

EVALUATION REPORT

2022 Luxembourg Climate
Citizens' Assembly

Klima Biergerrot (KBR)

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Executive summary



Plateforme Luxembourgeoise
de la Démocratie Participative



UNIVERSITÉ DU
LUXEMBOURG

Executive summary

Overview

The report titled ‘Evaluation of the 2022 Luxembourg Climate Citizens’ Assembly – Klima Biergerrot (KBR)’ presents findings from independent research into the Luxembourg Climate Citizens’ Assembly (Klima Biergerrot – KBR). It provides an in-depth evaluation of the KBR that was commissioned by the Luxembourg Government and took place in 2022. The KBR was comprised of 100 individuals living or working in Luxembourg. Throughout 8 months, these members were guided through a process of learning, deliberation, and decision-making about environmental politics by a team of facilitators and external experts.

The report describes and assesses the KBR from two different perspectives. On the one hand, it analyses the quality of the process *“from the inside”, including participant selection, organization and design, evidence and expertise, deliberation and facilitation, communication, decision-making and outcomes. Furthermore, it focuses on the members’ experience within the assembly and the related implications. On the other hand, the report turns also to a view “from the outside”, i.e., the impact of the process beyond the assembly: on the media, public policy, and party politics. To produce this evaluation, we adopted a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. These include surveys, interviews, non-participant observation, desk research, and content analysis.*

The report reveals that, although the KBR did not meet all the usual deliberative codes in terms of design and presented relatively common recruitment biases, it was yet valuable participatory experiment that enabled a diverse group of Luxembourg citizens to engage in climate policymaking in a meaningful and respectful way. Furthermore, the KBR stands out from previous exercises conducted in Europe thanks to significant political uptake, extensive and valuable media coverage, and a high level of public awareness. The KBR was thus an important step forward in the public engagement strategy of Luxembourg, and based on the evidence provided in this report, there are strong incentives to conduct more citizens’ assemblies in the future, either on the climate or on other important issues. However, given that the KBR was a new and experimental process, the report shows also that there is room for improvement and development to make citizens’ assemblies efficient, inclusive, and diverse democratic instrument.

This executive summary provides the key findings presented in the different chapters of the report, as well as the following recommendations for future citizens’ assemblies – in Luxembourg.

Assembly members' recruitment and representativeness

The recruitment of assembly members was outsourced to the polling institute [Il-res](#) via a public tender. The delivery body selected 100 participants (60 principals + 40 stand-ins), who were intended to be representative of the demography of Luxembourg.

- Sortition (or civic lottery) was not the sole recruitment method but was paired with self-selection, which did not guarantee equal participation and failed to eliminate the common biases associated with voluntary political activities.
- The sociodemographic sampling applied to the pool of volunteers ensured that the KBR was broadly representative of the Luxembourg population in social terms. The KBR was inclusive for typically underrepresented groups in electoral politics like women or the youth. The KBR also gave a voice to non-nationals (either residents or cross-border workers), a portion of the Luxembourg population typically excluded from national politics.
- Skewness in KBR recruitment persisted: individuals with higher levels of education were overrepresented. Moreover, KBR members did not reflect the broader population's diversity regarding climate attitudes, political views, or the acceptance of participatory processes. The lack of attitudinal diversity was acknowledged by members and noted by media and politicians.
- KBR members generally joined the process for a “good” reason, driven by normative motivations to represent the interests of the entire Luxembourg population as assembly members.

Recommendations

R1 – civic lottery: Citizens' assemblies must provide equal opportunities for all citizens to be selected, ensuring that recruitment strategies are based entirely on the principles of a civic lottery.

R2 – attitudinal sampling: citizens' assemblies should ensure attitudinal diversity by sampling from a pool of volunteers based on their perspectives on the issue under debate and politics more broadly.

R3 – compositional transparency: clear communication and transparency regarding the recruitment process and the assembly's composition are essential to ensure the perceived legitimacy and enable non-participating citizens to identify with the participants.

R4 – civic norms: public efforts to promote and value the work of citizens engaged in deliberative processes must be encouraged.

Organization and deliberation quality

Purpose, task, and mission

The KBR's main objective was to consult Luxembourg citizens on climate policy. Via the question *'Is Luxembourg able and willing to do more to combat climate change? And, if so, how?'*, the selected citizens were tasked with i) discussing Luxembourg's current commitments to combating climate change, and ii) providing recommendations regarding potential additional policy measures or proposals. The latter aimed to implementation in the integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) or other governmental programs.

- A large majority of members understood the role of the KBR and acknowledged that the mission was well-defined.

