

Deepening Public Engagement on Climate Change: Lessons from the Citizens' Assembly

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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- Office of Communications and Corporate Services

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EPA RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2014–2020

Deepening Public Engagement on Climate Change: Lessons from the Citizens' Assembly

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EPA Research Report

Prepared for the Environmental Protection Agency

by

Dublin City University

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The EPA Research Programme addresses the need for research in Ireland to inform policymakers and other stakeholders on a range of questions in relation to environmental protection. These reports are intended as contributions to the necessary debate on the protection of the environment.

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Executive Summary

The Irish Citizens' Assembly afforded 99 citizens the time, space and structure to deliberate on some of the most important issues facing Irish society and politics. The 13 climate recommendations agreed on by the citizens in consideration of "How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change" were significantly more radical than many expected. They encompassed a suite of sectors, solutions and policy actions. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action (JOCCA) was established in July 2018 to respond to each recommendation, with the results of its review forming a firm foundation for the all-of-government Climate Action Plan released in June 2019.

The form, structure and process of the Assembly were key to its success and hold important lessons for others desiring to experiment with this form of deliberative democracy for better public engagement and inclusive policymaking. In particular, lessons from the process could be used to inform the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA). The Citizens' Climate research project was funded by the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to draw lessons from the Citizens' Assembly for deepening public engagement on the climate crisis, including in the context of the NDCA.

The project was conducted in three phases. In phase I, we analysed the corpus of public submissions to the Citizens' Assembly on the climate change topic. Our findings offer important lessons for climate change communications. These include understanding the multi-layered perceptions of engaged publics of climate change, highlighting various communication devices and frames deployed, including diverse topics, language, level of climate science denial, responsibility attributions and scale of relevance. Combined, these insights can create more effective and connected modes of persuasion to communicate the urgency of the climate crisis and enhance environmental literacy nationally.

In phase II, we conducted two focus groups. The first of these groups targeted previous members of the Citizens' Assembly on climate change, who may have specific recommendations for the deliberative

process and/or for rolling this process out at other scales. The second group targeted publics who had not participated in the Citizens' Assembly. Thus, the approach of the two focus groups differed, with the first concentrating on the specifics of the Citizens' Assembly process and the second focusing more broadly on communication styles. Nonetheless, the overall message from these focus groups was that more citizens' assemblies are desired in the future, with rotating members, fewer topics, more time, and enhanced political and community engagement. To complement this bottom-up form of governance, clear political engagement and top-down leadership were deemed necessary. Top-down and bottom-up approaches must combine to tackle the urgency of the climate crisis, provide necessary policy coherence and ensure meaningful contributions from citizens when they dedicate their time to providing solutions. Ensuring that recommendations from a citizens' assembly are incorporated into the policy process in an appropriate manner, including through the use of dedicated parliamentary committees, is vital for output legitimacy. Our focus groups also showed a desire among participants that their recommendations be complemented by further expertise, cost assessments and evidence-based input so as not to over-emphasise citizens' contributions or rely solely on their output.

In phase III, we developed a public engagement resource, detailing guidelines for conducting citizens' assemblies when they are appropriate, as well as guidelines on how to communicate the climate crisis both in the context of deliberative forums and more generally. We reviewed and tested these draft guidelines with the end-users of the resource – the policymakers operating across government charged with engaging the Irish public in climate governance. The finalised policymakers' resource, entitled *Enhancing Citizen Engagement on the Climate Crisis: The Role of Deliberation*, is published alongside this EPA Research Report and is available online (<https://bit.ly/2SZZCmG>). The guidelines captured in this resource could be used to underpin future public engagement activities conducted within the remit of the NDCA.

It is important to note that deliberation represents only one potential form of public engagement. A variety of other mechanisms are available according to the time and resources available, policy phase, purpose and topic in question. In the right context, however, deliberative forums, including but not limited to citizens' assemblies, can facilitate societal buy-in for tough policy decisions by including the concerns of citizens in policymaking and increasing the legitimacy of decisions and actions taken.

The participation of all of society will be crucial to achieve the necessary reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, demanding often transformative change in how we live our lives. Engaging those who are not aware of, interested in or cognisant of the climate crisis remains pressing and necessary. Achieving long-lasting and sustainable behaviour change remains a crucial component of climate action.

1 Introduction

Ireland is at a critical juncture in its response to climate change. Stark warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlight the risks involved in exceeding 1.5°C of warming, as well as the scale of the challenge facing humanity to remain within that threshold (IPCC, 2018). To date, Ireland has been plagued with a “climate laggard” status and has been repeatedly ranked as the worst performing European Union Member State in the annual Climate Change Performance Index (Burck *et al.*, 2017, 2018). Progress towards decarbonisation has been slow, hampered by often haphazard, conflicting, unambitious and poorly implemented climate policies (Torney *et al.*, forthcoming).

The Irish Citizens’ Assembly afforded 99 citizens the time, space and structure to deliberate on some of the most important issues facing Irish society and politics. Although its deliberations relating to repealing the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (the constitutional ban on abortion) received the most time and attention, the Assembly’s deliberations related to climate change are just as noteworthy. The 13 climate recommendations agreed on by the citizens in consideration of “How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change” were significantly more radical than many expected. They encompassed a suite of sectors, solutions and policy actions (Citizens’ Assembly, 2018a). The Joint

Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action (JOCCA) was established in July 2018 to respond to each recommendation, with the results of its review forming a firm foundation for the all-of-government Climate Action Plan released in June 2019 (Government of Ireland, 2019).

Aside from its impact in policy circles, the way in which the Citizens’ Assembly engaged publics on the climate crisis is also important. Its mode of deliberation comprised four key elements, as detailed in Figure 1.1. The Assembly’s recommendations on climate change received the highest levels of consensus across all five topics¹ deliberated on by the Assembly, with 80% or more of citizens in favour of each proposal. Achieving this level of citizen acceptance for climate action (including in relation to politically controversial topics such as raising the carbon tax and taxing agricultural emissions) in just two weekends points to a constructive and positive process worth investigating.

Indeed, the Irish Citizens’ Assembly model has gained international attention. Many are now seeking to emulate Ireland’s experience in relation to the climate crisis and other contexts (Caldwell, 2019; Carrington, 2019; Extinction Rebellion, 2019; Grant, 2019; Sage, 2019). The form, structure and process of the Assembly were key to its success and hold important lessons for others desiring to experiment with this

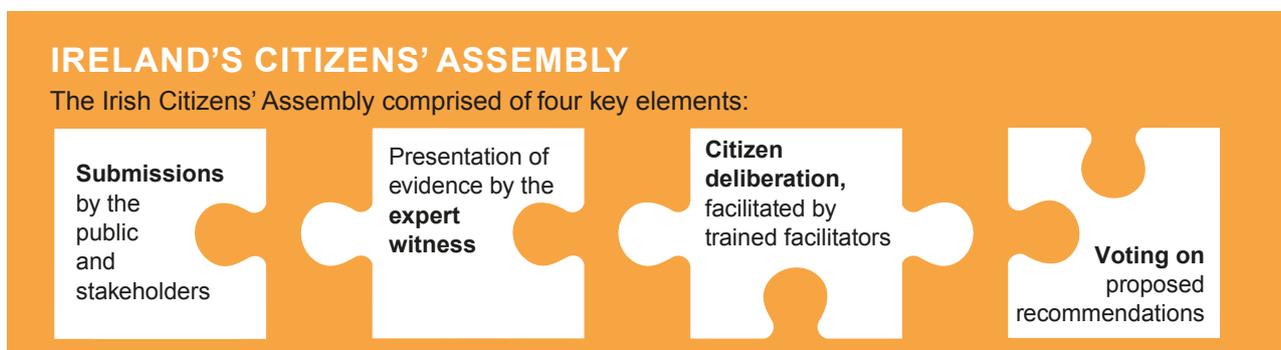


Figure 1.1. Working method of the Irish Citizens’ Assembly 2016–2018.

¹ The five topics were (1) the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution; (2) how we best respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population; (3) how the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change; (4) the manner in which referenda are held; and (5) fixed-term parliaments.

form of deliberative democracy for better public engagement and inclusive policymaking.

The Citizens' Climate Research Project was funded by the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to draw lessons from the Citizens' Assembly for deepening public engagement on the climate crisis, including in the context of informing the ongoing

work of the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA). Based at Dublin City University, the project team examined the contexts in which deliberation can contribute to enhancing such engagement and developed guidelines for conducting and communicating within climate-orientated deliberative forums when appropriate. This report summarises the results.

2 Engaging the Public on the Climate Crisis: The Role of Deliberation and Communication

Evidence of the climate crisis has never been more stark or well received. The publication by the IPCC of the *Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C* in October 2018 (IPCC, 2018) has been coupled with a critical rally from the bottom up, including the international school strikes movement. This has heralded a new era of climate governance, with increased public engagement on the topic and citizen demands for climate action.

Although these early signs of an increasingly engaged public are promising, engaging those who are not aware of, interested in or cognisant of the climate crisis remains pressing and necessary. Citizens will be at the heart of the low-carbon transition and it is crucial that they are engaged, empowered and supported in moving towards more sustainable practices. The participation of all of society will be crucial to achieve the necessary reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, demanding often transformative change in how we live our lives.

Achieving long-lasting and sustainable behaviour change remains a crucial component of climate action. Previous EPA projects have made headway in connecting the suite of interventions required to mobilise more sustainable consumption practices (e.g. Davies *et al.*, 2014a). Adopting a social practice theory approach holds promise, highlighting the need to combine a concurrent range of governance, technical and socio-cultural supports to achieve desired behaviour changes (Shove, 2010; Hargreaves, 2011; Davies *et al.*, 2014b). Translating research into policy and practice, however, remains difficult. Engaging the public more directly in decision-making represents one potential avenue to enhance buy-in and success. Deliberative forums represent a promising space for such collaborative, creative and solutions-orientated climate discussions.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Irish government's Climate Action Plan 2019 specifically calls for improved public awareness of the need for climate action (Government of Ireland, 2019). Crucially, the Plan proposes a significant

step-up in government engagement with citizens through better mobilising structures and initiatives “to inform, engage, motivate, and empower people to take climate action” (p. 17). Deliberative forums, including but not limited to citizens' assemblies, represent a promising mode of engagement that can connect experts, stakeholders and citizens and mobilise them to collaboratively tackle the climate crisis. They require the best in both deliberative democracy and communications excellence to achieve impact and long-term success, facets that are well established in the academic literature.

