-assembly-for-the-climate/>.

#### *Commitment to follow up*

Spain's Climate Assembly was established by law, which did not mention anything about follow-up. When it was announced, however, it stated that the citizens' recommendations would be submitted to the government and presented to the plenary session of the Congress of Deputies to facilitate debate and decision-making on climate change policy at all levels of government and stakeholders in the economy and society.

Later, when the citizens handed over their recommendations to the government, the president, Pedro Sanchez, committed to publish a government response within a year (in June 2023) that would study the options of integrating the recommendations into government action. This means that the follow-up process is still in progress in the time of writing.

#### *Responsibility for following up*

Throughout the assembly process the Office for Climate Change in the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge acted as secretariat. It is also the Office for Climate Change that coordinates the follow-up process and the writing of the government response.

#### *Preparation of follow-up*

The Office for Climate Change has been involved in the assembly process from the beginning but did not prepare any structures for how to receive the recommendations once the assembly process was over. This was both due to the fact that they wanted to adapt the follow-up process to the content of the recommendations and that they did not want to centralize the process. Instead, they wanted it to be a collaborative effort across the administration.

### *Organisation of follow-up*

Close to the end of the assembly process, the Office for Climate Change took their first steps toward organizing the follow-up process.

First, they asked the assembly members to appoint spokespersons among themselves who could present their experience and recommendations to relevant actors, as the administration believed it would increase the level of impact if the actors potentially affected by the recommendations were aware of them before the writing of the government response. Once the spokespersons were appointed, the Office for Climate Change started organizing and preparing the spokespersons for meetings with the autonomous communities of the Valencia, Extremadura, La Rioja and Catalonia, third sector organizations, the business sector, trade unions, the education sector, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), the President of the Congress of Deputies, the President of the Senate, and the government of the Canary Islands running from September to December 2022.

Second, the Ministry for Ecological Transition, coordinated by the Office for Climate Change, made a preliminary analysis of all the citizens' recommendations identifying:

1. The degree of current implementation of the recommendations, whether they had already been implemented, partially implemented or not implemented.
2. The responsible for the implementation of the recommendations (e.g. state, region, local administration, business and citizens)
3. What type of implementation the recommendations required, whether it was regulatory instruments, incentives or something third?
4. If the recommendations were feasible in the short, medium and long term or whether they needed further analysis.

This preliminary analysis was used both to prepare the Minister for Ecological Transition and the President for receiving the recommendations and as a basis of reaching out to other ministries asking for inputs. In total, 21 ministries assessed the recommendations in terms of whether they were competent to implement them and, if so, whether they had already implemented or were planning to implement them. The quality of the inputs varied which is why the Office for Climate Change might still need to reach out to some ministries and potentially arrange bilateral meetings.

At the time of writing, the structure of the government response has not been settled yet, but the Office for Climate Change wants to give an overview of the status of the recommendations, whether they have been implemented, partly implemented or need further analysis. The office is thinking of developing a set of categories defining the level of implementation so that it is transparent what is in progress and how and what is not. Connected to this work, the Ministry for Ecological Transition still needs to figure out how the recommendations are related to the work of the parliament. However, it is not planning to develop any laws or regulations. Finally, the Ministry has not decided yet at what type of event the government response is going to be presented but anticipates some kind of interaction with the assembly members.

### *Monitoring of the follow-up*

At the time of writing, the Ministry for Ecological Transition has the intention to monitor the implementation of the recommendations after the government response has been given and preferably produce follow-up reports that take stock of the development. However, they don't know whether this will be possible or how often such reports would be made.

### *Stakeholder involvement in following up*

Nobody outside the Ministry for Ecological Transition has been directly involved in the follow-up process besides when organizing the spokespersons' presentations. Different environmental organizations have been interested in the assembly process and the government response, but nobody has tried to influence the process.

### *Main challenges and lessons learned*

Reflecting on the follow-up process so far, the Office for Climate Change acknowledges that it could have been planned better and more in advance. Especially, some of the presentations of the spokespersons were difficult to organize.

Moreover, the Office for Climate Change foresees that it is going to be a major challenge to handle the more complex recommendations that can only be implemented in the medium or long term or need further analysis. It will be difficult to follow them and respond to them. In general, it is a challenge to create continuity in public policy. Leading up to the coming election, the Ministry for Ecological Transition will make proposals for the coming government of which some will take into account the citizens' recommendations. However, it cannot know how the new government will respond.

