

WHERE: **Athens, Greece**

WHAT: **Citizens' Assembly**

WHEN: **June 8–9, 2024**

GREECE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE AND THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

In the 1990s and the early 2000s, Greece was indifferent towards climate change, increasing its emissions. More recently, this apathy has dissipated to a great extent, with emissions showing a decreasing trend. But who is to blame for – and who is to act against – climate change in this context? To address this conundrum, a hybrid Citizens' Assembly on *Intergenerational Justice and the European Green Deal* was organised by [ELIAMEP](#), the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, on **8–9 June 2024**, within the framework of the EU research project REAL DEAL. ELIAMEP is a thinktank that has conducted research and produced policy recommendations for almost 40 years. Researchers and project managers from two of its research fields, namely “Democracy, Identity, and Culture” and “Climate and Sustainability”, jointly undertook the design and implementation of the Assembly.



BEFORE THE EVENT: PREPARATION

TOPIC FRAMING

Overall, Greek citizens demonstrate low ‘willingness to pay’ regarding environmental and climate issues, despite acknowledging their contribution to climate change. They also consider that governments and the private sector are to blame and should therefore lead efforts to resolve these issues. At the same time, the youth in Greece does not participate in environmental policy making. They feel that they want to, but lack the necessary tools to do so. This creates a dual challenge: On one hand, citizens experience a disconnect between recognising their role in climate change and taking responsibility for action; on the other hand, crucial decisions about the future are being made without the

involvement of Greek youth, despite their willingness to participate. Thus, the topic of “*Intergenerational Justice and the European Green Deal*” was selected, in order to explore the extent to which the Green Deal’s provisions and implementation in Greece adopt an intergenerational lens. The main question was “**How can a just green transition be ensured so that a sustainable planet is left to future generations?**”.

RECRUITMENT

A total of 63 people participated in the Assembly. Their recruitment was outsourced by ELIAMEP to an external agency. In order to make the Assembly as representative and inclusive as possible, ELIAMEP decided to observe a series of quotas on geographic representation, gender balance, as well as age, education level, and occupation distribution. Greece has a peculiar geography and population distribution: On the one hand, its territory includes many islands; on the other, almost one-third of its entire population resides in the Attica region, including the capital city Athens. Thus, it was decided that a hybrid event would work better logistically, with participants from Attica being strongly represented. Ultimately, 31 people were recruited from Attica, and 32 from the rest of Greece. The participants represented 9 of the 13 regions of Greece: Attica, Central Macedonia, Crete, Epirus, Peloponnese, Thessaly, Western Greece, and Western Macedonia.

Of the 63 participants, 30 were men and 33 women; No other genders were reported by the participants. An equal distribution of age groups was sought, with 29 participants aged 18–40 and 34 aged 40–70. Participants’ educational background ranged from secondary, vocational, and technical to tertiary, i.e., level

3 and above of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Finally, occupational diversity was also sought, recruiting people working in the public and private sectors, students, freelancers, stay-at-home people, unemployed, and retired citizens.

KNOWLEDGE PREPARATION: FOCUS GROUPS, ROUNDTABLE, WEBINAR

To support informed deliberation, the Citizens’ Assembly was preceded by two Focus Groups and a Roundtable, as well as a Webinar. While the latter was organised by ELIAMEP, the two other types of event were organised by supporting organisations, with different participants than the Assembly itself. They took place some weeks before the Assembly, and their outcomes were presented by the respective hosting organisations during the opening session of the Assembly. The webinar took place in the week prior to the Assembly, serving as the main knowledge input for its participants.

The Focus Groups on “Intergenerational Equity & Environmental Social Justice: Perspectives of Young People from Greece” were conducted by the supporting organisation [KMOP – Social Action and Innovation Centre](#), a civil society organisation (CSO) working on a broad range of social policy issues including democracy and civic participation, as well as education. The Focus Groups took place in May 2024 with the aim of gaining insights on how Greek youth sees intergenerational equity with regard to the European Green Deal. Each focus group comprised 6–8 participants, divided into two age categories: 20–24 and 25–30. All participants were already active within KMOP’s network and were recruited based on their availability.

Focus Group and Roundtable events prior to the Citizens’ Assembly



The Roundtable was organised by the supporting organisation [Organization Earth](#), a Greek CSO working on environmental issues and sustainable development, advocating for sustainable lifestyles and promoting social inclusion. The Roundtable (also during May 2024) addressed the topic of “Funding the Green Transition in Cities – Centre and Periphery”. Its aim was to capture the views and attitudes of local authorities and selected businesses on financing the green transition. A total of 16 stakeholders from various sectors participated, including local authorities and private sector businesses across Greece.