2.1 Deliberation

Deliberative decision-making can trace its origins to Athenian democracy. A relatively long tradition of scholarship has advocated deliberative forms of democracy (e.g. Dryzek, 1990; Fishkin, 1991). They are posited as dialogue-based methods that can work to integrate citizen viewpoints into policymaking (Smith, 2009; Fournier *et al.*, 2011; Fung and Warren, 2011; Dryzek *et al.*, 2019; Farrell *et al.*, 2019). Proponents of deliberative democracy have drawn attention to its particular suitability for shaping responses to climate change (e.g. Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014; Blue, 2015). According to Niemeyer (2013), engaging citizens in deliberation can produce improved environmental outcomes. Participating citizens are facilitated in considering the interests of non-human agents, and deliberation can also attune participants to coping with complexity and taking a long-term view.

A significant literature has developed around the use of such mini-publics, defined by Goodin and Dryzek (2006, p. 220) as democratic innovations involving ordinary citizens in “groups small enough to be genuinely deliberative, and representative enough to be genuinely democratic”. However, some critics state that political dialogue in the broader public sphere must adopt similar deliberative characteristics if positive intended effects are to be achieved (Lafont, 2015). These include being sensitive to reasoning and

open to criticism, lacking coercion and overcoming manipulation. Otherwise, according to Lafont (2015, p. 58), “simply inserting the conclusions of mini-publics into the highly defective deliberative context of a public sphere full of sound bites, demagoguery, and manipulative misinformation would hardly lead to the intended positive effects”.

Critics of deliberative processes point to the potential for limited impact on policy and decision-making, particularly when politicians do not buy into the process or accept the recommendations proposed. This is reported by Garry *et al.* (2019), for example, in the context of politicians’ perceptions of the merits of citizens’ assemblies in Northern Ireland. Recommendations by randomly selected citizens, who are neither elected nor experts in a given topic, can raise legitimacy and accountability issues as they enter the public sphere. Moreover, vested interests may desire to maintain the status quo rather than adopt recommendations from a citizens’ assembly. Deliberative forums may serve to demonstrate citizen support for climate action, thereby enabling politicians to engage more confidently in this policy area. Politicians are charged with making difficult decisions in a climate policy landscape that is characterised by uncertainty and trade-offs. Developing and promoting citizen acceptance will be key to transformative change.

As an empirical phenomenon, deliberative forums remain relatively marginal (Setälä and Smith, 2019). This makes the Irish experience all the more significant. As Farrell *et al.* (2019) argue, Ireland has emerged as a pioneer of deliberative democracy and is the first country to use an institutionalised mini-public for a second time. This, they argue, points to the systematisation of deliberation in the Irish system. This connects with a broader “systemic turn” in the deliberative democracy literature over the past decade (see, for example, Parkinson and Mansbridge, 2013; Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014). This scholarship advocates viewing deliberation as a distributed quality of political systems rather than as a characteristic of specific deliberative democratic institutions added to existing political systems.

Deliberative forums, it is argued, should be open, inclusive and public and include affected citizens on equal terms (Dryzek, 1990; Fishkin, 1991). Collective decisions should not just be based on

simple aggregation of atomised preferences, but be arrived at through reasoned debate. The use of citizens’ assemblies in addressing highly contested political issues is long established. In Ireland, citizens’ assemblies helped to pave the way for the legalisation of same-sex marriage (through the Convention on the Constitution 2013–2014) and, more recently, spearheaded the referendum to remove the constitutional ban on abortion. The use of citizens’ assemblies helped to break political deadlock and demonstrate levels of public support and acceptance for change.

More widely, Farrell *et al.* (2019, p. 113) praise Ireland as “something of a trail-blazer in the use of deliberative methods in the process of constitutional review”, being one of the first countries internationally to not only host two constitutional mini-publics in quick succession, but also link deliberative (mini-publics) and direct democracy (referendums). The Irish experience arguably also provides a template for combining representative and deliberative democracy. These forms of democracy should not be thought of as rivals. Rather, deliberative forums can be successfully embedded within structures of representative democracy. Indeed, they have been endorsed for their ability to respond to the seeming “crisis of democracy” worldwide to allow politicians to account for (and not be overwhelmed by) citizens’ voices in a way that avoids polarisation and enhances decision-making (Dryzek *et al.*, 2019).

The Irish experience remains relatively unique as a forum composed of a representative sample of the population, established by and reporting to Parliament. Its potential to inform ongoing and future attempts to engage diverse publics and contribute to decision-making on the climate crisis remains largely untapped. The Citizens’ Climate Research Project aimed to address this gap. It adopted an interdisciplinary approach to examine both the strengths and the limitations of the deliberative approach used in the Assembly, combining this with knowledge and best practice from the field of climate change communications, as explored in the following section.

2.2 Communication

From a communications perspective, Mackenzie and Warren (2012) propose using mini-publics such as the Citizens’ Assembly as “trusted information

proxies”, with the aim of feeding into more effective communication with the general public. In the context of the climate crisis, this can, in turn, ensure more proactive engagement with new forms of environmental citizenship, helping to build consensual solutions to environmental problems.

Prospective environmental literacy benefits of mini-publics such as the Citizens’ Assembly can potentially outweigh purported limitations of the deliberative process. Environmental literacy is the desired outcome of environmental education that seeks to empower citizens to make responsible lifestyle decisions based on new-found consideration of their relationship with the environment (Roth, 1992; Brereton, 2019). In this vein, Lafont (2015) proposes to focus on the potential of mini-publics to influence and shape public opinion, as opposed to solely shaping public policy. In this way, we may begin to look at citizens’ assemblies to provoke more effective public engagement by enhancing the communications approach adopted around the climate crisis.

Climate change is often termed a “wicked” policy problem, marked by significant complexity, uncertainty, ethical challenges and deep societal conflict. Identifying trends, preoccupations and salience among citizens on the topic is therefore important to better understand citizens’ perceptions of climate change and their desired actions and help engage in dialogue more effectively with them on the topic. Environmental literacy, however, is not simply a top-down process of disseminating the correct attitudes, values and beliefs (Brereton, 2019); instead, it incorporates a dialogue with audiences of different persuasions, knowledge

and levels of engagement. Deliberative forums can thus also work to create dialogue regarding the urgency of the climate crisis to generate consensual solutions, promote individual agency and, ultimately, change behaviour.

How people speak about the climate crisis represents the first step in promoting environmental literacy, allowing later communications and educational campaigns to adapt their language to connect with real audiences. Connecting with the local scale, whether through identifying shared values, concerns, places or spaces, is reported to represent a central facet of effective climate crisis communications (Dunlap, 2008; Garrard, 2011; Garforth, 2017). Engagement strategies should be structured around these preferences, including through the use of local imagery and storytelling (Roth, 1992; Rust, 2012). Using an appealing rhetoric and frame to structure arguments is also key to communicating effectively (Priest, 2017), along with identifying practical, positive and actionable next steps for a solutions-orientated climate message (Corner *et al.*, 2014).

Assessing the Citizens’ Assembly’s content and submissions in the Citizens’ Climate Research Project allowed for the identification of such citizen-orientated climate concerns and stories, with potential for use in future communication, educational and action campaigns. This represented the first step in the Citizens’ Climate research process, diving into one aspect of the deliberations in particular and connecting this with the wider Assembly process, as detailed in the following chapter.

3 The Irish Citizens' Assembly

Ireland's experience with citizens' assemblies dates to 2011, when a project run by Irish academics, entitled "We the Citizens", piloted the process as one that could help to address citizen disconnect in Irish politics (Farrell *et al.*, 2013; We the Citizens, 2015). The model became a template for the Convention on the Constitution. This forum ran from 2013 to 2014 and deliberated on potential changes to the Constitution that could be put to a wider population in a referendum (Field, 2018). Alongside representative, randomly selected citizens, one-third of its members were elected politicians from the Republic and North of Ireland. The most impactful outcome of the Convention was a recommendation to change the Constitution to allow for marriage equality. This was passed by a referendum in 2015, with a majority of 62.1% (RTÉ, 2015).

Some academic research has been carried out on the predecessors to the Citizens' Assembly. Positioning "deliberation as a sign of democracy in transformation", Farrell *et al.* (2013, p. 100), for example, outline the impact of "We the Citizens". This included enhanced ability on behalf of the participants to account for trade-offs in policymaking, as well as the potential for the model to be replicated. Suiter *et al.* (2016) similarly revealed the power of deliberative processes in encouraging opinion change. They highlight the importance of heterogeneous groups for deliberation, exposing people to views that are different from their own.

Following on from these processes, the Citizens' Assembly was founded as a result of a commitment in the Programme for Government in May 2016. It consisted of a chairperson (now-retired Supreme Court judge Mary Laffoy) and 99 citizens who were randomly selected to be representative of the Irish electorate in age, gender, social class and regional spread (Citizens' Assembly, 2018b). Chosen citizens deliberated on five topics over the course of 12 weekends, as detailed in Table 3.1. Unlike the Convention on the Constitution, no politicians

were involved, largely attributed to desire on the part of politicians to distance themselves from the controversial abortion issue also under examination (Suiter, 2018). An expert advisory group was formed for each topic to assist with the expert selection process. A dedicated Secretariat ensured the smooth running of each event. The transparency of the process was enhanced through the live streaming of all expert presentations. A strong media presence increased public awareness of the process, while a dedicated website provided public access to all expert content, papers and public submissions.

Climate change was allocated two weekends of deliberation within the Assembly's schedule.² Citizens engaged in 26 hours of listening, discussion and deliberation on the topic, including presentations from 15 experts and six advocates championing low-carbon transition. They focused on the sectors of transport, energy and agriculture in particular, in keeping with Ireland's emissions profile. The Citizens' Assembly also invited submissions from the public. In total, 1185 public submissions were received on the topic of climate change.

