



BÜRGERForum

Citizens' Forum

Community Input and
Discussion for Greater Impact





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Citizens' Forum: What's at stake



Today's citizens want to have a direct, tangible impact on policy decisions that are theme-focused. But what are the features of a successful transparent process? The Citizens' Forum answers this question. It combines the efforts of motivated individuals at various events with citizens' ideas gathered through an online platform. Participants' recommendations are then used to draft a Citizens' Agenda.

The Citizens' Forum represents an innovative model of civic participation. It allows more citizens to participate in decision-making processes and address policy questions, thereby fostering greater interest in participatory democracy. It also offers decision-makers at various levels of government opportunities to discuss challenges with citizens, providing these decision-makers new insight into their own work.

This format, developed and tested over several years, is a joint initiative of the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Heinz Nixdorf Foundation.

The Citizens' Forum ...

... speaks to a broad spectrum of people:
Hundreds of citizens from all walks of life have already participated.

... is innovative:
It combines discussion events with online discussion in interesting ways.

... delivers high-quality outcomes:
Participants not only discuss, they work together to draft recommendations and put forth a Citizens' Agenda.

... is reliable:
Based on a standardized procedure, the format draws on many years of practical experience.

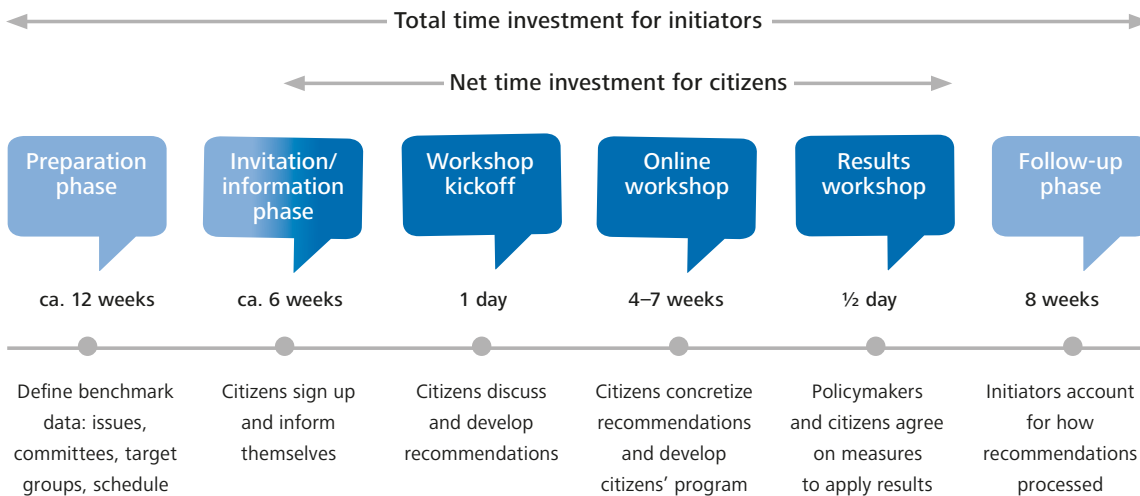
... combines several points of view:
The selection process ensures that a broad spectrum of interests and participants are included.

The process, in brief



Civic participation often takes place either at events or online. The Citizens' Forum is different because it combines the advantages offered by both. Carried out over several weeks, each forum delivers relevant Citizens' Agendas that have been conceived and drafted by citizens themselves. For each forum, there are anywhere from 100 to 400 participants determining their own process, which involves debating, advocating specific interests, substantiating opinions and taking a vote.

A single Citizens' Forum process usually extends over one year, including preparatory work, implementation and follow-up activities. While the entire process may take a year, the actual net time investment for participating citizens is only eight weeks.



A proven format



The process implemented by the Citizens' Forum was developed by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Heinz Nixdorf Foundation and then tested across Germany with the "Social Market Economy" and "Europe" citizens' fora in 2008 and 2009 respectively. The "Citizens' Forum 2011" was carried out in 25 cities and administrative districts across Germany with 10,000 participants. In each forum, some 400 citizens worked together developing concrete recommendations to strengthen social cohesion.



