

# Deliberation in a politically challenging environment



## CAAs thrive when there is trust in society and a high level of active citizenship

- this is not always the case in Central and Eastern Europe
- low level of active citizenship (Eurostat, 2015: EU28: 12,8%, Sweden: 31,3%, Hungary: 4,3%,)
- no solid track record in cross-sectoral dialogue (weak trade unions, elitist approach)

## Type of challenges societies in CEE face

- old-fashioned public administration, cautious civil servants
- low level of trust in society
- high political polarization
- we live in opinion bubbles

Eurobarometer (2023): Outside Hungary and Poland, there is no member state where less than one-third of the people consider state news agencies to be credible sources of information. Social media: 83% of Hungarians use FB on a weekly basis (EU average: 63%)

## The situation gets even more difficult when there are politicians who attack deliberative processes

- are advocates for CAs ‘foreign agents’?
- politicians co-opting/hijacking processes?

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## Is there still a chance for deliberative mini-publics?

*DemNet's survey (2023):*

60% is skeptical and does not believe CAs are feasible in Hungary

- *Because politicians are not interested in people's opinion (32,5%)*
- *Because the population does not know enough about CAs (27,5%)*
- *Because they don't believe citizens who are invited would actually participate (20%)*
- data shows citizens are open to deliberative mini-publics  
*DemNet's survey (2023): 53,8% would participate in a CA if invited*
- successful CAs in CEE (Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary) show it is possible

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## How to ensure the integrity and legitimacy of CAs in challenging environments?

- non-partisan approach, independent execution
- transparency
- open communication (before, throughout and after the process)
- high quality process in line with international standards
- practice makes perfect! changing mindsets does not happen overnight





**Budapest (2020):** How should Budapest tackle the climate emergency?



1.7 million



70,000



150,000

**Érd (2022):** Roads and Routes for Relief – How can we transform Érd from a commuting town into a vibrant, green city? (transport and infrastructure)



**Miskolc (2021):** Air! We pollute it, we inhale it. What can we do to collectively improve the quality of air in Miskolc? (transport, heating, and waste burning)