The government was not obliged to pursue the recommendations of the Assembly, but it committed to responding to each one. Some topics received more traction than others, as illustrated in Table 3.1. The recommendations on climate change encompassed a suite of sectoral solutions and policy actions (Citizens' Assembly, 2018a). Overarching proposals included the need to put climate change at the heart of policymaking in Ireland through a new climate governance architecture, as well as an increase in the carbon tax. Other recommendations included increasing investment in public, electric and active transport, supports for micro-generation and community ownership of renewable energy, and the ending of subsidies for peat extraction. Enhanced support for land use diversification also featured, alongside provisions for a socially just transition to protect vulnerable citizens (Citizens' Assembly, 2018a).

2 One weekend was originally dedicated to the climate change topic but this was increased to two weekends at the request of Assembly members, given the breadth and complexity of the topic.

Table 3.1. The Irish Citizens' Assembly: topics, meetings, submissions, output and impact

Topic	No. of weekends	No. of public submissions ^a	Output	Government response and impact
The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution	5	12,200	1 key recommendation (with various parts) plus 5 ancillary recommendations	Considered by a special parliamentary committee. The government accepted the proposal for a referendum, which was passed in May 2018
How we best respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population	2	122	15 recommendations plus 6 ancillary recommendations	No reaction to date
How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change	2	1185	13 recommendations plus 4 ancillary recommendations	Considered by a special parliamentary committee with a report published in March 2019
The manner in which referenda are held	1	206	10 recommendations	No reaction to date
Fixed-term parliaments	1	8	7 recommendations	No reaction to date

^aTotal number of submissions declared valid and published on the Citizens' Assembly website: <https://2016-2018.citizensassembly.ie/en/> (accessed 21 February 2020).

An all-party parliamentary committee – the JOCCA – was established in July 2018 to respond to the Assembly's recommendations on climate change. The JOCCA published its final report in March 2019, largely endorsing and developing the Assembly's recommendations (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2019). Two exceptions to this include an inability to achieve cross-party consensus on raising the carbon tax (recommendation 3) and placing a tax on GHGs from agriculture (recommendation 11). Nonetheless, the JOCCA process succeeded in giving momentum to the recommendations of the Assembly. Each chapter of the report explicitly responded to the Assembly's recommendations and, in most cases, developed and expanded on the Assembly's work. In turn, the JOCCA report to a significant extent shaped the development

of the all-of-government Climate Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown, published by the government in June 2019 (Government of Ireland, 2019).

The Citizens' Assembly process highlights the power and potential of engaging citizens through deliberation. When engaged and informed in this way, it appeared that citizens overcame information deficits and moved beyond self-interest to reach collective decisions for the greater public good, in contrast to criticisms often levied at deliberative processes and climate engagement more broadly (Fung, 2003; Smith, 2009; Suldovsky, 2017). Moreover, the far-reaching recommendations proposed provide an insight into the level of acceptance and buy-in that can be achieved by engaging citizens in a deliberative way.

4 The Citizens' Climate Research Project

4.1 Objectives

Citizen engagement can take many forms. Deliberation is one option that can connect experts, stakeholders and citizens, mobilising them to collaboratively tackle the climate crisis. The Citizens' Climate Research Project aimed to develop guidelines for policymakers wishing to utilise this method for further engaging citizens on the climate crisis. Discovering the best and most effective ways to engage in dialogue with a wide range of publics on this topic constituted the overall focus of the research. Key objectives of the project were to:

- establish best practice in climate crisis communications and deliberation from the literature;
- undertake a comprehensive analysis of the written submissions, video footage and presentations of expert speakers at the Citizens' Assembly on climate change;
- use these analyses to develop a resource for policymakers to enhance public engagement on the climate crisis;
- conduct public focus groups to inform and refine the resource;

- test the resource with end-users, i.e. the policymakers charged with engaging the public on climate change.

4.2 Methods

Building on the literature review outlined in previous chapters, the empirical phases of the Citizens' Climate Research Project progressed in three key stages:

1. a content analysis of public submissions and expert presentations to the Citizens' Assembly on climate change;
2. two focus groups, one with citizens who took part in the Citizens' Assembly and a second with a business-oriented community group;
3. an interactive policy workshop to test and provide feedback on the draft resource for public engagement.

More detailed methodologies are discussed in conjunction with headline results from each phase in the following chapter.

5 Research Results

5.1 Content Analysis of Public Submissions and Expert Content

The Citizens' Assembly deliberations included an invitation for public submissions on each topic. We suggest that this distinctive model, whereby members of the wider public were given a formal opportunity to input into the deliberative process, provided an institutionalised connection between the chosen 99 citizens in the mini-public and the wider society maxi-public. Studying in a systematic manner the submissions made to the Assembly on climate change can shed light on an aspect of Ireland's experience that both is unusual in international terms and has not been examined in detail in the existing literature (Farrell *et al.*, 2013, 2019; Suiter *et al.*, 2016; Suiter, 2018).

Identifying trends, salience and preoccupations within the corpus of written submissions received is also important for future communication and engagement campaigns. It can help to better understand citizen perceptions of climate change and, in turn, help to engage in dialogue more effectively with citizens on the topic. Understanding the content of submissions may also contribute to higher order aims of enhancing environmental literacy in Ireland and increasing people's connections with their impact on the environment, thus planting a seed for more sustainable behaviour change in the future.

5.1.1 Methods

In total, 1185 submissions were received on the topic of climate change, including 153 group submissions (including from non-governmental organisations, sectoral interests and representative groups). The methodology for their analysis consisted of two parts:

1. a quantitative machine learning element that assessed all 1185 public submissions and compared them with the content of expert presentations;
2. a qualitative analysis of 10% of the submissions utilising a purposefully developed hybrid analytical framework.

Phase 1 of the analysis was undertaken with a view to uncovering the key topics and themes present in the entire corpus of submissions and expert presentations. This phase utilised computer-assisted quantitative content analysis techniques and leveraged a collaboration with experts at Trinity College Dublin (Dr Constantine Boussalis) and the University of Exeter (Dr Travis Coan).

The qualitative component meanwhile focused on 10% of the submissions, enriching and complementing the breadth of the quantitative analysis with increased analytical depth. A systematic sampling technique was adopted, drawing on every 10th submission. A hybrid analytical coding framework was applied, as outlined in Figure 5.1. This framework was developed by adapting the work of Xie (2015) for a systematic, yet tailored, approach to the research.

5.1.2 Results

Assessment of the key topics present in the written submissions is important to identify societal concerns and priorities related to climate change. This will help to ensure that future communications and policymaking capture such nuances, desires for action and practicalities. Figure 5.2 showcases the results of the quantitative analysis, which clustered words into topics and latent themes and also included an analysis of expert content for comparison.

Figure 5.2 can be interpreted in three key "blocks". The first, indicating the four most prominent topics, reveals a preoccupation with national policies, measures and strategies for tackling the climate crisis. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the nature of the call for submissions and Assembly framing on "How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change". It nevertheless reveals a distinct expectation on behalf of publics and experts that government should take a lead in responding to climate change. Similarly, the importance of setting emissions reduction targets featured strongly in the submissions, including in relation to the Paris Agreement. Renewable energy received the most attention of the three sectors focused on by the Assembly (agriculture, energy,

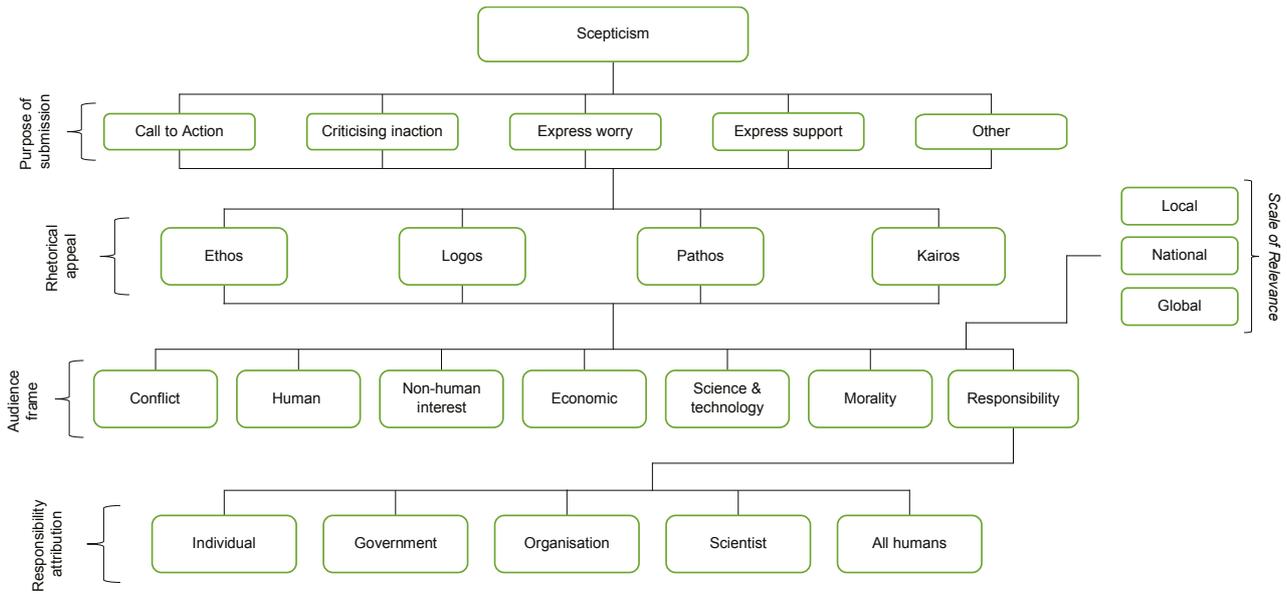


Figure 5.1. Hybrid analytical framework for qualitative assessment of written submissions.