## **Brussels Deliberative Committees**

The committees were established in December 2019. So far, five committees have been delivered with the first one in 2021. For more information see <https://democratie.brussels/>.

### *Commitment to follow up*

The deliberative committees are established in the rules of procedure of the French-speaking parliament in Brussels and the parliament of the Brussels and Wallonia Regions where it is stated that the parliament has to issue a follow-up report within six months (and nine months if the recommendations concern more than one parliamentary committee) and discuss it at a follow-up meeting with the participants of the deliberative committees. In addition, government has committed itself to contribute to both the follow-up report and to take part in the follow-up meeting.

### *Responsibility for following up*

The deliberative committees have a secretariat including two guarantors who are parliamentary civil servants that coordinate the follow-up with civil servants in both parliament and government.

### *Preparation of follow-up*

As the deliberative committees are institutionalized, there is a fixed procedure for following up, which is known by the people involved.

### *Organisation of follow-up*

Once the recommendations of the deliberative committee are adopted, they are sent both to the government and the standing committee of the parliament, which is responsible for the given deliberative committee (e.g. the standing committee on climate would be responsible for a deliberative committee on climate), who discusses the recommendations and potentially forwards them to other relevant



parliamentary committees. In addition, the president of the standing committee can send recommendations to other levels of power (local and national level) in case (s)he considers it relevant.

Within six months (or nine if the recommendations concern more than one parliamentary committee), the parliamentary committee responsible for the deliberative committee writes a follow-up report with inputs from other committees and the government, commenting on each recommendation. Afterward, a follow-up meeting is organized with the participants of the deliberative committee, parliamentarians and the relevant minister, where the parliamentarians and minister go through the recommendations one by one and explain how the authorities will work with the recommendations, and the citizens have a chance to comment.

At the time of writing, the parliament is evaluating the deliberative committees and will vote on new rules of procedure explicating how the writing of the follow-up report and follow-up meeting should be organized.

#### *Monitoring of the follow-up*

After the follow-up meeting the administration of the parliament is required to track the relation between the recommendations and new legislation and article and inform the participants of the deliberative committee about the progress of the recommendations via e-mail.

#### *Stakeholder involvement in following up*

No actors outside the parliament and government are directly involved in the follow-up process.

#### *Main challenges and lessons learned*

In the current rules of procedure, the follow-up process is not extensively elaborated. For the same reason, the parliament has been evaluating the rules and are going to vote on an updated version, which elaborates more on the process and organization of the follow-up. This way, it will become more streamlined and transparent.

### **Brussels Permanent Climate Assembly<sup>4</sup>**

The assembly was established in November 2022 and started its first cycle February 2023. The assembly is planned to present its recommendations in June 2023. For more information see <https://environnement.brussels/assembleeclimat>.

#### *Commitment to follow up*

The assembly was established by the incumbent government, which included it in its program when it came into office. Later, the process has been developed and the government has committed to write a government response, which is presented one year after the assembly has ended.

#### *Responsibility for following up*

The assembly has a secretariat within the government administration that follows the recommendations, support a follow-up committee of citizens and make sure that the government provides a response.

---

<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing, the assembly process is ongoing, which is why a follow-up still has not taken place.

### *Preparation of follow-up*

In preparation of the assembly, the secretariat met with the ministers' cabinets to ensure government support and raise awareness of the process.

### *Organisation of follow-up*

Once the recommendations are done, they will be handed over to the ministers responsible for the topics that have been treated. Three months later, the participants will meet with the ministers again where the latter will give an orientation about their work and where it is heading. Nine months after this initial meeting, the ministers will give a government response to the citizens providing an overview of how they have treated the recommendations, where they are in the process, and what they are planning to do.

### *Monitoring of the follow-up*

During the follow-up process, the secretariat will meet with relevant civil servants and cabinets to ensure progress and support the follow-up committee of citizens, e.g. by setting up meeting between the citizens and relevant civil servants.

### *Stakeholder involvement in following up*

The recommendations are sent to the parliament and relevant stakeholders who are also invited to the citizens' presentation of their recommendations.

At the time of writing, the government administration, including the organizers of the assembly, is developing a process for building a government vision. The idea is that the vision is created on the basis of inputs from both the assembly, which for every cycle is asked to develop a vision for 2050, and relevant stakeholders. The government vision will then be revised every five years.

### *Main challenges and lessons learned*

It is important to ensure and communicate the legitimacy of the process to gain political support from the government but also the wider public so that the assembly can be established by law, survive election cycles and keep on running in the long term.