Organization and design

The KBR organization was outsourced to [Oxygen & Partners](#), [Pétillances](#), and [AccentAigu](#) via public tender. These delivery bodies were appointed for the governance, facilitation, moderation, and communication, respectively. Initially slated for 6 months (from January to June 2022), the KBR extended until October 2022. During the first phase (February to June 2022), members deliberated and crafted recommendations during five thematic cycles, addressing the NECP sectors: agriculture and forestry (weekend 1), renewable energy (weekend 2), sustainable construction (weekend 3), waste management (weekend 4), mobility and transport (weekend 5). Saturdays focused on identifying challenges within these themes for Luxembourg. Sundays were used to contemplate possible solutions. Deliberations took place in plenary sessions and small groups of 12 to 15 members, facilitated by the delivery bodies. In the second phase, members finalized their recommendations in six more autonomous groups. Online feedback mechanisms allowed all members to review and contribute to the proposals drafted by the groups.

- The KBR design differed from most previous climate citizens' assemblies in three key ways. Firstly, the allocation to working groups was not random but organized by language (phase I) or personal interest (phase II). Secondly, all members engaged in each of the five subthemes of Luxembourg's climate policy rather than being divided into separate workstreams. Thirdly, the process underwent redesign during its course, allowing more time for the development of final recommendations.
- This configuration has not altered the process' quality. The members were satisfied with the facilitators and the design of the KBR. The organizers demonstrated adaptability with responsive changes made in accordance with member feedback. Effective, professional facilitation contributed significantly to the deliberative process's quality. Additionally, member commitment remained

strong throughout the KBR's duration (high retention rate with only 9 people dropping out).

Deliberation quality

KBR members perceived the quality of deliberation positively, feeling free and respected all over the process. However,

- there were reports of increasing dominance of certain participants over time.
- The self-organizing principles of phase II appeared to reduce the members' perceptions of information quality, communication, and deliberation.
- Some informal, interpersonal issues arose during the process.

Evidence

To ensure that the KBR members had access to balanced information on all the topics discussed, the delivery bodies made sure that they were informed during the various phases of the consultation by experts from academia, representatives of ministries or public administrations, and professionals in the field. They were entirely responsible for their selection. A clear distinction was maintained between the roles of the experts and the members.

- The information provided in the KBR by the experts was perceived comprehensible, useful, and relatively balanced in terms of views and opinions by the members.
- Nevertheless, in terms of composition, public servants were over-represented among the experts, whereas academic and civil society actors were under-represented. This line of criticism also fed some of the debates relayed in the media or by MPs.

Multilingual deliberation

The KBR was a case of multilingual deliberation, conducted in three different languages: French, Luxembourgish, and English.

- The multilingual aspect of the process has not been a barrier to the quality of deliberation but rather a constraining factor for the design of the KBR.

Developing recommendations and decision-making

The KBR members actively participated in policy development, formulating concrete and actionable recommendations within the scope of climate policy. All the recommendations reached consensus among the members. However,

- KBR members held a rather negative (or realistic) view regarding the political uptake of their proposals.
- Some members were concerned about whether enough time was provided to develop their policy recommendations. Despite the process being extended

and the Government allowing organizers to adjust the initial design to overcome this problem, a portion of members still felt that additional time would have been beneficial.

Recommendations

R5 – reasonable timeline and goals: citizens' assemblies must not be rushed. The commissioning bodies must leave a decent amount of time for potential delivery bodies to build and propose the most suitable design, which will set up clear goals and adopt an appropriate length to serve these purposes.

R6 – continuous professional facilitation: citizens' assemblies must avoid purely self-organized groups and ensure professional facilitation and moderation (even online) throughout the process.

R7 – transparent and balanced selection of experts: citizens' assemblies must ensure a careful, balanced, justified, and transparent selection of experts. The selection of external experts and resource persons is as important as that of assembly members.

R8 – ethics and good conduct: citizens' assemblies must constrain their members to adhere to formal rules of good conduct and deliberation.

R9 – multilingualism: citizens' assemblies must ensure, when relevant, multilingual facilitation and accommodations, and so to overcome any participation barrier related to languages.

Impact of deliberation

- Within this context, the KBR members learned about climate policy and felt more knowledgeable about environmental issues in general after they participated in the process.
- Their attitudes towards climate change remained stable and highly skewed towards pro-climate positions.
- As far as their attitudes towards politics in general is concerned, the members felt more competent at the end, expressing greater confidence in their own ability to deal with complex political issues. We found them also slightly more interested and satisfied with democracy in general, although this marked only a reinforcement rather than a fundamental change in their initial attitudes.
- Finally, the members remained in proportion positive and favourable to citizens' assemblies throughout the process and reported a higher likelihood of accepting to participate (again) in the future at the end of the process.