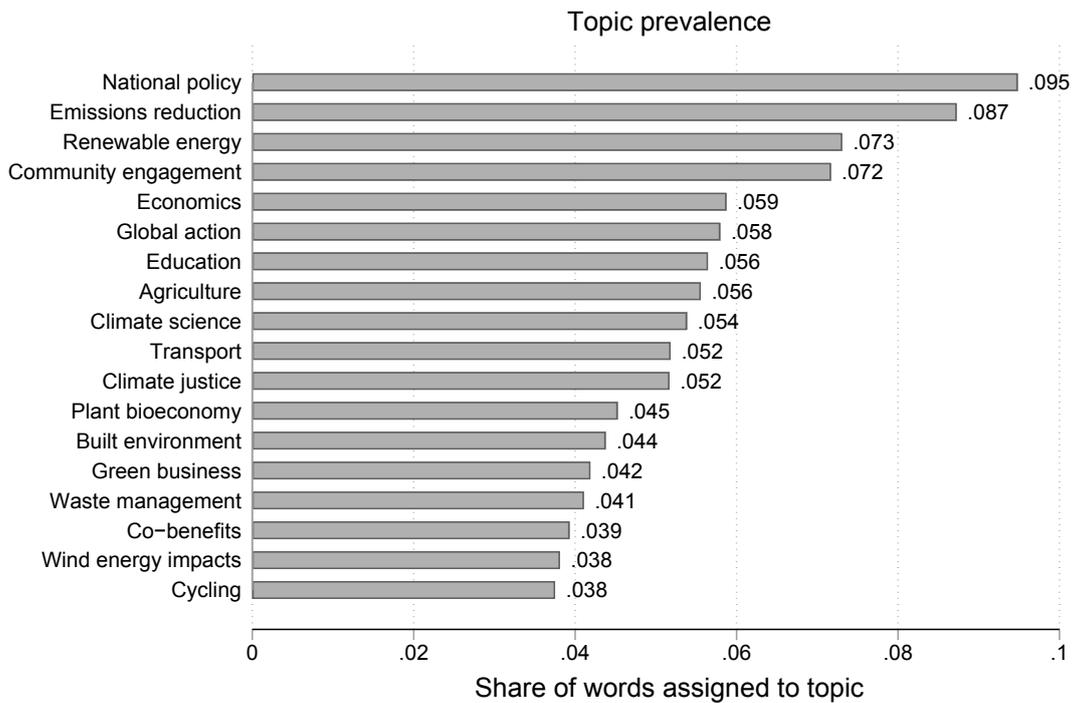


Figure 5.2. Topic modelling results from quantitative analysis of submissions and expert content.

transport). Desires for community engagement in the transition were also strong.

The second block of topics opened the discussion to wider climate science, economics and education themes. Issues of climate justice also featured in the submissions, including from geographical and intergenerational standpoints. The sectors of agriculture and transport also feature in this second block of topics.

Finally, the last block of topics, although receiving the least attention, is noteworthy from the perspective that most of these were not prompted specifically by the topics specified in the call for submissions. They can therefore be seen to hold a particular resonance with segments of Irish society. This included a preoccupation with waste management, particularly a desire to ban single-use plastics and improve recycling. Nuanced and specific opposition to wind

energy also featured, highlighting a need for targeted engagement on this topic in the future. Finally, the co-benefits of climate action were also apparent in a number of submissions, with people noting the potential health, wellbeing, ecosystem and tourism benefits from action on climate change. This can represent a powerful communication tool for garnering buy-in and acceptance in the future.

We compared the submissions with the text of the papers prepared by the expert speakers who addressed the Assembly. Regression analysis revealed some differences in submitter types. This included a tendency for individuals to draw on climate justice arguments more than experts; for groups and non-governmental organisations to focus more on community engagement; for experts to place greater emphasis on national policy measures; and for individual female submitters to speak more about waste management than individual male submitters.

Meanwhile, the qualitative analysis of 10% of the public submissions revealed important findings related to their purpose, the presence of climate science denial, responsibility attributions and the scale of climate action most relevant to this engaged

public (summarised in Figure 5.3). First, in terms of the purpose of submissions, the analysis revealed a strong call to action (63% of submissions) as opposed to negative connotations, including desires to complain or merely criticise inaction. Meanwhile, just 3% of the submissions included the presence of sceptical content. This echoes the reported global consensus on climate change whereby 97% of experts are repeatedly found to agree that climate change is real and caused by humans (Cook *et al.*, 2016).

Finally, identifying which stakeholders, and at what scale, are viewed as being responsible for responding to climate change in the submissions has implications for progressing climate action from a governance perspective, as well as when considering who might be a trusted communicator. The qualitative analysis revealed a dominance of responsibility attributions to government, while the power of the national framing held most relevance from a scalar perspective (see Figure 5.3). Government was largely seen as holding the levers, sticks and carrots that citizens need to live more sustainable lives. Similarly, contradicting some of the climate change communications literature that attributes effectiveness to communications that harness local impacts (e.g. Dunlap, 2008), it is

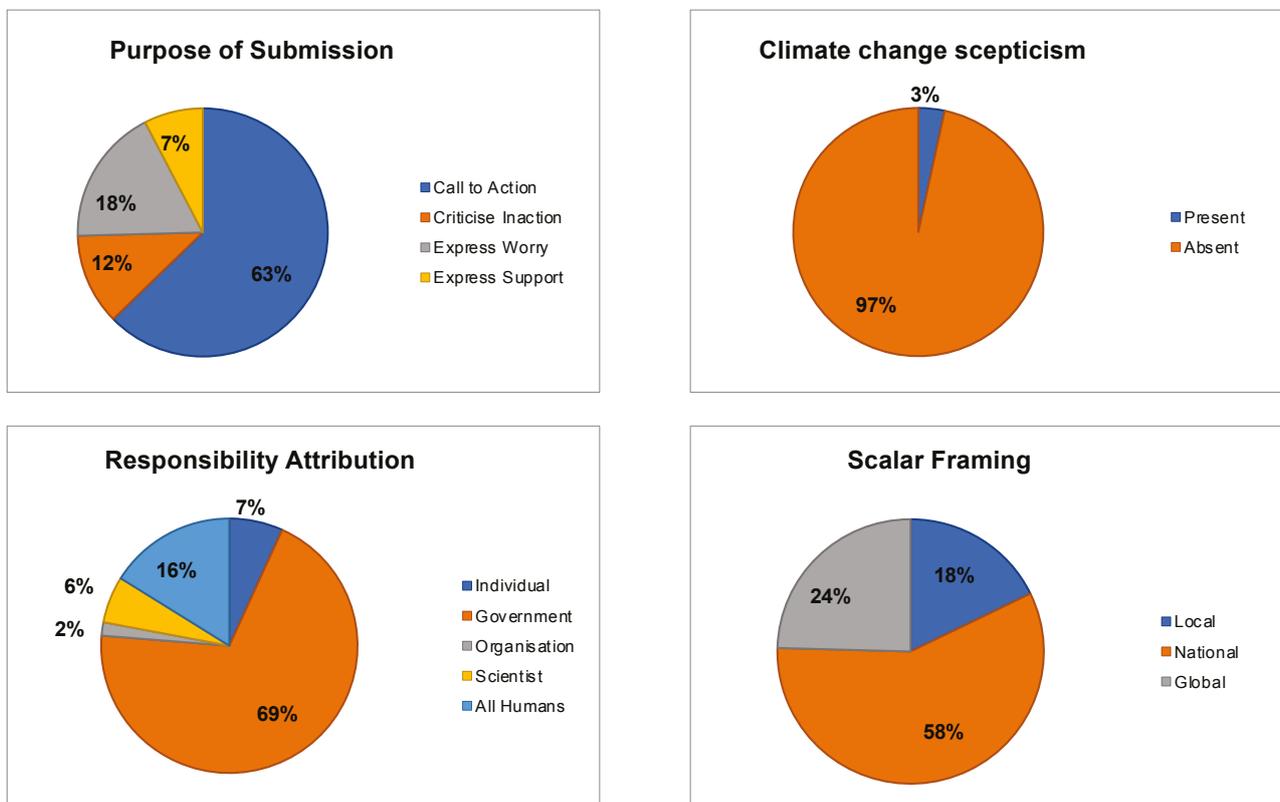


Figure 5.3. Headline results from the qualitative analysis of written submissions on climate change.

noteworthy that submitters referenced those suffering globally. A consciousness that carbon-intensive actions in Ireland (as well as policy inaction) impacts on populations worldwide was obvious. Submitters further stated that often these impacts are felt by those who can least afford to adapt and who have also contributed the least to the causes of the problem. This introduced a significant climate justice element to the public submissions (Schlosberg and Collins, 2014).

5.1.3 Implications

The public submissions utilised in the Irish Citizens' Assembly represent a distinctive form of public engagement. This process provided already engaged "midi-publics" (somewhere between the 99 members of the mini-public and the wider societal maxi-public) with a platform to voice their concerns, propose solutions and feel part of the policy process. However, questions remain over how the submissions were used by the mini-public partaking in the Citizens' Assembly. Members of the Assembly were invited to view them in their own time, and consideration could be given to including them in a more structured manner as part of the expert presentations format.

The potential of public submissions to enhance environmental literacy is important. Their results hold relevance for improving future climate change communication, education and engagement strategies. The content analysis reveals the topics of concern for engaged citizens, desirable frames and associated responsibility attributions. Leveraging the mindset of the midi-public for future engagement holds promise to connect more accurately with the local community position compared with developing strategies solely based on expert or civil service input. Further, these engaged submitters undoubtedly represent much-needed sustainability champions and gatekeepers to communities to raise environmental literacy protocols and enact solutions.

5.2 Public Focus Groups

Two public focus groups were held to inform the development of deliberation and communication guidelines for the public engagement resource promised as part of the project deliverables. The first of these groups targeted previous members of the 2017 Citizens Assembly on climate change, as publics who took part in the deliberations and who thus may have

specific recommendations for the deliberative process and/or rolling this process out at other scales. The second group targeted a business-oriented community organisation that had not participated in the Citizens' Assembly. This latter group did not necessarily have experience with deliberative processes, or indeed the topic of climate change. It was thus envisaged to be better placed to probe aspects around wider climate crisis communications. Moreover, as a group of business people, we hypothesised that they may constitute a cohort of the population with relatively high per-capita GHG emissions.

5.2.1 Methods

Eighteen people were engaged in the second phase of the Citizens' Climate research process. The first focus group was held on 15 June 2019 and engaged 10 previous members of the Citizens' Assembly (FG1). The second was held on 29 June 2019 and utilised Rotary Club Ireland as a gatekeeper, leveraging eight of its members with a mix of gender, age and geographical spread (FG2). Although neither of these groups is representative of the wider population, the groups provide an important snapshot of public opinion at a particular time, place and context.

