Strong Citizen Participation as a backbone of democratic governance
A precondition to building trust in public institutions

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What is citizen participation and why is it beneficial?

Citizen and stakeholder participation includes "all the ways in which stakeholders (including citizens) can be involved in the policy cycle and in service design and delivery"

OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017)
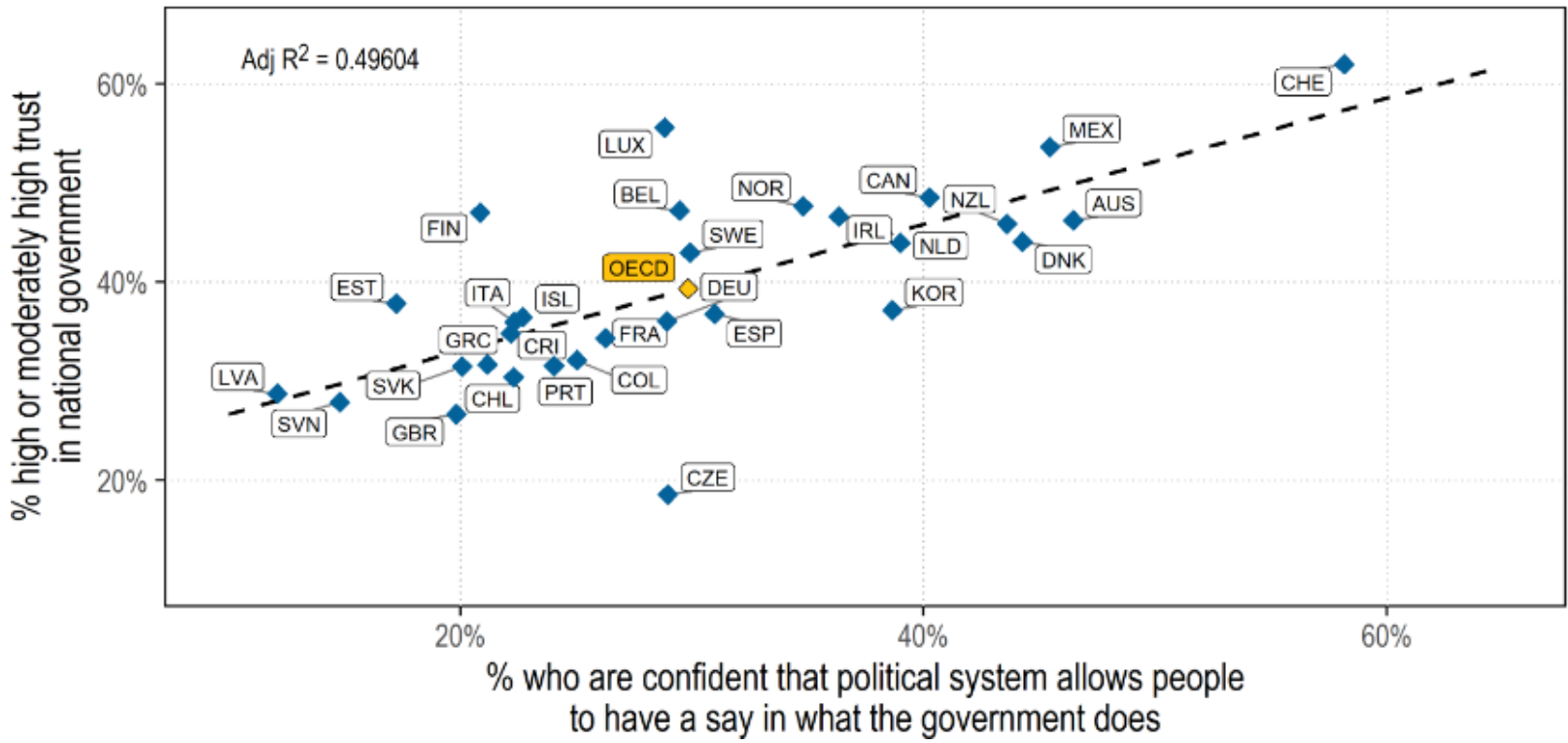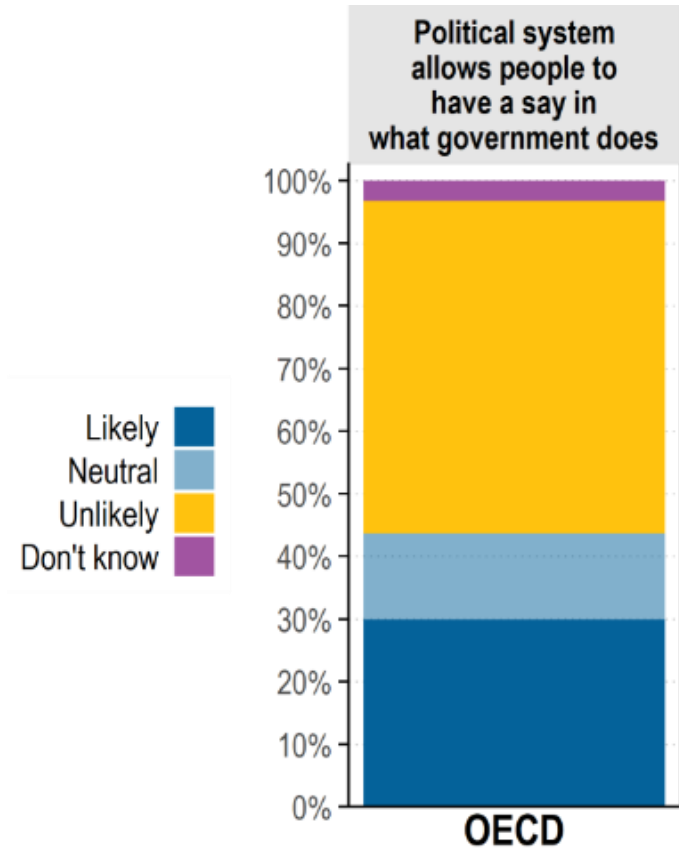
Why involve citizens?