Drawing on the practical experience gathered, the project leaders developed the format further. In 2014, five pilot communities in Germany – Karlsruhe, Marburg, Oldenburg, Remseck am Neckar and Wiehl – each carried out their own Citizens' Forum to target regional challenges.

■ Examples, at a glance

Karlsruhe: Citizens' Forum "Sustainable Oststadt | Future in Citizens' Hands"

Sustainable Oststadt | Future in Citizens' Hands

This forum was driven by the twin objectives of identifying what a livable and sustainable district means for the citizens of Karlsruhe's Oststadt, and how they, working together, might ensure it.

The forum is a joint initiative of the city of Karlsruhe and the KIT "Urban Transition Lab" project at the Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS).

Contact: Sarah Meyer-Soylu, Research Associate, ITAS
(E-Mail: sarah.meyer@kit.edu, Telephone: +49 721 608-23993).

Supporting organizations: IKU_Die Dialoggestalter GmbH, Dortmund;
ZebraLog GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin

Participatory Processes | The National Garden Show (BUGA) 2029

This Citizens' Forum focusing on Marburg's potential application to host Germany's National Garden Show in 2029 is designed to identify as early as possible what citizens in Marburg expect from the show, what conditions they envision for the application, and what longer-term benefits the show can and should generate for the city.

Marburg's Lord Mayor Egon Vaupel initiated this Citizens' Forum.

Contact: Press and Public Relations/Citizen Outreach,
Sabine Preisler, Telephone: +49 6421 201346.

Supporting organizations: memo-consulting, Seeheim-Jugenheim;
polidia GmbH, Berlin

Oldenburg: Citizens' Forum "The Day After Tomorrow Tomorrow: Shaping Demographic Change Together"

The Day After Tomorrow Tomorrow: Shaping Demographic Change Together

Participants in this forum convened to discuss Oldenburg's demographic future. Top issues of concern included: "Living and District Development," "Social Cohesion and Health," "Jobs and Employment," "Public Spaces," and "Leisure and Mobility."

The city of Oldenburg initiated this forum.

Contact: City Council Member Dagmar Sachse
(E-Mail: dagmar.sachse@stadt-oldenburg.de, Telephone +49 441 2353678)

Supporting organizations: mensch und region, Nachhaltige Prozess- und Regionalentwicklung, Hannover; DEMOS Gesellschaft für E-Partizipation mbH, Berlin

A Once-in-a-Lifetime Opportunity to Create a Livable Community for All

Following this motto – adopted together with Remseck's citizens – participants developed ideas on how to address the consequences of demographic change that are suitable for citizens of every age.

The city of Remseck am Neckar initiated this forum.

Contact: Claudia Peschen, Project Management and Civic Engagement, the city of Remseck am Neckar (E-Mail: peschen@remseck.de, Telephone: +49 7146 289-643)

Supporting organizations: Büro suedlicht, Freiburg;
DEMOS Gesellschaft für E-Partizipation mbH, Berlin

Wiehl: Citizens' Forum "Shaping the Future"

Shaping the Future

The key focus of Wiehl's Citizens' Forum "Shaping the Future," was urban living spaces. Through the forum, ideas for the community's future were developed in areas such as "Working and Living," "Education and Mentoring," "Ensuring Social Structures," and "Leisure and Public Spaces."

The city of Wiehl and Mayor Werner Becker-Blonigen initiated this forum.

Contact: Michael Schell, Deputy Head of Administration, City of Wiehl
(E-Mail: m.schell@wiehl.de, Telephone: +49 2262 99273)

Supporting organizations: IKU_Die Dialoggestalter GmbH, Dortmund;
buergerwissen.de, Bielefeld



Information and materials

Further information

For more information on the Citizens' Forum: www.buerger-forum.info

Manual

The manual guides you through the various phases of the Citizens' Forum format, providing templates and checklists useful for implementing such fora. The manual is available free-of-charge at www.buerger-forum.info.

Online platform

The online platform for discussion and developing ideas for Citizens' Agendas supports you in organizing an online workshop. The Bertelsmann Stiftung has provided an open-source software designed for this purpose at <https://github.com/bertelsmannstift/buergerforum>.

These tools are designed to help you plan and conduct your own Citizens' Forum. We hope you enjoy your endeavor and wish you much success!

The Citizens' Forum is a joint initiative of:

| **BertelsmannStiftung**

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