Both focus groups followed semi-structured question schedules to allow for some consistency in data collection but enough flexibility to tap into the perceived proficiency of each grouping (related to deliberations and communications, respectively). Both followed an hourglass structure. This allowed both to start with broad questioning around Irish public engagement in climate change. This was followed by more specific questioning relating to participant experiences (FG1) and perceptions (FG2) of the Citizens' Assembly. Finally, both groups closed by considering the opportunities and challenges of using deliberation as a mode of public engagement (FG1), as well as the appropriate types of communications and community channels required for success (FG2). Activities were also conducted in both focus groups to assist with data collection, as detailed in the following section.

5.2.2 Results

Deliberative democracy literature often analyses democratic innovations according to three distinct elements: input, throughput and output legitimacy

(Schmidt, 2012; Bekkers *et al.*, 2016). Citizens' Assembly participants were questioned according to these elements in the focus group discussion. This included (1) their perceptions of the recruitment process and citizen make-up at the Assembly (input), (2) the format, process and timing of the event, including the use of expert speakers and public submissions (throughput) and (3) the relevance, impact and uptake of their recommendations (output). Although high levels of satisfaction were expressed with the Citizens' Assembly process, it was also obvious that the group desired to provide lessons and improve future deliberations.

Input legitimacy

The participant selection process used in the Citizens' Assembly was deemed suitable by the majority of FG1 participants. For many, the selection was deemed to be representative and in keeping with the stratified nature of the Irish population. Several reported feeling that they were conversing with diverse individuals and that varying viewpoints were represented and challenged. A minority of the group perceived that more citizens should have been included to enhance voting attendance and/or that profiles were skewed in particular geographical directions, including urban areas. For some participants, this limited discussion of certain topics, such as rural solutions to climate change, but others were satisfied that the spread of participants was representative of the Irish electorate. Overall, the enthusiasm and engagement of the final selection of citizens was deemed commendable by the group and led to a very positive experience of the Assembly. One lesson arising from this is that greater effort could be undertaken to communicate the methodology behind selection to mitigate accusations of bias.

Throughput legitimacy

There was a high level of satisfaction with the format of the Citizens' Assembly among FG1 participants. They specifically praised the organisation of the roundtable discussions, the success and performance of an effective Secretariat and chairperson and the significant learning they experienced by participating. They also welcomed the presentation of factual information, along with strong governing rules that ensured fairness, civility and equality in participation.

In general, the group praised the range of speakers who addressed the Assembly, with particular appeal associated with the international experts who could speak of climate action successes in their own countries. They expressed a desire to have been given more information and an opportunity to deliberate on the costs of proposed climate solutions to enable the development of more realistic recommendations. They also deemed the overall time dedicated to climate change (two weekends) to be too short given the complexity of the topic.

Moreover, they considered the wide framing of the question "How to make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change" to be somewhat unhelpful. For example, many FG1 participants felt that it would have been more useful to delve into specific topics such as carbon tax, free public transport or reducing the dairy herd. More focused topics such as these may have been more manageable in the short time available and could have led to more meaningful recommendations according to these participants. A key FG1 finding thus revolved around the idea that citizens' assemblies are better suited for more divisive and binary topics, as experienced with the Eighth Amendment topic.

Output legitimacy

Finally, FG1 participants were questioned regarding the relevance of the recommendations on climate change that emerged from the Assembly, as well as their perceptions of their uptake in policy processes. Participants were asked as a group to rank the 13 recommendations and reported finding it difficult to do so. They viewed all of the recommendations as important.

The results nevertheless revealed a strong emphasis on top-down direction and climate leadership from government. This reflected wider discussions in the focus group in which participants emphasised that it is not just the public who need to be better engaged in the climate crisis – politicians also need to be convinced of the importance and urgency of climate action. FG1 participants unequivocally stated that required climate actions extend beyond their 13 recommendations and that basing Irish policy solely on their recommendations would be inappropriate. Participants stressed that they were not experts and suggested that experts and climate scientists, instead of citizens, could be gathered together for

two or three weekends to deliberate and decide on appropriate pathways.

When questioned on the perceived impact of the Citizens' Assembly's recommendations on climate change, FG1 participants were not aware of the JOCCA, which was established to take them forward in the policy process. This signalled a need for better feedback to citizens following conclusion of the Assembly. The FG1 participants had huge praise for the communication ability of the chairperson and Secretariat throughout the Assembly process. The fact that these structures had been disbanded by the time the JOCCA was established was noted as detrimental to potential feedback processes.

Participants were also asked to discuss and rate the advantages and disadvantages of deliberation. The results of this exercise are presented in Figure 5.4; however, as stressed by one FG1 member, "every point is valid" (Citizens' Assembly member 10). This is important for the interpretation of the results below.

In prompted discussions around the Citizens' Assembly in FG2, the most common themes to emerge included (1) positive perceptions for enacting change around the Eighth Amendment topic, (2) scepticism around the motives and impact of the Assembly for other topics and (3) desires to expand the selection of expert speakers to include media, or even celebrity, communicators.

Unprompted referrals to the Assembly deliberations on the climate change topic were minimal in FG2,

indicating a general lack of awareness. One participant stated that they had listened to the expert presentations to the Citizens' Assembly on the climate change topic at the time, but others expressed concern that the motivation behind the Citizens' Assembly was to "get the politicians off the hot seat" (participant 8) regarding the abortion topic. Some members of FG2 questioned the impact of the Assembly as something beyond a talking shop for the 99 citizens involved. They spoke of their desire for increased engagement of the Assembly with the wider public, as well as their aspirations for the recommendations to create action. Government refusal to stop peat burning was noted by participants in the light of the Assembly's recommendation on this issue.³ Rather than government heeding the Citizens' Assembly, this topic was believed to be hampered by politicians' unwillingness to face the problem head on.

In terms of the expert communications, participants in FG2 expressed a desire for the inclusion of more mainstream communicators in future deliberative forums along with scientific experts. In particular, participants mentioned the influence of a number of media figures in the environmental space that they would desire to see included, such as David Attenborough or, in an Irish context, Duncan Stewart. FG2 participants were also shown extracts from two of the expert presentations to the Citizens' Assembly on the climate change topic and were asked to rate their communication styles. Headline feedback from FG2 included:

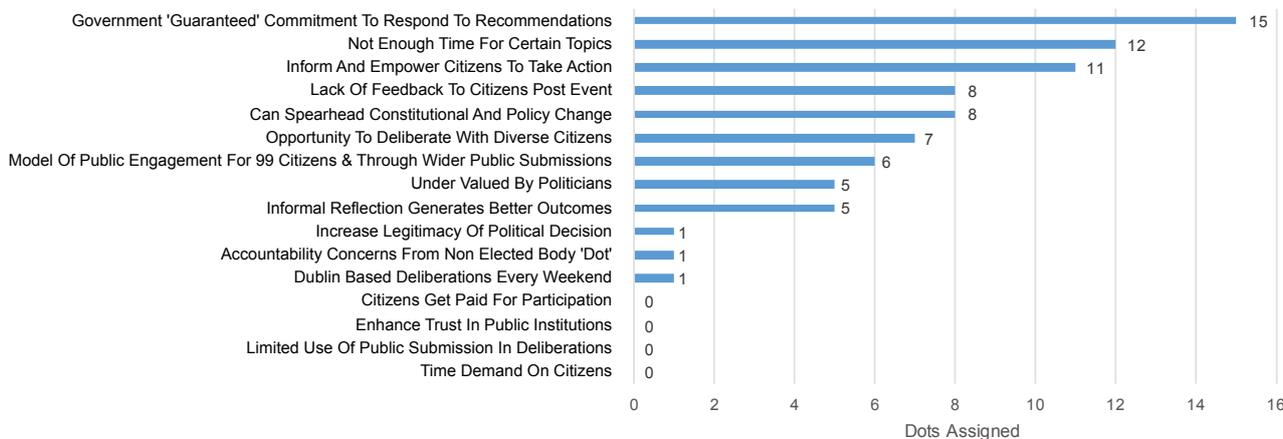


Figure 5.4. Pros and cons of deliberation: FG1 prioritisation results.

³ This focus group was conducted prior to the decision of the ESB (Electricity Supply Board) in November 2019 to close its peat-burning power stations in Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly, and Lanesboro, Co. Longford.

- Keep it simple: reduce the amount of content and detail and the complexity of the language.
- Keep it local: communicate tangible, relevant impacts and reach out to community groups as gatekeepers to spread the climate message.
- Powerful imagery: impactful images emanate from emotive contexts (e.g. a polar bear on ice) and relatable contexts (e.g. images of waste at Electric Picnic). Do not over-rely on imagery to change behaviour, as cause and effect can be difficult to trace.
- Non-human frames matter too: the impact of climate change on biodiversity loss, including on bees, coral reefs and fish stocks, is an important framing. Moving away from cost-orientated framings was also seen as important.
- Provide solutions: focus on actions that individuals can take to harness the goodwill of those already engaged.
- Facts tell, stories sell: include more personal stories in future deliberation processes. Intergenerational justice stories are appealing, with praise given to the youth climate strikes and concerns for the impact that climate inaction will have on children's future.
- Structure around purpose: decide on the aim of the communication and structure accordingly. Provide an overview outline and three to four key take-home messages.
- Passionate tone: in oral communications, adopt a lively and passionate tone. Connect with the audience through eye contact, open body language, humour and intonation.
- Watch your speed: speakers were perceived to chase through their content in a bid to communicate everything that they know. Instead, focus on three key messages and slow the pace of delivery to ensure that the messages are understood.

5.2.3 Implications

First, it is important to acknowledge the subjective nature of climate communications appeal. What works for one person will not work for another. One size cannot fit all when it comes to creating stimulating and impactful environmental communications. However, the principles outlined by the FG2 members are useful to guide environmental communications, including for those not necessarily engaged in the topic.

Nevertheless, although communication campaigns were deemed a necessary part of public engagement on the climate crisis, three caveats to this communications dominance emerged: (1) tracing communications impact on behaviour is hard, (2) other supports are required for holistic climate action and (3) there is potential for greater public engagement through actionable projects.

