



## Participation & Sustainable Development in Europe

### Ireland's Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss

Date: May/2024

#### Country + Region

Ireland

#### Date (Start - End)

October 2022 - April 2023

#### Short Description

Ireland's national Children and Young People's Assembly took place over two weekends in October 2022. The Assembly brought together 35 children and young people aged 7-17 to learn about, deliberate on, and come up with solutions to the challenge of biodiversity loss. It published its final report in April 2023, consisting of a vision statement, six key messages, and 58 calls to action. These have been reflected in the Irish Government's new National Biodiversity Action Plan.

#### Background, Cause

In response to large-scale environmental degradation, the Irish government declared a climate and biodiversity emergency in 2019, and pledged to convene a Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss. That Assembly, for the adult population, deliberated over the course of five weekends from May 2022 to January 2023. Alongside the adults' Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, a parallel Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss was commissioned by the Irish government, in order to give the population under 18 a chance to have their voices heard within a deliberative democratic process. The Assembly represented one of the first instances anywhere in the world of parallel citizens' assemblies for children and young people, and adults, running side by side on the same topic.

#### Goal(s)/Objective(s)

The Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss's core goal was to meaningfully realise children and young people's participation rights by creating a space for intergenerational dialogue on how Ireland will protect its biodiversity.

#### Process and Flow

The Assembly was an innovative experiment in deliberative democracy that brought together 35 children and young people from across Ireland. The Assembly was designed and implemented by an intergenerational team consisting of researchers and practitioners from Dublin City University, University College Cork, and terre des hommes, and a Young Advisory Team of nine children and young people from across Ireland.

The members of the Assembly were selected through a process of stratified random sampling, to capture the diversity of the Irish population. The participant sample was representative of the wider population of children and young people in Ireland in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, geography, urban/rural living, and disability status.

The Assembly met over two weekends in October 2022. Over the course of the two weekends, the Assembly members learned about biodiversity and the causes of and potential solutions to biodiversity loss, deliberated on these topics through age-appropriate mechanisms, and came up with their calls to action.

#### Results of the participation process

The Assembly's final report, published in April 2023 to coincide with Earth Day, called for greater respect for the rights of nature and for biodiversity to be at the centre of decision-making. It also called for children and young people to be included in how we respond to biodiversity loss. The Assembly produced a vision statement, six key messages, and 58 calls to action.

On the final day of the Assembly, the government minister who commissioned the Assembly, Malcolm Noonan T.D., joined the Assembly to receive their calls to action.

But the story didn't end there. Representatives from the Assembly met with members of the adults' Citizens' Assembly in November 2022. In October 2023, they met with the Committee on Environment and Climate Action of the Irish Parliament, and have also met with local government officials, appeared in a number of podcasts and webinars, and have featured in a range of media coverage.

### Why it made sense to work with participation

Taking a child rights-based approach was central to the design and implementation of the Assembly. One of the strongest messages that came through from the Assembly was the importance of listening to children and young people, and giving them a meaningful say in decisions that affect them.

### Experience to share / Lessons learned

This was one of the first instances anywhere in the world of parallel citizens' assemblies for children and young people, and adults, running in parallel and deliberating on the same topic. The process showed the promise of including children and adults in such an intergenerational dialogue, and giving a strong voice to children and young people.

### Applied Method

x	Method	Method	x
	Agenda Konferenz / agenda conference	Kooperativer Diskurs/ Cooperative discourse	
	Aktivierende Befragung / activating interview	Laddering	
	Anwaltsplanung / advocacy planning	Mediation / mediation	
	Appreciative Inquiry / appreciative inquiry	Neo-Sokratischer Dialog / Neo-Socratic dialog	
	Bürger_innenbudget / participatory budget	Online Konsultation / online consultation	
X	Bürger:innenrat / Citizens Assembly	Open Space Konferenz / open space conference	
	Bürger:innenrat / wisdom council	Planning for Real	
	Bürger:innenversammlung / citizens' panel	Planspiel / experimental game	
	Collective Story Harvest	Planungszelle / „design cell“	
	Community Organizing / Community Organizing	Pro Action Café	
	Community of Practice	Projektschmiede / Design for Wiser Action	
	Delphi-Befragung / delphi method	Runder Tisch / round table	
	Design Thinking	Soziokratie / Sociocracy	
	Dialog / stakeholder dialogue	Strategic environmental assessment at the round table	
	Dragon Dreaming / Dragon Dreaming	Syst. Konsensieren / Systemic consensus building	
	Dyade / dyad interviews	THANCS	
	Dynamic Facilitation / Dynamic Facilitation	Workshop	
	Ephesos-Modell / Ephesos method	World Café	
	Fish Bowl / fish bowl	Zukunftskonferenz / Future Conference	
	Fokusgruppe / focus group	Zukunftswerkstatt / „Future Workshop“	
	GfK / nonviolent communication		
	Holacracy / Holacrcy		
	Konsensus-Konferenz / consensus conference	other:.....	

### Topic & Application

x	Topic	Topic	x
	climate protection / climate crisis	Water resources management	
	Energy(transition)	Natural hazards	
	Construction & Buildings	Socio-space analysis	
	Mobility	Social movements	
	(Local) Agenda 21	Child and youth participation	X
	Cooperative housing and living concepts	Technology Assessment	
	Spatial planning	Nuclear Coordination	
	Circular economy	other: Biodiversity	X

### Principal / contracting authority

The Assembly was commissioned by the Minister Malcolm Noonan, the national government minister with responsibility for nature and biodiversity.

### Process support and consulting

The Assembly was designed and implemented by an intergenerational team consisting of researchers and practitioners from Dublin City University, University College Cork, and terre des hommes, and a Young Advisory Team of nine children and young people from across Ireland.

### Costs and financing

The total cost of the Assembly was approximately €209,000.

### Publications, links, resources

The Assembly's process and outcomes, including the final report, are available on the website: <http://www.cyp-biodiversity.ie>

### Details of the person providing this case study

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