- <u>Strengthening democracy</u>: participation can lead to more democratic and transparent policy- and decision-making.
- <u>Better informed decisions</u> and <u>higher-quality services</u> that reflect public needs
- <u>Inclusion and diversity:</u> Diverse voices are heard, promoting fairness and more nuanced decisions
- More <u>legitimacy of policy of decisions</u> and more <u>buy-in regarding policy implementation</u>
- Citizens have a <u>fundamental right</u> to be involved in decisions that affect their lives

Higher confidence in having a say in government processes is correlated with higher trust in the national government

30% believe the political system allows people like them to have a say in what government does

Share of population with high or moderately high trust in the national government (y-axis) and who find it likely that political system allows people to have a say in what the government does (x-axis), 2023

Political system allows people to have a say in what government does

Legend:
- Likely (dark blue)
- Neutral (light blue)
- Unlikely (yellow)
- Don't know (purple)

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Adj R² = 0.49604

% high or moderately high trust in national government (y-axis)

% who are confident that political system allows people to have a say in what the government does (x-axis)

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023

Inclusive and meaningful citizen participation is crucial to building trust in public institutions

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Perceptions of agency and a sense of political efficacy as main drivers for trust

- Citizen's **sense of political agency matters more** for trust in government than their socio-economic or demographic characteristics
- Those with a **sense of political influence** are **3x more likely to trust** the government.

The strongly distrustful minority continues to engage, but not through official channels

- 15% report no trust **at all** in government, but are often **highly engaged** in non-institutionalised political activities (e.g., protests)

Gender and age gaps matter

- **Women and younger people** tend to have **lower trust** in government, and tend to feel **less confident to participate** in politics

Confidence in participation is key

- **Only 40%** feel **confident in participating** in politics, and **just 30%** believe **public institutions allow them a voice**.

Calls for direct democracy

- **79%** want more referenda on national issues, reflecting a **desire for direct participation.**

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023

OECD work to support public institutions in the promotion of participatory and deliberative policies and practices

The OECD Recommendation on Open Government

- **Adopted in 2017** by the OECD Council, following a public consultation

- **Rationale:** Identification of a clear, actionable, and internationally recognised understanding of what open government strategies and initiatives entail; define necessary characteristics of their governance to maximise impact.