Behaviour change is challenging and complex. Examples were given in FG2 whereby seemingly impactful imagery failed to make a change, values did not translate to action and modern comfort and convenience continue to trump environmental concern, even among the already environmentally engaged. It is clear that communications alone or enhanced environmental literacy alone will not create the necessary sustainability transformations required. As articulated by focus group participants, large-scale changes in societal rules, norms and infrastructure are also required to enable sustainable lifestyles. This is in keeping with the social practice approach outlined in Chapter 2 (Shove, 2010; Hargreaves, 2011; Davies *et al.*, 2014a). Addressing value–action gaps to ensure that people behave in a manner that is in tune with their new-found environmental literacy is essential. Effective communications must thus be accompanied by appropriate policy (e.g. regulation, incentives, grants and taxation) and infrastructural and socio-cultural supports for truly transformative change (Davies *et al.*, 2014a). Engaging and educating public sector officials and politicians will thus be as important as engaging publics to achieve necessary top-down action. A non-linear approach is required that moves engagement and communication efforts into a coherent, multi-dialogical and action-orientated conversation. Therefore, the final lesson from both focus groups for public engagement on climate change relates to a need for coherent and consistent leadership from government.

Preventing resistance to change is required for successful public engagement, and something that may be aided further by enhanced opportunities for citizen deliberation. This not only will engage publics but also can demonstrate to politicians that support for climate action exists. Overall, there was strong consensus in FG1 that the model of the Citizens' Assembly can and should be continued and rolled out for other topics and across local areas. However, participants were clear on two elements in this regard.

First, citizens’ assemblies should not be used for all policy questions; other forms of public engagement should also be used. Second, the Citizens’ Assembly of 2016–2018 was not flawless and lessons must be taken from it in terms of what to keep and what to change. Table 5.1 summarises these lessons and represents a valuable resource for those considering undertaking citizens’ assemblies in the future, whether across different topic areas or in other jurisdictions.

5.3 Citizens’ Climate Policy Workshop

Through the first two phases of the Citizens’ Climate project, the research team examined the contexts in which deliberation can contribute to enhancing public engagement on the climate crisis and drew lessons from the 2017 Assembly to improve this process. A draft public engagement resource was developed, detailing guidelines for conducting citizens’ assemblies when they are appropriate, as well as guidelines for how to communicate the climate crisis both in the context of deliberative forums and more generally.

There was a need to review and test the draft guidelines with the end-users of the resource – the policymakers operating across government charged with engaging the Irish public in climate governance. A workshop for policymakers was held on 6 September

2019 in Dublin. Workshop participants were encouraged to assess and provide feedback on the draft resource that was presented at the event by the Citizens’ Climate research team.

Interest in the workshop from the policy community was significant. In total, 46 policymakers attended the workshop, divided into six tables to enable breakout activities. Senior-level officials were present from many government departments and headline agencies.

5.3.1 Methods

The workshop was opened by Dr Jonathan Derham of the EPA who provided an overview of the history of public engagement on the climate crisis to date. Professor Pat Brereton introduced the broader context for the workshop, including providing detail on the Irish Citizens’ Assembly and the Citizens’ Climate project. Dr Laura Devaney then presented an overview of the project findings, including in relation to phase I (content analysis) and phase II (focus groups), which combined to create the draft resource presented to participants on the day.

The policy workshop was then broken down into three interactive activities, each relating to a different part of the public engagement resource. Part I was on governance, part II was on deliberation and part III was on communication.

Table 5.1. Summary of lessons from the Citizens’ Assembly on climate change: focus group results

Lessons from the Irish Citizens’ Assembly on climate change	
Keep	Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-element format • Clear rules for maintaining civility • Level of support to members • Non-payment of honorarium • Communicative Secretariat and chairperson • Transparency through website and live streaming • Appreciation of complex policy trade-offs when exposed to different angles • Education and learning element for citizens • Non-binding recommendations to allow for further expert input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalise the process and make it a regular feature of democracy with rotating citizens • Use for more divisive and specific topics • Time allocated to topics and between them • Shorter assemblies with fewer topics • Feedback to citizens post event • Standing orders of citizen steering group to enable more input to speaker selection and visibility • Formalise what happens with regard to recommendations • Communicate recruitment methodology • Do not print all public submissions and present a summary at the event • Potential for more informal discussions • More international best practice and critique

5.3.2 Results

Activity 1

This activity introduced participants to the plethora of public engagement options available to them. A draft of a public engagement flow chart was introduced (part I of the resource) to show that a citizens' assembly is not appropriate for every policy question. Workshop attendees were invited to interview each other in pairs to discuss the role that public engagement on climate change plays in their work and how it could be strengthened. There was strong consensus on the importance of public engagement, especially recognising the need to deal with resistance to change, although some questioned how meaningful current public engagement initiatives are. Participants were also asked to identify with whom they needed to collaborate to progress public engagement on the climate crisis. They identified politicians, businesses, local decision-makers, media, local authorities, academia, citizens and youth groups. Finally, participants were asked to identify challenges in their efforts to pursue public engagement. The difficulty of getting a fair and balanced selection of citizens' views was noted, because often only those with strong – and often opposing – views participate in public consultations.

Activity 2

This activity aimed to sense-check, rank and prioritise a set of proposed guidelines for deliberation. Participants began by first discussing the draft guidelines in pairs, with results collected on A4 sheets and Post-it notes. Following the workshop, this feedback was collated and reviewed by the project team and the draft guidelines were amended accordingly (see the finalised guidelines in section 6.2 below). The ranking results revealed a lack of consensus among the table groupings on the most important elements of the guidelines. This diversity suggests some level of importance attributed to all of the guidelines proposed.

Activity 3

The final activity focused on how to undertake effective climate communications. It aimed to convey the importance of segmenting communications by audience type and to sense-check a set of draft guidelines developed by the project team (see section 6.3 for the final guidelines). Each group was assigned a different societal group from among the following: farmers, a retirement group, a parent and toddler group, schoolchildren, a low-income group and local business owners. The six groups examined the draft communications guidelines outlined in the resource, discussing how each recommendation would vary the communications approach deployed according to different target audiences. Different guidelines held more relevance for different groupings, resulting in a multitude of diverse and creative ideas for future climate communications.

5.3.3 Implications

The workshop was considered successful by the research team. It engaged 46 diverse and senior policymakers in considering the use of deliberation as a method to deepen public engagement on the climate crisis. All participants took away their draft resource, with several positive testimonies and requests for soft copies also received after the event. The feedback received from this user group was used to strengthen the public engagement resource for policymakers.

The feedback collected through the workshop pertained primarily to part II (deliberation guidelines) and part III (climate communication guidelines). Feedback regarding part II included that the guidelines should be focused on deliberative forums more broadly, rather than specifically citizens' assemblies. Feedback regarding part III included that a focus on action that individuals can undertake should be incorporated into the guidelines. Following the workshop, all feedback received was collated in a spreadsheet and the project team systematically considered each suggestion.

The finalised versions of the guidelines, summarising and combining all project learnings, are presented to conclude this report.

6 The Role of Deliberation in Enhancing Public Engagement

6.1 Governance for Public Engagement

Deliberation will not be suited to every topic or policy question related to the climate crisis. Follow the flow chart in Figure 6.1 to consider what form of public engagement is most appropriate according to where you are in the policy cycle, the purpose of your engagement and the time that you have available.

6.2 Guidelines for Deliberation

Our guidelines for conducting deliberative forums are as follows:

- *D – Distinct question.* Deliberation works best when there is a distinct policy question that needs to be answered. The question proposed needs to be specific enough to ensure a depth of conversation and tangible results. An overarching question can in turn be broken into sub-questions.
- *E – Engage early.* Where possible, citizens should be engaged early in the policy cycle. This is important so that participants do not feel that they are being asked to endorse a decision that has already been made. Citizen views should be used to help shape future decisions. Early participation will also help to mitigate accusations of Nimbyism at later policy implementation stages.
- *L – Leverage community champions.* Community groups such as Tidy Towns, GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) clubs or Rotary organisations operate across the country, with already significant community buy-in. Such groups can be incorporated into deliberative forums as speakers, or alternatively can be involved in the roll-out and delivery of the actions agreed by a deliberative forum.
- *I – Impact of deliberation.* A guaranteed response from government (local and/or national as appropriate) to the recommendations of a deliberative forum is needed. Procedures should be agreed in advance for taking forward citizen input. Generating legally binding decisions from citizens' recommendations would take this further, although this may not be appropriate or indeed desired by citizens in all cases.
- *B – Boost diversity.* The inclusivity of deliberative forums should be promoted. This can be enhanced by providing supports for people who otherwise may be unable to participate, such as those with disabilities, parents with young children and those with financial limitations. Supports in terms of quality food, accommodation, travel, childcare and accompanying aides should be provided to participants where feasible.
- *E – Engagement as a process.* Citizen engagement should be considered not as a one-off event but rather, where possible, as a continuous learning and feedback process for both politicians and citizens. Effective follow-up communications are crucial to notify participants of the progress of their recommendations. This will help to ensure legitimacy for citizens and accountability for politicians to utilise results.
- *R – Responsive format.* The specific format of a deliberative forum should take account of the stage in the policy cycle, the nature of the topic to be discussed and the amount of time and resources available. The implementation of agreed rules is important in ensuring respectful debates and non-repetitive, inclusive discussions. Where resources permit, consideration should be given to involvement of professional facilitators.
- *A – Allow time.* Participants in a deliberative forum must be allowed sufficient time to read and digest expert material in advance of the event. Agreed deadlines are essential among all those involved. The time allocated to topics must be sufficient, but account should also be taken of the limited time available to participating citizens.
- *T – Trusted speakers.* The selection of expert speakers has a significant impact on the quality of debate, citizen learning and the outcomes of deliberation. Ensuring a balanced and transparent selection of speakers is key. Personal testimonials should be included alongside

scientific presentations and use of international best practice. Media presenters or celebrities engaged in environmental programming may boost impact.

- *E – Ensure reflective discussion.* Reflective discussion is a core component of the deliberative

process. Participating citizens need to not only receive information but also be provided with the time and space to reflect on and discuss it with their fellow citizens, including those holding differing opinions. Respectful engagement, dialogue and listening is crucial.