The three-hour Webinar was conducted by ELIAMEP’s team and was attended by all 63 participants of the Assembly. The Webinar format included both *ex-cathedra* teaching and interaction with and among the participants. A presentation was produced by ELIAMEP’s researchers and made available to the participants as study material immediately after the Webinar. The presentation was produced by a researcher specialising in environmental issues, with feedback from a senior researcher specialising in democracy issues. This ensured that justice considerations were adequately addressed, thus efficiently covering the complex topic selected for the Assembly. The Webinar addressed the following topics:

- The value of bottom-up approaches in policy making and the institution of citizen assemblies;
- Presentation on the scope and objectives of the REAL DEAL project and the specific Assembly;
- The notion of intergenerational justice;

KMOP presenting the findings of the Focus Groups during the Citizens’ Assembly opening session



- The drivers of human impacts on the environment, and the current situation at the global level;
- The institutional framework in Europe and Greece;
- Actual performance of the EU and Greece on climate policies;
- Survey findings on views and attitudes of Greek people to climate change;
- Interactive activity employing modern tools for participants to measure their personal and household carbon footprints;
- Q&A with the researcher delivering the lecture;
- Presentation on the forthcoming Assembly’s structure.

DURING THE EVENT

The event took place over the weekend of 8–9 June 2024, with the first day dedicated to deliberation and the second to drafting recommendations. Following registration, the event started with addresses by ELIAMEP’s team. This was followed with presentations by the Greek CSOs engaged in the project, namely KMOP and Organization Earth, which presented the findings of their respective Focus Group and Roundtable events. This input served as additional information for the participants, giving them greater insights into the perceptions and views of youth, local authorities, and selected businesses in Greece.

FACILITATION AND INTERACTION

Participants were then divided between four live and digital rooms, depending on their geographic location and age. Thus, participants from Attica were split between two live rooms: those aged 18–40, and those 41+; Participants from the periphery of Greece were split between two digital rooms: those aged 18–40, and those 41+. This breakdown was deemed appropriate for the smooth functioning of the Assembly. Given the limited time and known generational tensions within Greek society, it was decided that these two groups would best discuss issues initially among each other.

Thus, for the rest of the first day participants deliberated in these groups, following a discussion guide that was formulated and observed by a member of the organising team who acted as a moderator for each room.

The second day was devoted to drafting policy recommendations. In the first session, participants remained in their groups from the first day, trying to elaborate their texts on the issues discussed the day before, and formulating their own policy recommendations accordingly. As the drafting progressed, participants started merging into larger groups.

By the fourth session, two larger, hybrid groups were formulated:

- **Group 1:** Participants aged **18–40** from Attika and the periphery
- **Group 2:** Participants aged **41+** from Attika and the periphery

This restructuring aimed to allow peer groups from different areas of Greece to present their recommendations to each other and integrate them into a unified set of proposals.

Due to time constraints during the unification process, participants were asked to bring forward only serious concerns about a proposal; in those cases an alternative wording of the policy recommendation was sought. Finally, in the fifth session, the two different age groups from all around Greece (18–40, and 41+) presented their respective sets of recommendations in the plenary session. The Assembly concluded with a discussion among participants of the different groups, and discussion of the two sets of proposals by the ELIAMEP team.

Overall, the deliberation during the Assembly followed a structure of five sessions in which the participants' perceptions of theoretical concepts were first brought out, before proceeding with conversations on practical aspects, namely how policies affect them. After that, the formulation of policy recommendations began. The general structure of the sessions was as follows:

- Session 1: Deliberation on notions of intergenerational justice and just transition;
- Session 2: Deliberation on the European Green Deal;
- Session 3: Recap and drafting of policy recommendations;
- Session 4: Consolidation and finalisation of policy recommendations;
- Session 5: Plenary session for presentation of outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As already mentioned, after working independently, the two peer age groups (18–40, and 41+) representing Attika and the periphery convened to unify their recommendations, thus producing two different sets of proposals. This was done intentionally by the organisers, in order to better capture convergence or divergence between generations.

The combined 18–40 age group (Attika plus periphery) organised their recommendations by three pillars: infrastructure; legal and institutional framework; information and training. Although the 41+ age group had not initially categorised its proposals, while watching the presentation of the first group they realised that their proposals followed the same categories and thus adopted the same format. This was a very interesting finding regarding intergenerational justice and the EU Green Deal in Greece: Namely that, regardless of generation, Greek people want to see changes in infrastructure and the legislative and institutional framework, as well as information and training initiatives. Again due to time limitations, the participants of both groups did not manage to fully elaborate proposals for all their topics of concern. Thus, they made a list of priority interventions identified as crucial, and elaborated a number of specific proposals as policy recommendations (see Annex).