- Key **definitions** (e.g. open government, open state)

- 10 Provisions that provide a framework for both the **governance and implementation** of Adherents' open government agendas

- **Adherents**: OECD Members + Argentina, Brazil, Morocco, Romania, Tunisia

- Instructs the Public Governance Committee to **monitor its implementation** and to report thereon to the OECD Council

OECD work on citizen participation

Our vision

Enhancing citizen voices in public policy- and decision-making is a vehicle for promoting democratic values, while ensuring the representation of diverse perspectives and enhancing legitimacy of decisions.

Our work on citizen participation supports countries in the promotion of participatory and deliberative policies and practices across their entire public sectors and in exploring new ways to engage the wider public.

This work is aligned with pillar 2 of the **Reinforcing Democracy Initiative**: Enhancing Representation, Participation and Openness of Public Life.

What we do

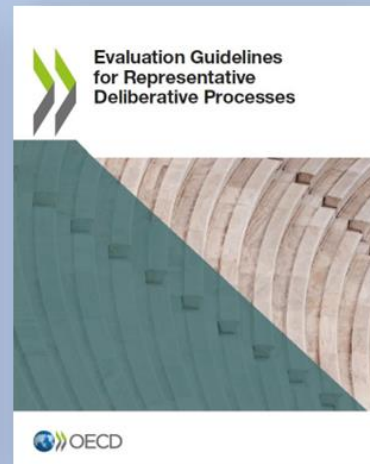| Country advisory & peer reviews	Policy measurement and research	Convening policy dialogue	Technical assistance & capacity building
Assessments and recommendations at national and local level, e.g. • Brazil, Morocco, Czechia, Ukraine, Romania etc. • Basque country (Spain), Salé (Morocco) etc.	• Open government indicators, e.g. **Citizen Participation Barometer** • Benchmarking reports, e.g. Innovative Citizen Participation and new Democratic Institutions: **Catching the Deliberative Wave**	The **OECD Network on Innovative Citizen Participation** (ICPN) meets regularly.	Tools and guidelines: • OECD **Citizen Participation Guidelines** • OECD **Deliberative Democracy Toolbox** Technical support for citizen participation processes

OECD **Deliberative Democracy** Toolbox and **Guidelines** for Citizen Participation Processes
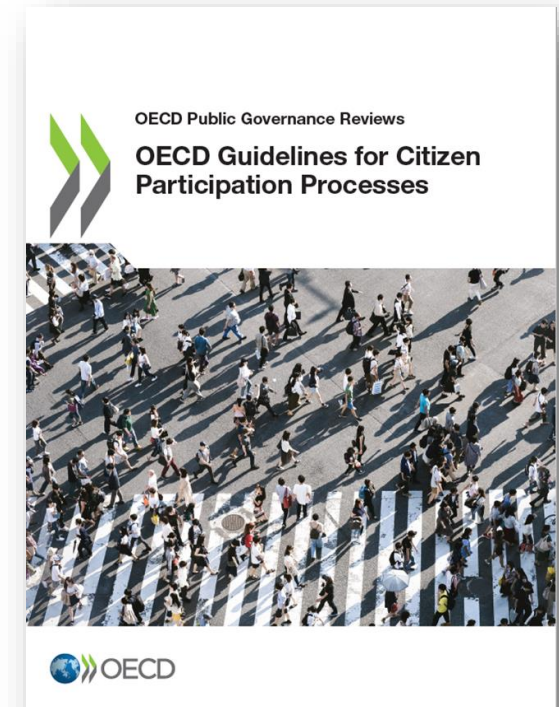

