

WHERE: **Online**, with participation from different regions of Italy

WHAT: **Deliberative event**

WHEN: **18 April 2024**

# ITALY CITIZENS' DELIBERATIVE EVENT ON THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER

On **18 April 2024**, 63 citizens from different regions of Italy participated in an online deliberative event organised by ASviS (Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development) as part of the research project REAL DEAL. The process was supported by SCS Consulting, building on its experience with stakeholder engagement and management in decision-making processes. SCS helped identify solutions in both the recruitment and knowledge preparation phases, as well as during the event, providing facilitators for the working groups and plenary sessions.

The topic of the event was the national policy options within the framework of the European Semester. The process was informed by a previous deliberative event on the same topic – the European Policy Lab, held in Denmark in December 2023. Prior to the deliberative event on 18 April 2024, a knowledge input session was held on 9 April, including an open debate with all participants.



**VOUOI CONTRIBUIRE ATTIVAMENTE  
ALLE SCELTE POLITICHE NAZIONALI?**

**Dì la tua: partecipa  
all'assemblea deliberativa!**

Candidati QUI



Scadenza 29 marzo

## BEFORE THE EVENT: PREPARATION

In order to maximise inclusiveness and enable citizens from different regions of Italy to take part, it was decided to conduct the event entirely online.

The rationale was that, although in-person events foster more meaningful relationships, online formats lower participation barriers such as time constraints, particularly for those in remote regions with poor transport connections or facing significant work-life balance challenges.

TOPIC FRAMING

The topic for the event was developed through analysis of the [European Semester](#) and its [Annual Sustainable Growth Survey](#) (ASGS), as a process subsequent to the European Policy Lab in Denmark that also focused on the European Semester. The ASGS puts forward the macro-economic coordination of EU Member States, presenting the economic and social priorities for EU with the aim of placing sustainability and social inclusion at the centre of economic policymaking. The event was intended to discuss how to implement the analysis and proposals in Italy.

RECRUITMENT

The event organisers sought to recruit approximately 100 participants and launched a public Call to Action (CtA) to allow interested citizens to apply. The CtA ran for 17 days and was disseminated via ASviS social channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X), in two weekly newsletters and via email communication to ASviS' civil society member organisations and its wider network.

Overall, 50,000 people were reached via ASviS social media channels, with almost 5,000 clicks on the in-depth link on the ASviS website. The CtA included the date of the event, enabling citizens to plan their commitments in advance. At the close of the application window, 125 citizens had expressed interest in participating and it was decided to include all of them. Ultimately, 63 attended the event, which means there was a drop-out rate of 50%. Nevertheless, the 63 participants represented 16 of the 20 regions of Italy, with a rather balanced gender distribution of 60% female and 40% male.

The demographic breakdown by age saw a prevalence of participants in the two age groups 30–44 years (33%) and 45–64 years (40%); the under-30 and over-65 age groups combined accounted for 20% of participants. In terms of educational background, 89% of participants had at least a three-year degree and the remaining 11% had a second degree. Participants' employment status showed 59% employees (38% clerical, 19% managerial, 2% executive), 24% freelancers, 8% each were students or pensioners, and 2% were unemployed (see graph).

KNOWLEDGE PREPARATION

Participants received a 'welcome kit' prior to the event, including an ASviS official video course on the UN SDGs, ASviS reports on SDGs, and related (EU) policies. The welcome kit was shared with all participants via email and presented by an ASviS expert during a webinar 10 days before the event.

The focus of the webinar was on presenting the mission of the REAL DEAL project, the rationale of the citizen deliberation, the future of the European Semester, the 'country-specific recommendations' (CSRs) for Italy, and ASviS's proposals for this as a suggested basis for the citizens' debate.

Dati dei partecipanti

A fronte delle 125 candidature raccolte, i partecipanti **effettivamente presenti all'Assemblea** Deliberativa del 18 aprile sono stati **63**:

| GENERE                    |                             | 63 Partecipanti<br> | ETÀ                  |                       |                      |              |             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Uomo                      | Donna                       |  | 18-29 anni           | 30-44 anni            | 45-64 anni           | Over 65 anni |             |
| 25<br>(40%)               | 38<br>(60%)                 |  | 6<br>(10%)           | 21<br>(33%)           | 30<br>(48%)          | 6<br>(10%)   |             |
| ISTRUZIONE                |                             |  |                      |                       |                      |              |             |
| Istruzione di primo grado | Istruzione di secondo grado | Laurea triennale   | Laurea specialistica | Master                | Dottorato di ricerca |              |             |
| 0<br>(0%)                 | 7<br>(11%)                  | 7<br>(11%)   | 26<br>(41%)          | 15<br>(24%)           | 8<br>(13%)           |              |             |
| PROFESSIONE               |                             |  |                      |                       |                      |              |             |
| Operaio                   | Impiegato                   | Manager/<br>Quadro   | Dirigente            | Libero professionista | Studente             | Pensionato   | Disoccupato |
| 0<br>(0%)                 | 24<br>(38%)                 | 12<br>(19%)  | 1<br>(2%)            | 15<br>(24%)           | 5<br>(8%)            | 5<br>(8%)    | 1<br>(2%)   |