AFTER THE EVENT

DOCUMENTATION AND FEEDBACK

ELIAMEP was invited by the REAL DEAL project to organise the Assembly due to its longstanding experience in hosting participatory events in Greece such as public agoras, international institution simulations, and youth assemblies on climate change. After the event ELIAMEP prepared a report for the REAL DEAL project, providing comprehensive details on the citizens' deliberation. Furthermore, organisers from ELIAMEP's team were interviewed by the REAL DEAL team as part of subsequent analysis of the deliberative formats researched in the project. For this purpose, participants' inputs were also taken into account: They were asked to complete three different questionnaires to evaluate the entire process; one after their recruitment and prior to the event; one immediately before the kick-off of the Assembly; and one after its conclusion. All these data were directly available to the consortium.



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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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PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS **CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY** ON INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE AND THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

(June 2024)

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS: 18–40 AGE GROUP (ENTIRE GREECE)

PRIORITIES (18-40 AGE GROUP)

1) Infrastructure

- Flood control works;
- Desalination plants;
- Equipment and training for forest surveillance / fire prevention;
- Enhancing green spaces: tree planting / reforestation / pocket parks within cities with equal / just access for all;
- Improvement of municipal lighting (more efficient lamps, renewable sources);
- Better and more comprehensive waste management (e.g., municipal composting projects).

2) Legislative & institutional framework

- Intensification of controls (e.g., energy-intensive industry);
- More staff, better trained (emphasis on environmentally intensive professions);
- Reward systems for those who comply;
- Penalty systems for those who do not comply;
- Better alignment between funds and goals; increase in funds & lending programmes (e.g., interest-free loans);

- Simplification of procedures and removal of bureaucratic obstacles;
- Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs);
- More funding for research and innovation (at EU and national level).

3) Information & training

- Provide training on new technologies to specific professions (e.g., agriculture and farming);
- Training of stakeholders' personnel (e.g., local authorities);
- Reintegration programmes for groups that may be affected by the transition (reskilling);
- Upskilling programmes;
- Promotion of good examples: “success stories” for elimination of frustration.

RECOMMENDATIONS (18–40 AGE GROUP)

Industry: Ensure that industry commitments are met. Frequent checking and assessment of the situation. At the same time, reinforcement of their environmental efforts (tax reductions, greening subsidies) for those who meet/achieve their goals. Combined with promotion of circular forms of utilisation within these schemes.

Subsidies / investments / preferential loans: We believe that in order to achieve the goals of the green transition, a large part of the adaptation costs should be covered by the EU, whether this concerns changes in the habits of ordinary citizens (transportation, insulation, efficiency of appliances, energy) or those of businesses.

Support for public services (with an emphasis on transport): In addition to businesses and citizens, we consider how the Greek state should also contribute to the effort. This is particularly important in public transport, with network expansion, more frequent routes, and greener measures.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS: 41+ AGE GROUP (ENTIRE GREECE)

PRIORITIES (41+ AGE GROUP)

1) Infrastructure:

- More funds for improving the energy efficiency of buildings;
- Enactment of quotas for new buildings regarding the usage of more environmentally friendly materials;
- More desalination plants;
- Modernisation and greening of public transport;
- Increase of green spaces, pocket parks, etc.

2) Legislative & institutional framework

- Creation of an EU Transparency Bureau, specifically for monitoring the green and just transition, accompanied by national independent/regulatory authorities;
- Reward systems for those who comply with regulations (e.g., enhancing existing initiatives of rewarding recycling efforts);
- Decentralise responsibilities for monitoring and implementing green transition policies, shifting them from the state to municipalities;
- More freedom for ordinary citizens to produce their own energy (e.g., energy communities), and institution of related incentives/funding opportunities.

3) Information & training

- EU-wide informational campaign, detailing the steps to be followed and the positive aspects of the transition;
- Upskilling and reskilling of workers, with an emphasis on those in the most vulnerable areas;
- Wider use of technology to reach the younger generation;
- SDG monitoring platform under the auspices of the state and municipalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS (41+ AGE GROUP)

• **Building trust and ensuring accountability:** We believe that trust and mutual accountability are what holds the transition together. The EU should demand more, but also provide more. There should be regular assessments of the measures adopted at EU, national, and sub-national levels, via the appropriate institutions. There should also be a pan-European campaign that will target politicians, civil society, and ordinary citizens.

• **Subsidies:** Subsidies should be increased, and the criteria should be less strict and more accessible to all citizens. Buying an electric car or investing in upgrading household energy efficiency is still very expensive for a middle-income household. Each country shall have its own plan, focusing on those sectors in which it is most vulnerable. For Greece, this should be energy efficiency and minimising heating and cooling costs.

• **Public transport:** The public transport fleet must be modernised, and the commuting infrastructure must be repaired, improved, and/or expanded. There are still many areas that are not covered by public transportation / the fleet is old / the roads are of poor quality, resulting either in more car usage or dissatisfaction amongst the population. There should be a concerted effort, headed by the Commissioner of Transport, to ensure that the EU and Member States cooperate more effectively and efficiently.