STEP 1
DISCOVER

STEP 2
IMPLEMENT

STEP 3
EVALUATE

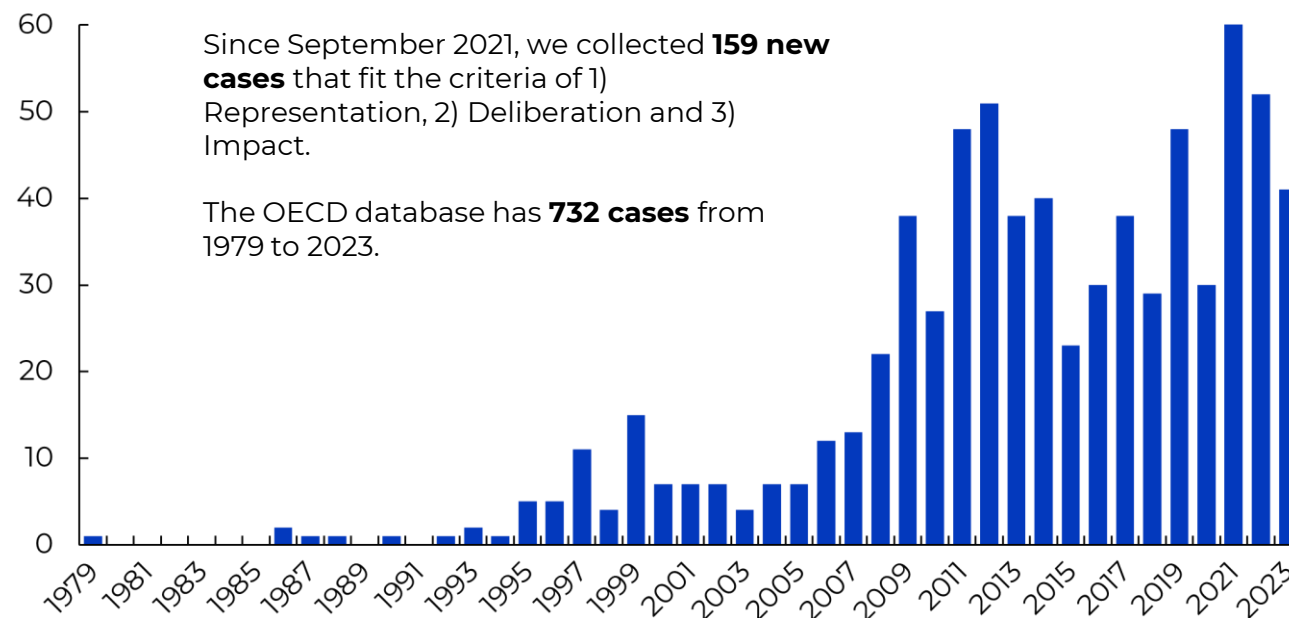