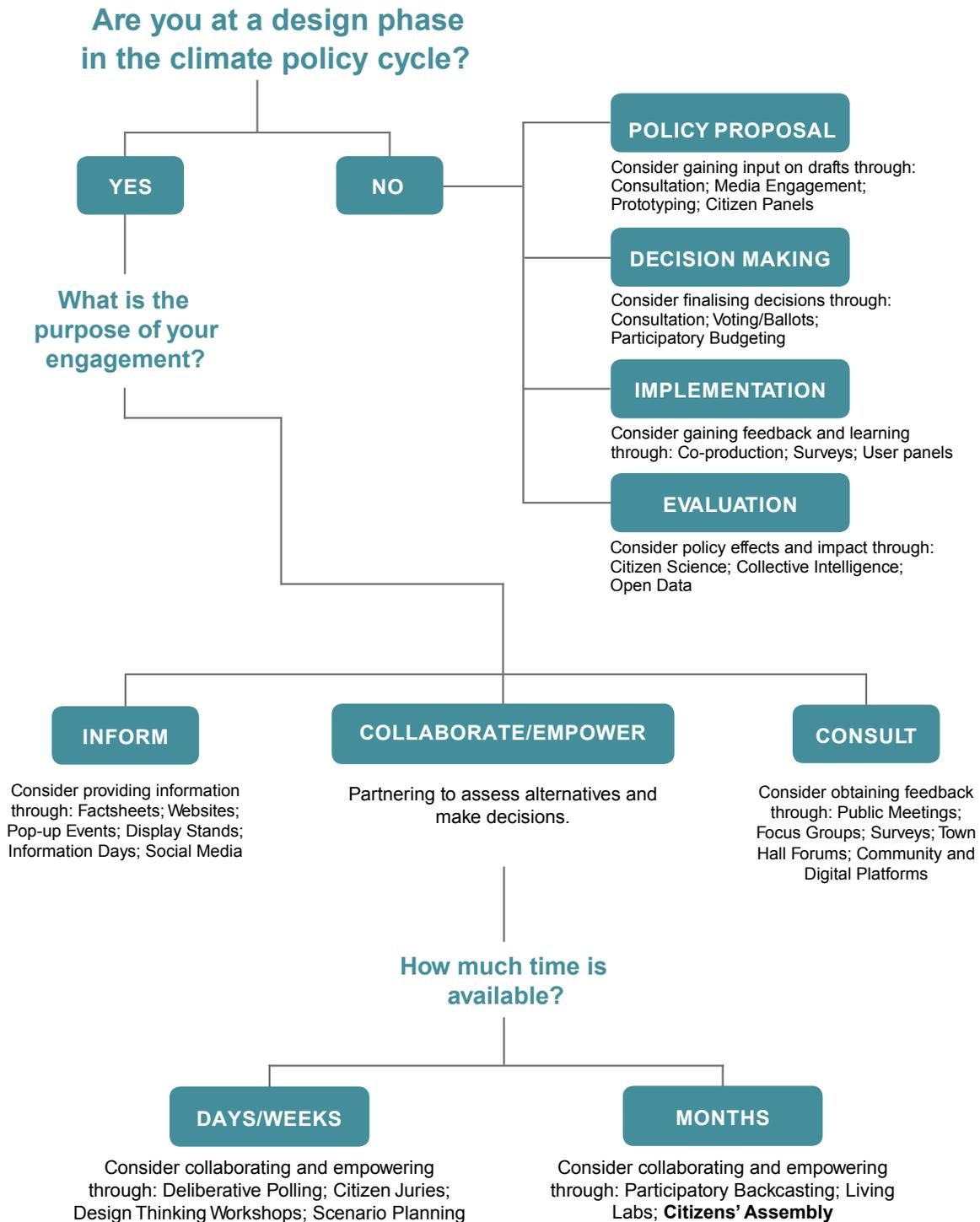


Figure 6.1. The policy cycle flow chart.

6.3 Guidelines for Communication

Our recommendations for effective climate communications are as follows:

- *E – Everyday language.* Use simple, persuasive and accessible language. Avoid jargon and preaching. Use a limited number of relevant key factual statements. Home in on three key messages per communication to avoid getting lost in the detail. Do not talk about climate change only in the future as this can take away from the urgency of the problem. Action is needed now and this conversation must be encouraged in everyday conversation.
- *N – Noteworthy impacts.* Communicate about locally relevant, tangible and observable climate impacts (e.g. local flooding, drought, fodder crisis). Enable people to identify with an often abstract concept through stories about real people. Adapt examples to the specific context: geography, sector or organisation. Global impacts, however, are just as crucial to connect with a sense of justice and moral duty. Where possible, avoid one-dimensional financial cost framings; instead, try to focus on human and non-human impacts of inaction.
- *G – Get creative.* Be imaginative in the delivery of communications. Combine expert presentations with interactive videos, flip charts, games, etc. Mix formal and informal approaches. Imagery can also be powerful in climate crisis communications, including showcasing real people, relatable contexts and emotionally powerful content. Protest imagery should be balanced with positive imagery. Consider using poetry, music and storytelling for impact, and humour when appropriate.
- *A – Action.* Communication and citizen engagement on the climate crisis should be action-oriented. There should be a clear vision of how the communication intends to empower citizens to make positive changes in their lives and communities. Meet people where they are rather than expecting them to come to you. Support systems should be made available including, where feasible, access to funding, mentoring, tools for establishing community actions, and dialogue and educational resources.
- *G – Good news.* Focus on solutions. Show people what they can do and empower communities to have a meaningful role. Balanced optimism is required that identifies the problems, illustrates ways to overcome them and addresses any barriers to change that citizens face. Lead with the opportunity to create more vibrant and resilient climate-positive communities. Next, clarify the climate challenge that the costs of inaction are adding to. Conclude with ideas that inspire citizens to create positive change.
- *E – Emotional stories.* Tell emotional and personal stories. Tangible stories of real people affected by the climate crisis (e.g. physically, emotionally, financially) are encouraged, as are stories about how families and communities are benefiting from climate action. More engaged discussion is likely to occur when the conversation includes considerations of distributional, social and intergenerational justice (e.g. the impact on our children's futures), as well as the impact on the economy and environment.
- *S – Shared values.* Listen and ensure two-way dialogue to explore your audiences' needs and values first. Find similarities between the diversity of citizens requiring engagement. Root explorations of the climate crisis in participants' common and personal values. Ask what people care about, what they dislike and what makes them proud. Find out what matters to your audiences and resonate with them on that basis. Engage strategies of social norming and move away from shaming for effective climate action.

7 Conclusion

Amid increasing pressure for climate action worldwide, processes of deliberative democracy are being called on to address public policy complexities, include citizens in decision-making and enhance governance processes. The Irish Citizens' Assembly has been lauded internationally. Yet, there was a dearth of analysis of its form, structure, impact and content, particularly in the climate change context. The Citizens' Climate project addressed this gap.

Deliberative democracy is particularly important in the case of climate policy that requires buy-in and public support for action. Nonetheless, deliberation should not be considered a panacea for climate change policymaking. Indeed, the jury is still out in the Irish case. The true test of whether the Citizens' Assembly has successfully contributed to strengthening Ireland's response to climate change will be seen in the uptake and implementation of the 13 recommendations in policy, and ultimately in Ireland's GHG emissions trajectory in the years to come.

It is important to note that deliberation represents only one potential form of public engagement. A variety of other mechanisms are available according to the time and resources available, the policy phase, the purpose and the topic in question. In the right context, however, deliberative forums, including but not limited to citizens' assemblies, can facilitate societal buy-in for tough policy decisions by including the concerns of citizens in policymaking and increasing the legitimacy of decisions and actions taken. Against this backdrop, the findings of this project ought to be helpful in informing the ongoing work of the NDCA, particularly with respect to how a deliberative approach could be integrated into its work.

Focusing on the Assembly's public submissions (phase I of the Citizens' Climate project) allowed for the identification of citizen-orientated climate concerns, stories, trends and solutions for use in future educational and engagement campaigns. Our findings offer important lessons for climate change communications. These include understanding the multi-layered perceptions of engaged publics on climate change, highlighting various communication devices and frames deployed, including diverse topics,

language, level of climate science denial, responsibility attributions and scale of relevance. Combined, these insights can create more effective and connected modes of persuasion to communicate the urgency of the climate crisis and enhance environmental literacy nationally.

The overall message from the public focus groups (phase II of the Citizens' Climate project) is that more citizens' assemblies are desired in the future, with rotating members, fewer topics, more time, and enhanced political and community engagement. To complement this bottom-up form of governance, clear political engagement and top-down leadership were deemed necessary. Top-down and bottom-up approaches must combine to tackle the urgency of the climate crisis, provide necessary policy coherence and ensure meaningful contributions from citizens when they dedicate their time to providing solutions. Ensuring that recommendations from a citizens' assembly are incorporated into the policy process in an appropriate manner, including through the use of dedicated parliamentary committees, is vital for output legitimacy. Our focus groups also showed a desire among participants that their recommendations be complemented by further expertise, cost assessments and evidence-based input so as not to over-emphasise citizens' contributions or rely solely on their output.

When considering the potential roll-out of citizens' assemblies, it is important to pay close attention to who is selected to participate (input), how the process operates (throughput) and what the recommendations are used for (output). Input legitimacy is crucial to ensure trust in the process among the wider maxi-public. Throughput legitimacy is essential to satisfy the demands of complex topics, engage the best science and communicators and develop meaningful results. Output legitimacy is crucial to ensure the satisfaction of those who dedicated time to take part. Combined, these legitimacy considerations can enhance citizen engagement, buy-in and bottom-up contributions to the governance of complex topics, climate change included.

Relying solely on citizens' assemblies for change would be premature, given that they may become

prohibitive with regard to costs and the resources and human capital available for their extensive execution. Taking into account the costs and behaviour change often involved for ordinary citizens, other forms of citizen-relevant education and outreach approaches are also necessary, creating new forms of environmental citizenship, including the role of mass media and tailored education campaigns. Such initiatives ought to be integrated into the work of the NDCA. In particular, using the climate communication recommendations set out in this research project and tested in our policy workshop showcases the potential application of the results of the Citizens' Climate project to the NDCA, as well as to other wider contexts, beyond citizens' assembly processes. It is important to remain cognisant of the technical, infrastructural, regulatory, governance and socio-cultural supports necessary to complement these education and communication campaigns.