Distribuzione geografica dei partecipanti



Regional origin, demographics and profession of participants:  
Italian online deliberative event on the European Semester, April 2024

The participants could then ask questions and share their initial ideas. A facilitator ensured fair participation by all participants in the debate. The webinar was recorded and made available to participants who did not watch it live. Approximately half of the 125 originally registered participants attended the live session.

In the 10-day period between the webinar and the deliberative event, a survey was launched to gather initial ideas for discussion at the event for the European Semester and the CSRs for Italy.

## DURING THE EVENT

### FACILITATION AND INTERACTION

The online deliberative event was held on 18 April 2024 from 15.30 to 18.30 hr, with 63 participants (see above). The three-hour event was divided into three phases:

#### Phase 1: Introduction

The event began with an introductory briefing addressed to all participants, conducted by the main SCS facilitator and ASviS main expert. The facilitator explained the methodology of deliberation, interaction, and final voting. At the end of this first phase, the participants were automatically sorted into thematic working groups.

#### Phase 2: Working Group (WG) activities in drafting proposals

- The participants were divided into six WGs (averaging 10–11 people per group) to give participants enough time for a meaningful dialogue.
- The WGs were organised on the basis of the pillars of the European Semester with the topics: energy transition, environmental protection, productivity, skills and employment, social rights, and macro-economic stability. The WGs received an initial introduction to the topic by an ASviS expert, and the facilitator illustrated the methods of engagement, discussion, and voting on the proposals. On the basis of the EU's CSRs for Italy, the ASviS proposals, citizens' earlier proposals from the webinar and survey, and the in-depth survey, the participants intervened and debated in order to integrate existing proposals or suggest new ones.
- During the debate, the ASviS expert was responsible for answering technical questions, while the facilitator summarised the discussion points in collaboration with the expert and compiled the final outputs.
- Finally, participants were asked to vote on each proposal identified during the discussion phase. Voting was conducted using the 'raise your hand' functionality of the Zoom platform. The aim was to select three proposals for each WG to be presented in the following plenary session.

#### Phase 3: Plenary session - Voting

- After discussing and elaborating proposals within the WGs, the participants were brought back to the plenary for a final vote on the proposals. Before the voting could commence, the facilitator explained the voting process:
  - Presentation of proposals;
  - Voting: To pass, a proposal must be approved by a majority vote (50% +1);
  - Presentation of the results.
- The three phases were replicated for each of the WG proposals, resulting in a total of six voting rounds and 18 proposals voted upon. All proposals were passed, with votes of 79–100%.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations developed in the deliberative event are presented in the Annex. The 18 proposals and the voting results are presented in an [article](#) and [all results with graphs here](#).

The proposals that received unanimous support concerned in particular:

- For **productivity** – Promote integration between institutions, communities, and businesses (SMEs) in the territories by identifying the roles of the various interlocutors in the decision-making processes, in order to enable a more effective path of change;
- For **budget stability** – Tax reform that ensures the principle of progressivity in fiscal policies and in the fight against tax evasion, including specific measures on the management of extra profits, investing in literacy on the subject (beginning in schools), and offering citizens channels to express satisfaction with the distribution of public spending.

## AFTER THE EVENT

### DOCUMENTATION AND FEEDBACK

The results of the event were shared on the [website](#) of the organiser ASviS and disseminated mainly in Italian through their social networks.

Participants were asked to complete a survey after the event. The majority of respondents were satisfied with the outcome of the event (average score of 3.87 out of 5) and considered the format suitable for including citizens in decision-making processes (4.00). They felt that everybody was treated equally (4.30) and given the chance to share their arguments or perspectives (3.78).