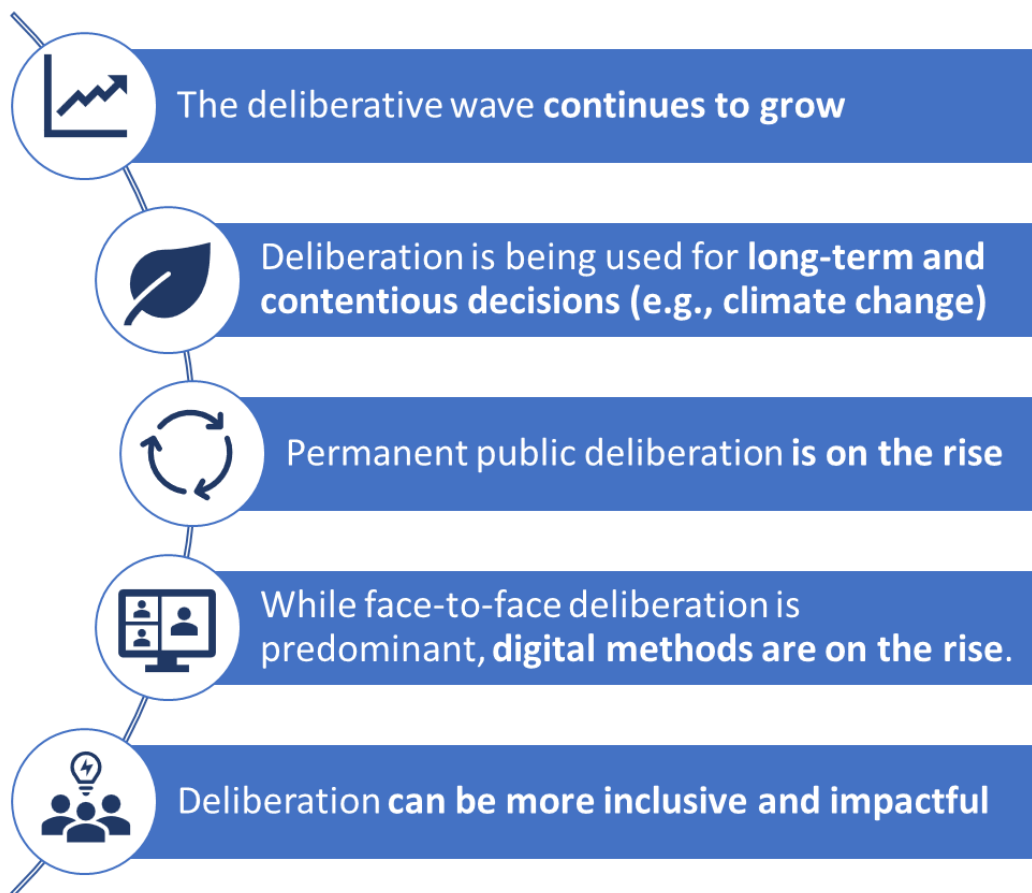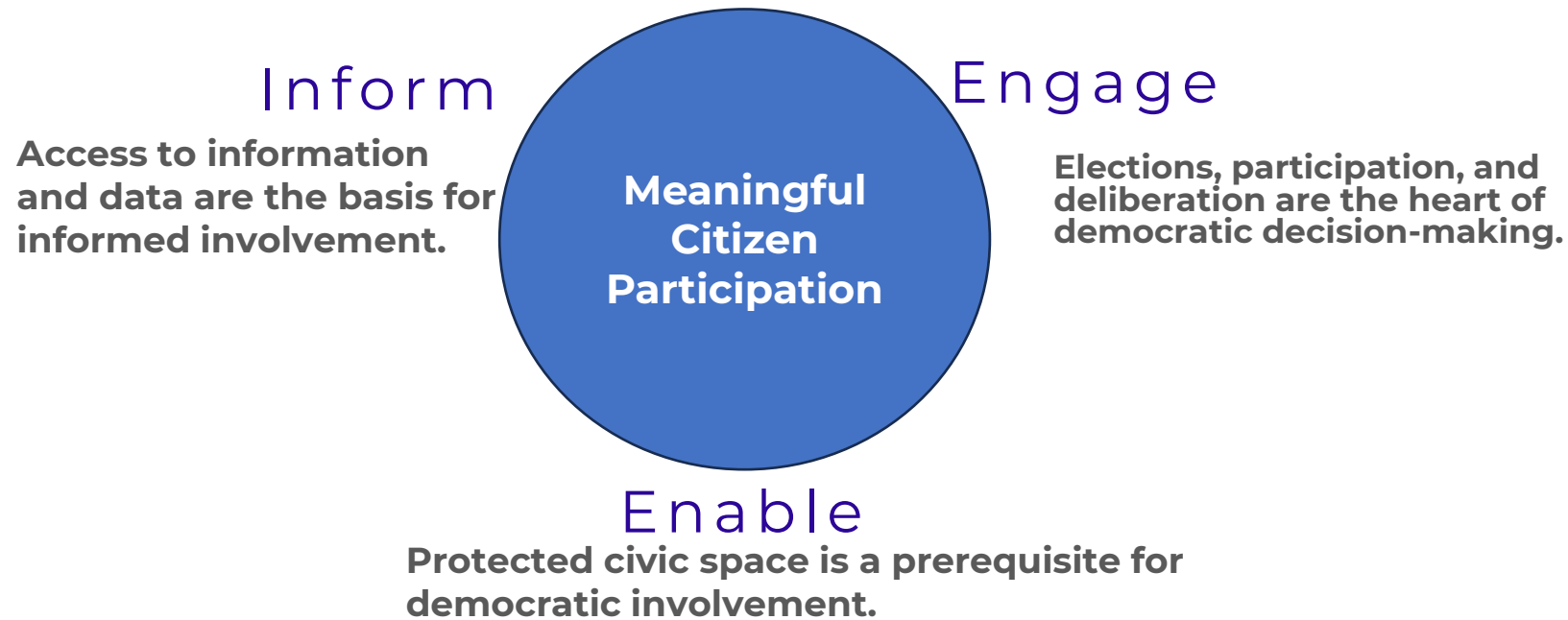**STEP 4**
EMBED

OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes
10-step implementation plan with examples from 15+ countries

OECD **Citizen Participation Barometer**

Inform

Access to information and data are the basis for informed involvement.

Meaningful Citizen Participation

Engage

Elections, participation, and deliberation are the heart of democratic decision-making.

Enable

Protected civic space is a prerequisite for democratic involvement.

Purpose: A tool to steer reforms
- **Added value:** Focus on practice, using statistical and verified data collected from governments, beyond availability (also assessing accessibility and accountability)
- **Barometer Approach:** Offers clear scores/rankings with additional context (e.g., country sheets, dashboards, comparative reports) for informed policy recommendations.
- **Iterative Design:** Currently prototyping to test methodology and build support.
- **Stakeholders:** Developed with input from CPB Taskforce, WPOG, OECD Open Government Indicators Network, and others.
- **Bridging Data Gaps**: Surveys to address data gaps with verified government responses.
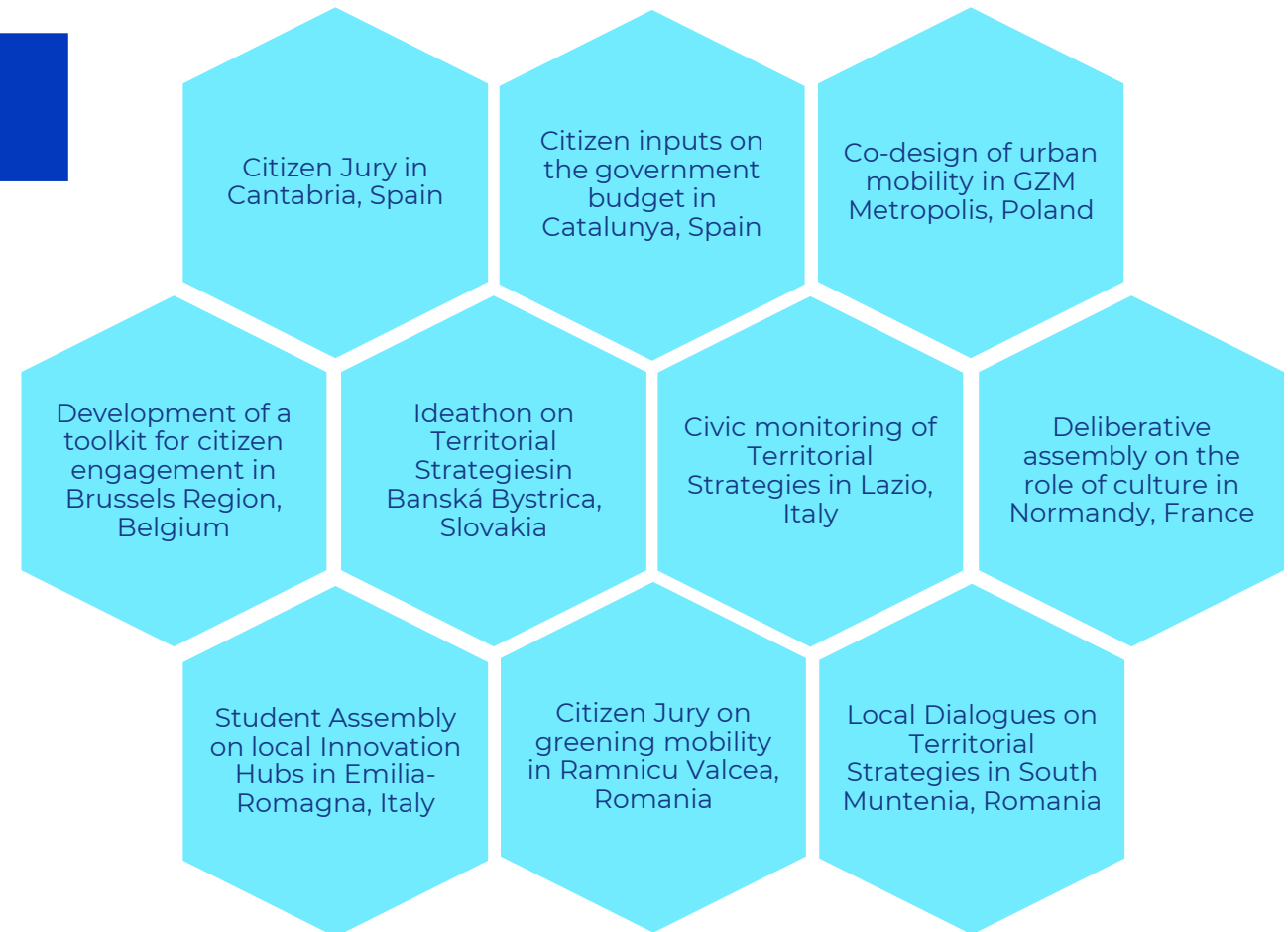
Priorities moving forward