Similarly, the recommendations for deliberation finalised through our policy workshop showcase the

potential for using the methodology of deliberation in the work of the NDCA, as well as in other engagement and policy contexts. Indeed, several workshop participants recognised that these guidelines could be employed across different contexts and not just as part of a citizens' assembly. We concur with this assessment. We see significant potential for the integration of deliberative approaches within the work of the NDCA. Part I of our resource for policymakers, published alongside this report and available online (<https://bit.ly/2SZZCmG>), identifies the circumstances under which citizens' assemblies ought to be deployed and when other forms of engagement are appropriate. Part II identifies key guidelines that could be used to shape deliberative approaches within the context of the NDCA, and part III sets out communications guidelines that will be of use to a broad array of policymakers. Our project resource can thus be interpreted and applied with a broadened context in mind, showcasing the potential to use deliberation in other situations and with other stakeholder groups.

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Abbreviations

EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GHG	Greenhouse gas
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JOCCA	Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action
NDCA	National Dialogue on Climate Action

AN GHNÍOMHAIREACHT UM CHAOMHNÚ COMHSHAOIL

Tá an Gníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil (GCC) freagrach as an gcomhshaoil a chaomhnú agus a fheabhsú mar shócmhainn luachmhar do mhuintir na hÉireann. Táimid tiomanta do dhaoine agus don chomhshaoil a chosaint ó éifeachtaí díobhálacha na radaíochta agus an truaillithe.

Is féidir obair na Gníomhaireachta a roinnt ina trí phríomhréimse:

Rialú: Déanaimid córais éifeachtacha rialaithe agus comhlionta comhshaoil a chur i bhfeidhm chun torthaí maithe comhshaoil a sholáthar agus chun díriú orthu siúd nach gcloíonn leis na córais sin.

Eolas: Soláthraimid sonraí, faisnéis agus measúnú comhshaoil atá ar ardchaighdeán, spriocdhírthe agus tráthúil chun bonn eolais a chur faoin gcinnteoireacht ar gach leibhéal.

Tacaíocht: Bimid ag saothrú i gcomhar le grúpaí eile chun tacú le comhshaoil atá glan, táirgiúil agus cosanta go maith, agus le hiompar a chuirfidh le comhshaoil inbhuanaithe.

Ár bhFreagrachtaí

Ceadúnú

Déanaimid na gníomhaíochtaí seo a leanas a rialú ionas nach ndéanann siad dochar do shláinte an phobail ná don chomhshaoil:

- saoráidí dramhaíola (*m.sh. láithreáin líonta talún, loisceoirí, stáisiúin aistriúcháin dramhaíola*);
- gníomhaíochtaí tionsclaíocha ar scála mór (*m.sh. déantúsaíocht cógaisíochta, déantúsaíocht stroighne, stáisiúin chumhachta*);
- an diantalmhaíocht (*m.sh. muca, éanlaith*);
- úsáid shrianta agus scaoileadh rialaithe Orgánach Géinmhodhnaithe (*OGM*);
- foinsí radaíochta ianúcháin (*m.sh. trealamh x-gha agus radaiteiripe, foinsí tionsclaíocha*);
- áiseanna móra stórála peitрил;
- scardadh dramhuisece;
- gníomhaíochtaí dumpála ar farraige.

Forfheidhmiú Náisiúnta i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaoil

- Clár náisiúnta iniúchtaí agus cigireachtaí a dhéanamh gach bliain ar shaoráidí a bhfuil ceadúnas ón nGníomhaireacht acu.
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar fhreagrachtaí cosanta comhshaoil na n-údarás áitiúil.
- Caighdeán an uisce óil, arna sholáthar ag soláthraithe uisce phoiblí, a mhaoirsiú.
- Obair le húdarás áitiúla agus le gníomhaireachtaí eile chun dul i ngleic le coireanna comhshaoil trí chomhordú a dhéanamh ar líonra forfheidhmiúcháin náisiúnta, trí dhírú ar chiontóirí, agus trí mhaoirsiú a dhéanamh ar leasúchán.
- Cur i bhfeidhm rialachán ar nós na Rialachán um Dhramhthrealamh Leictreach agus Leictreonach (DTLL), um Shrian ar Shubstaintí Guaiseacha agus na Rialachán um rialú ar shubstaintí a ídionn an ciseal ózóin.
- An dlí a chur orthu siúd a bhriseann dlí an chomhshaoil agus a dhéanann dochar don chomhshaoil.

Bainistíocht Uisce

- Monatóireacht agus tuairisciú a dhéanamh ar cháilíocht aibhneacha, lochanna, uisce idirchriosacha agus cósta na hÉireann, agus screamhuisec; leibhéal uisce agus sruthanna aibhneacha a thomhas.
- Comhordú náisiúnta agus maoirsiú a dhéanamh ar an gCreat-Treoir Uisce.
- Monatóireacht agus tuairisciú a dhéanamh ar Cháilíocht an Uisce Snámha.

Monatóireacht, Anailís agus Tuairisciú ar an gComhshaoil

- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar cháilíocht an aeir agus Treoir an AE maidir le hAer Glan don Eoraip (CAFÉ) a chur chun feidhme.
- Tuairisciú neamhspleách le cabhrú le cinnteoireacht an rialtais náisiúnta agus na n-údarás áitiúil (*m.sh. tuairisciú tréimhsiúil ar staid Chomhshaoil na hÉireann agus Tuarascálacha ar Tháscairí*).

Rialú Astaíochtaí na nGás Ceaptha Teasa in Éirinn

- Fardail agus réamh-mheastacháin na hÉireann maidir le gáis ceaptha teasa a ullmhú.
- An Treoir maidir le Trádáil Astaíochtaí a chur chun feidhme i gcomhar breis agus 100 de na táirgeoirí dé-ocsaíde carbóin is mó in Éirinn.

Taighde agus Forbairt Comhshaoil

- Taighde comhshaoil a chistiú chun brúnna a shainathint, bonn eolais a chur faoi bheartais, agus réitigh a sholáthar i réimsí na haeráide, an uisce agus na hinbhuanaitheachta.

Measúnacht Straitéiseach Timpeallachta

- Measúnacht a dhéanamh ar thionchar pleananna agus clár beartaithe ar an gcomhshaoil in Éirinn (*m.sh. mórfheananna forbartha*).

Cosaint Raideolaíoch

- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar leibhéal radaíochta, measúnacht a dhéanamh ar nochtadh mhuintir na hÉireann don radaíocht ianúcháin.
- Cabhrú le pleananna náisiúnta a fhorbairt le haghaidh éigeandálaí ag eascairt as tairmí núicléacha.
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar fhorbairtí thar lear a bhaineann le saoráidí núicléacha agus leis an tsábháilteacht raideolaíochta.
- Sainseirbhísí cosanta ar an radaíocht a sholáthar, nó maoirsiú a dhéanamh ar sholáthar na seirbhísí sin.

Treoir, Faisnéis Inrochtana agus Oideachas

- Comhairle agus treoir a chur ar fáil d'earnáil na tionsclaíochta agus don phobal maidir le hábhair a bhaineann le caomhnú an chomhshaoil agus leis an gcosaint raideolaíoch.
- Faisnéis thráthúil ar an gcomhshaoil ar a bhfuil fáil éasca a chur ar fáil chun rannpháirtíocht an phobail a spreagadh sa chinnteoireacht i ndáil leis an gcomhshaoil (*m.sh. Timpeall an Tí, léarscáileanna radóin*).
- Comhairle a chur ar fáil don Rialtas maidir le hábhair a bhaineann leis an tsábháilteacht raideolaíoch agus le cúrsaí práinnfhreagartha.
- Plean Náisiúnta Bainistíochta Dramhaíola Guaisí a fhorbairt chun dramhaíl ghuaiseach a chosaint agus a bhainistiú.

Múscailt Feasachta agus Athrú Iompraíochta

- Feasacht chomhshaoil níos fearr a ghiniúint agus dul i bhfeidhm ar athrú iompraíochta dearfach trí thacú le gnóthais, le pobail agus le teaghlaigh a bheith níos éifeachtúla ar acmhainní.
- Tástáil le haghaidh radóin a chur chun cinn i dtithe agus in ionaid oibre, agus gníomhartha leasúcháin a spreagadh nuair is gá.

Bainistíocht agus struchtúr na Gníomhaireachta um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Tá an ghníomhaíocht á bainistiú ag Bord Iáinimseartha, ar a bhfuil Ard-Stiúrthóir agus cúigear Stiúrthóirí. Déantar an obair ar fud cúig cinn d'Oifigí:

- An Oifig um Inmharthanacht Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Forfheidhmithe i leith cúrsaí Comhshaoil
- An Oifig um Fianaise is Measúnú
- Oifig um Chosaint Radaíochta agus Monatóireachta Comhshaoil
- An Oifig Cumarsáide agus Seirbhísí Corparáideacha

Tá Coiste Comhairleach ag an nGníomhaireacht le cabhrú léi. Tá dáréag comhaltáí air agus tagann siad le chéile go rialta le plé a dhéanamh ar ábhair inní agus le comhairle a chur ar an mBord.

Deepening Public Engagement on Climate Change: Lessons from the Citizens' Assembly



Authors: Laura Devaney, Diarmuid Torney,
Pat Brereton and Martha Coleman

Identifying Pressures

In May 2019, the Dáil declared a climate and biodiversity emergency. The Climate Action Plan, published in June 2019, acknowledged that “The window of opportunity to act is fast closing, but Ireland is way off course”. Successful climate action will require profound societal transformation. This will not be possible without citizen engagement at its core.

Informing Policy

Ireland’s Citizens’ Assembly was an exceptional experiment in democratic governance and engagement. Comprising 99 citizens, it afforded participants the time, space and structure to deliberate on complex public policy questions, including climate change. The Citizens’ Climate research project aimed to inform policy by drawing lessons from this experience on how and when deliberation can be used to engage with citizens on the climate crisis.

Developing Solutions

The Citizens’ Climate project developed guidelines for policymakers seeking to use deliberation to engage the public. These guidelines are structured around three questions: (1) “What form of public engagement is appropriate?”; (2) “If and when deliberation is appropriate, what rules should be followed?”; and (3) “How can the climate crisis best be communicated to diverse audiences?”