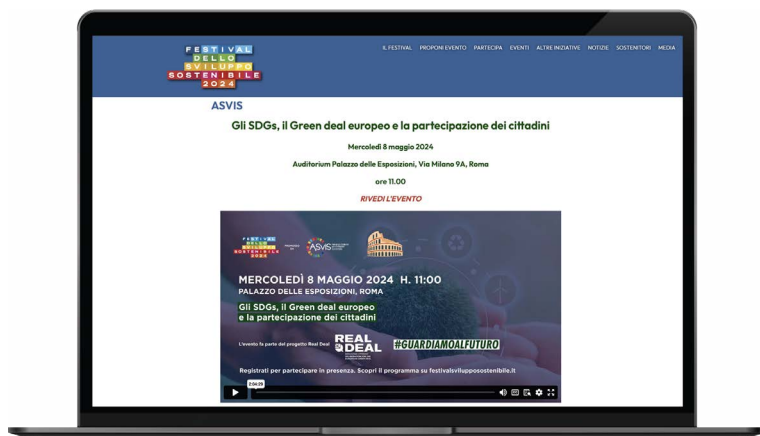
Many participants indicated that more time was needed for discussion; and some expressed preferences for an in-person event, as this allows for “more engagement and networks and partnerships”. Others expressed the idea of more structured and continuous involvement.

### FOLLOW-UP: JOINT EVENT DENMARK & ITALY

After the online deliberative event, five participants participated in a joint event with participants from the Danish European Policy Lab that was held in December 2023. The joint event was held in Rome on 7 May 2024. It served to discuss the proposals developed both in Denmark and Italy on policies related to the European Semester, and it also drafted the following proposals on governance including participation:

- EU funds and governance approaches to improve connections among European people horizontally and vertically, between and at national and local levels;
- Promote citizen participation at all levels: local, regional, national, and global;
- A new political framework to facilitate and promote citizens' ideas for new legislation.

The following day, on 8 May, the results of the participation process were discussed by a panel of EU experts and two participants from Denmark and Italy in a public event during the [Italian National Sustainable Development Festival](#), organised annually by ASviS.



Presentations of the Denmark & Italy deliberative events at the Italian Sustainable Development Festival, 8 May 2024

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In the REAL DEAL project, researchers and civil society organisations worked together on green transition and democracy. They conducted research on deliberative methods to find out what works best for involving citizens on the European Green Deal.



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

# THE CITIZENS' DELIBERATIVE EVENT ON THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER, ITALY

(May 2024)

(including the level of approval, as identified in a voting session)

### WG 1

#### ENERGY TRANSITION

- Adopt an Italian climate law defining sectoral targets, an appropriate governance system, and the establishment of a scientific committee to support choices. Promote a bottom-up approach (citizens, municipalities, regions) to collect best practices and achieve targets. Use social indicators/needs in the drafting of environmental laws. Independent governance promoting incentives and/or control systems. (93% approval)
- Accelerate all policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with benefits for air quality as well. Envisage a plan to reduce plastic production/consumption. Promote coherence in public procurement. (91% approval)
- Provide for measures to build an industrial supply chain to support the energy transition and to enhance the circular economy. Introduce digital product passports to other sectors. Promote the application of life-cycle assessment (with particular attention to the agri-food sector). Evaluate VAT reform according to, e.g., pollution. Standardise the concept of circular economy. (94% approval)

### WG 2

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- Soil law that pays attention to the quantitative and qualitative aspects of land use, including: Protection of traditional crops and historical land artefacts; extending the benefits of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) regardless of farmers' status; making urban green areas productive and providing integrated planning for better management of green areas, including through taxation and incentive systems; discouraging intensive livestock farming and encouraging food transition. (98% approval)
- Strengthen and make green culture transversal: Centrality within public administration (within planning); adoption of the EU's Joint Research Centre GreenComp framework as a bottom-up culture-building tool (in schools); promote climate pacts; stimulating research. (98% approval)



- Create coordination within authorities at the various levels of the public administration, making environmental development plans (regional planning) compulsory; adapt legislation where necessary. (87% approval)

### WG 3

#### PRODUCTIVITY

- Encourage integration between local authorities, communities, and enterprises (with a focus on SMEs): Identifying the roles of various stakeholders in the decision-making processes by acting on simplification and training of the various actors, thereby enabling more effective pathways for change by monitoring the progress of initiatives to recalibrate pathways; promote the facilitating role of local authorities. (100% approval)
- Disseminate digital education, transparency, and accessibility to public administration information by adapting communication tools to the target audiences in order to increase the participation of all in democratic life: from young people to the over-65s, to people with disabilities. (90% approval)
- Strengthen research and innovation through greater drive and incentives towards the implementation of measures to support the transition to, for example, Next Gen Material. (89% approval)