- **Create synergies** between participatory, deliberative, direct and representative democracy

- Reinforce capacities to **measure participation efforts** across OECD and non-OECD countries (e.g., Citizen Participation Barometer, OECD Database for Deliberative Democracy)

- Foster **digital participation** and digital democracy, and explore **new frontiers of participation** (e.g. AI and emerging tech)

- **Instititutionalise participatory and deliberative policies** and practices in the architecture of government (e.g. Centres of Expertise for Participation paper, update paper on deliberative trends, TSI multi-country project, DG REGIO)

Examples of case studies and impact

Supporting the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy with Citizen Participation

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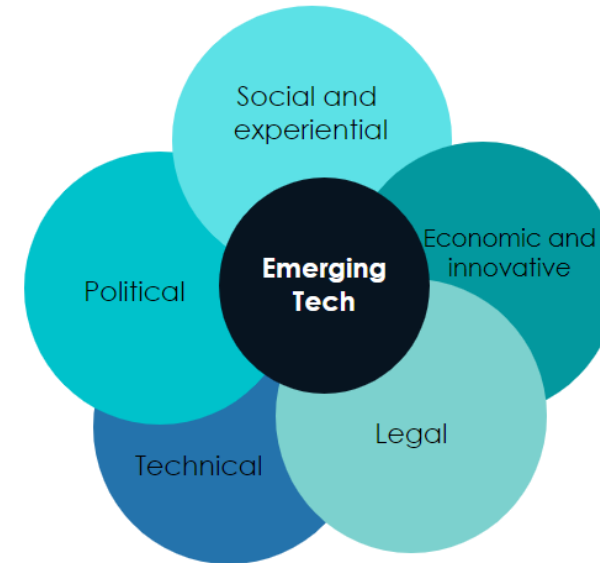## Innovative Implementation of the Partnership Principle in Cohesion Policy

- Collaboration with the **European Commission – DG REGIO** since 2020.
- Experimentation and institutionalization of **innovative practices of citizen participation at the subnational level**.
- Involving citizen in the design, management and monitoring of **Cohesion Policy** at the local level.
- **10 ongoing pilots across 7 European Countries**.
- **Technical support** in the design, implementation, and institutionalization of participatory processes.

Citizen Jury in Cantabria, Spain

Citizen inputs on the government budget in Catalunya, Spain

Co-design of urban mobility in GZM Metropolis, Poland

Development of a toolkit for citizen engagement in Brussels Region, Belgium

Ideathon on Territorial Strategiesin Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

Civic monitoring of Territorial Strategies in Lazio, Italy

Deliberative assembly on the role of culture in Normandy, France

Student Assembly on local Innovation Hubs in Emilia-Romagna, Italy

Citizen Jury on greening mobility in Ramnicu Valcea, Romania

Local Dialogues on Territorial Strategies in South Muntenia, Romania

Improving citizen participation with emerging technologies

Funded by the European Commission through DG REFORM and in collaboration with Portugal, Netherlands and Spain in 2024 and 2025.

- **Report** on state-of-the-art of the use of emerging tech for participation
- **Ecosystem mapping** of the actors in the three countries
- 2-day **co-creation event** with ecosystem
- **Prototype** requirements development
- **Action plans** for each country + EU