Recommendations

R10 - attitudinal diversity for deliberation quality and impact: citizens' assemblies must ensure a better attitudinal diversity when selecting their participants (both in terms of the issue at hand and politics in general) to promote more impactful and qualitative deliberation afterwards.

Impact on the wider public: the media

- The engagement of the KBR with the external world (either via social or mass media) during the process was rather limited because it was not considered a priority by the organization. Little information about the process was (and is still) available, and the final report was published online only in French. Indeed, communication directly from KBR was also limited after the process, mainly due to lack of sufficient budget to ensure a proper campaign. Public information relayed by the media was therefore mostly limited to press conferences organized by the Government at the start and at the end of the process.
- Despite this lack of transparency and public engagement's strategy, the extent of the mass media coverage of the KBR was rather substantial (112 pieces in a small - yet rich - media landscape of Luxembourg). They were five moments of mediatization: when the process was (1) announced, (2) launched, (3) extended, (4) finished (main quantitative peak), and (5) followed politically.
- Although most articles adopted a neutral tone when covering the KBR (relaying Government communication), the media also contributed to the interaction of positive and negative lines of argumentation in the public discourse, thereby triggering a diversified, constructive as well as legitimate and democratic debate on climate citizens' assemblies and environmental politics.

Recommendations

R11 – communication strategy: citizens' assemblies must adopt a communication budget, team and dynamic strategy tailored to the logic of deliberative processes and to the peculiarity of the target population.

R12 – diversified, educative, and modern communication: citizens' assemblies must rely on available technologies of all kinds to develop educational communication materials that will engage the media and public. They must encourage opportunities to access this information through different channels of communication (not only mass media).

Impact on the wider public: public opinion

- The panel study led with the Luxembourg population showed that the level of public awareness about the KBR has increased over the course of the process.
- The mass media played their role: citizens' news consumption in mass media (newspaper, TV and radio) was a key determinant to be aware and knowledgeable about the KBR.
- Overall, the Luxembourg population is rather favourable regarding the use and benefits of citizens' assemblies.
- People who had been aware of the KBR tended to increase their acceptance of the process' results over time, stressing that awareness is important for the perceived legitimacy.
- Public attitudes were strongly based on their evaluation of the outcomes: the more citizens agreed with the recommendations or found them favourable, the more they turned supportive and ready to accept the results.

Recommendations

R13 – public engagement and acceptance: citizens' assemblies must promote opportunities of engagement with the public, as a citizen aware of the process is a citizen who will be more inclined to accept the results, thereby boosting trust in policy decisions.

R14 – public engagement channels: citizens' assemblies must engage with the public not only through mass media but also with other communication means, channels, and networks, to reach less engaged profiles of citizens who follow less the news or who have different views than the participants on the issue at hand.

R15 – public support for replication: citizens' assemblies can be replicated and promoted as policy instrument because they are supported by the public opinion. Moreover, they can boost trust in public policies when they reach the population.

Impact on climate policies and political actors

Government

- The Government did not set up formal requirement to respond to the KBR. Yet, it received serious consideration and official responses. The Government provided a public justification for the implementation of the proposals. In this perspective, the KBR stood out from other (climate) citizens' assemblies because

there was a direct connection to the executive branch and related administration, which seems to have opened the path for more direct policy impact.

- The project of the new version of the NECP included 197 measures, of which 57 can be traced back to some of the KBR recommendations. Among these, 5 measures can be considered as genuinely new and would probably not have been present without the citizen consultation. The other measures directly attributed to the KBR reinforced Luxembourg's commitment to certain aspects of its climate policy.
- There is still an ongoing monitoring of the implementation of all the accepted measures.
- Since the Luxembourg elected a new Government in October 2023 (with a new coalition of parties), it remains unclear whether the KBR measures will be effectively considered in the final version of the NECP that is supposed to be ready by June 2024, as well as whether the rest of the recommendations will affect public policies.

Parliament

- The KBR received attention and raised questions within the Parliament, before even the publication of the final report and the scheduled parliamentary hearing. Even if some criticisms were raised by opposition parties during the process or some proposals were judged more difficult to accept after, the KBR finally received approval from MPs across party lines. The KBR thus contributed to the democratic debate within the Parliament as well.

Political parties

- During the 2023 national election, several parties positioned themselves on the question of citizen participation, sometimes directly referring to the KBR as an example in their manifestos.

Recommendations

R17 – political response and accountability: citizens' assemblies must receive a clear and justified response from the commissioning bodies regarding the consideration and implementation of the recommendations.

R18 – political integration: citizens' assemblies must be offered a direct pathway for policy influence through a clear articulation with existing political structures (government, parliament, public administrations).

R19 – parliamentary scrutiny: Citizens' assemblies' outcomes must be discussed in parliament, prompting parties and elites to position themselves on such processes as well as the concrete outcomes they yield.