### WG 4

#### SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Reduce the vulnerabilities in the labour market of women, young people, and immigrants, including through a national youth strategy and an integrated and systemic plan to strengthen active policies on women, and combating precarious work. Enabling proposal vis-à-vis other priorities, as this would allow individuals to have generative power and harness the potential of all. (88% approval)
- Provide structural interventions aimed at launching wide-ranging policies for the creation of 'decent' jobs; reduction of precariousness, poor work, and undeclared work. (87% approval)
- Encourage collective bargaining; strengthen proximity welfare; develop family/work reconciliation and online working. Provide for governance choices that put workers, the environment, and the common good at the centre of decision-making processes and strategic choices, resulting in healthy and safe workplaces to increase workers' wellbeing and decrease accidents at work. (98% approval)

### WG 5

#### SOCIAL RIGHTS

- Right to health: Promote co-programming, co-planning actions in order to enhance the needs of civil society that can optimise resources and implement policies to finance and reorganise facilities on the territory in order to act effectively towards people's needs; Mitigate the impact of the climate crisis on health; Combat mental distress, addictions, and family and social violence; Integrate the right to health with the right to access to food and food security; Progressively relaunch public financing of the National Health System (NHS); Implement the reform of care for people with disabilities. (98% approval)
- Migrants' rights: Overcome the logic of emergency and promote a widespread system of reception that favours the social integration of immigrants, especially of unaccompanied foreign minors. Also by supporting access to education, training, and employment. (97% approval)
- Right to decent housing: Promote micro-scale policies to redesign disused spaces, consider the redistributive effects of allocation in the relevant social context, and protect people without housing. Guarantee constant allocations to rent-support funds; Consider housing services for citizens in situations of economic hardship as part of the Essential Levels of Services; Plan a certain, multi-year funding stream for the housing sector; Build public residences for students attending universities as part of the right to study; Pass a law to regulate the short-term rental sector. (97% approval)

## MACRO-ECONOMIC STABILITY

- **Tax reform:** Ensure the principle of progressiveness in tax policies and the fight against tax evasion, including specific measures on the management of extra profits; Improve literacy on the issue, including in schools, and encourage citizen participation, with communication and transparency campaigns that give a sense of citizens' participation in state spending; Consider the extent of public support for spending proposals (through surveys). (100% approval)
- **Issuance of public bonds** linked to medium- to long-term sustainability goals and the green transition (e.g., SDG Bonds), with lower interest rates than that on public debt. In addition, budgetary stability should be preserved by expanding the insurance obligation for climate risks/damage, to be tax-free for the insured. The higher profits of insurance companies would ensure higher tax revenues. (88% approval)
- **Structural incentives** for companies to use ESG (environmental, social, and governance) ratings to reduce red tape in order to accelerate private and public investments (e.g., National Recovery and Resilience Plans). Measures could be provided as tax credits, favouring SMEs. (79% approval)

# RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JOINT EVENT: DENMARK & ITALY

(May 2024)

## CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

- **Give legal rights to nature and climate.** Example: The climate law in Italy (example from Denmark), fundamental nature rights. Instead of having civil society organisations, introduce a law that says, "This part of nature has a right in its own". If someone tries to harm it, there is a law protecting it.
- **Support a culture for nature and conservation at all levels, including citizens and stakeholders.**
- **Rethink agriculture and EU agricultural subsidies.** (this one is the only recommendations that is not changed, with the same outcome on both Danish and Italian sides).

## SOCIAL AND JUSTICE

- **Equal and inclusive labour market:** Rethink our workplace and create an action plan for wellbeing.
- **Equal rights for everyone:** Should include the right to resources through redistribution, as well as access to health and housing. However, inequality is rising, and a tiny group of people holds more wealth than the majority. To address this, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be incorporated into international law.
- **Leave no-one and nothing behind.** Develop wellbeing within the limits of the earth and research on how this can be achieved.

## MACRO-ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

- **Important to make a constitutional economic charter, in which wellbeing is more important than profit.**  
A European constitutional charter. If Europe does not exist equally for every country, it is important to have a constitutional charter in which human wellbeing is more important than profit. We have to promote citizen involvement and participation in more citizens' associations and better educate about the financial aspect of the economy.
- **Make up a European balance.** A public European bond linked to sustainability targets. What has each country achieved? The involvement of citizenship; Everyone is obliged to have insurance for climate calamities.
- **[Not voted by the group]: "For the participation of citizens: A declaration about what people do every year towards sustainability goals".** A self-declaration about sustainability goals, about how they reach these goals. A self-certificate for involvement, to ensure that people are making contributions. To involve everyone in this sustainability programme.



Participants of the joint event Denmark & Italy

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