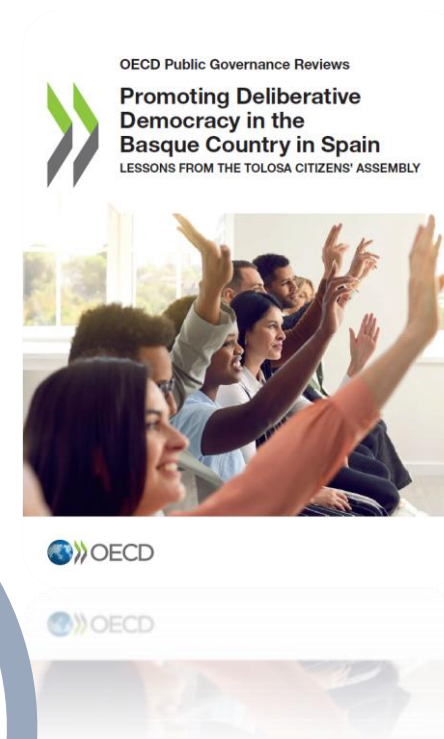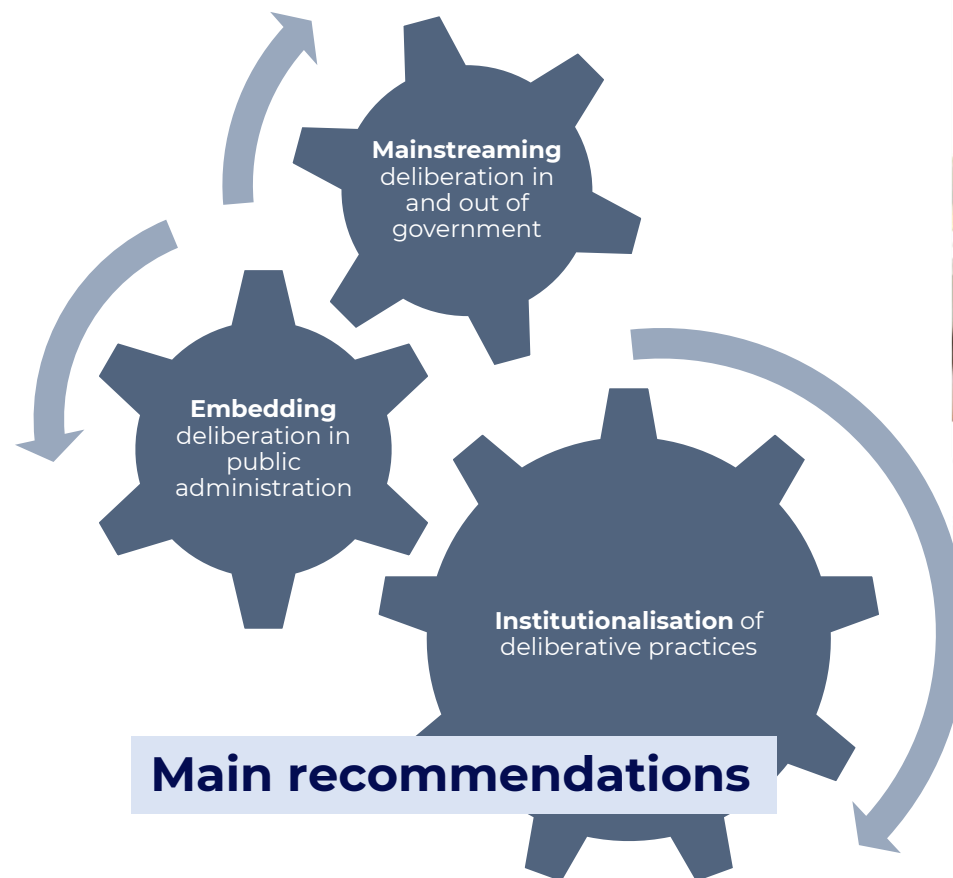**Focus on Artificial intelligence**

Two-fold approach:
- AI for participation & Participation for AI

- The objective is to empower citizens, not replace citizens.

- How can AI improve/enhance participatory and deliberative processes?

Promoting deliberative democracy in the Basque Country in Spain

About the project

- Collaboration with Arantzazulab to implement **the first representativ**e deliberative process in the Municipality of Tolosa in 2022 and **promote the institutionalisation of public deliberation** in the Basque Country.

- **Small scale implementation of processes** was used to **establish the conditions for institutionalising** representative deliberative processes in the Basque Country.

- The OECD supported Arantzazulab and Tolosa throughout the design process by organising **learning sessions with experts and technical assistance.**

Mainstreaming deliberation in and out of government

Embedding deliberation in public administration

Institutionalisation of deliberative practices

Main recommendations

OECD Public Governance Reviews

Promoting Deliberative Democracy in the Basque Country in Spain
LESSONS FROM THE TOLOSA CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

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Thank you!

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