



# Impact Report 2024

Another democratic future *is* possible.

DemocracyNext

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# Foreword

DemocracyNext stands at the forefront of a growing movement to build a new approach to decision-making in the common interest. We champion deliberative democracy and citizens' assemblies as vital institutions for building a more inclusive, resilient, and effective democracy.

Political polarisation is worsening. Polls show deepening public disillusionment and distrust of politicians and elites. People's frustration with the status quo is legitimate and understandable. Popular morale is sapped by the absence of suggestions for a credible remedy for this crisis.

In 2024, we witnessed growing recognition of the transformative power of citizens' assemblies, with initiatives flourishing across the globe. We saw cities embracing deliberative approaches to urban planning, cultural institutions opening their doors to citizen-led discussions, and technology playing an increasingly vital role in enhancing meaningful deliberation.

We are proud of the progress we made in 2024, our second year - and our continuing impact. We are deeply grateful to our dedicated team, partners, collaborators, and supporters who made it possible. Together, we are building a more just, joyful, and collaborative future where citizens have the power to shape the decisions that affect their lives.

Another democratic future is possible.

**Claudia Chwalisz**

Founder & Chief Executive Officer,  
DemocracyNext



Claudia speaking at the NYT Athens Democracy Forum



All illustrations found on our website, in our resource guides, and publications are created by [Adèle Vivet](#)

## About us

DemocracyNext is an international research and action institute dedicated to *scaling high quality, empowered, and permanent citizens' assemblies*. Our programmes aim to achieve this through building or creating new *infrastructure, institutions, innovation, impactful storytelling, and systemic change*.

### Our small but mighty organisation's values are:

- **Rigour:** We approach our work with intellectual rigour, ensuring that our methods and recommendations are grounded in evidence and best practices.
- **Curiosity:** We constantly explore new frontiers in deliberative democracy, seeking to catalyse technological innovation and refine approaches to citizens' assemblies.
- **Collaboration:** We work with a wide range of partners around the world and across sectors to achieve our shared goals, recognising that collective action is crucial for systemic change.
- **Vision:** We aspire to transform democratic practices fundamentally, envisioning a world where citizens' assemblies are integral to decision-making processes.

# About citizens' assemblies

Citizens' assemblies are **brave spaces for creative problem solving** – for public policies, legislation, or tough organisational decisions. **They are designed for exercising our collective intelligence, engaging with complexity, and finding common ground.**

Also known as civic assemblies, deliberative mini-publics, or citizens' juries, at the heart, all embody three principles: **sortition** (selecting decision makers by lottery, or random selection), **deliberation** (collectively weighing evidence for shared decisions), and **rotation** (taking turns representing, and being represented by others).



Cover of the Japanese translation of our *Assembling an Assembly Guide*

A citizens' assembly can range in size from roughly 20-200 people. Selected at random from a community or nation, they ideally have a mandate from a public authority, which can be a government entity or the leaders of a museum, school, university, or other institution. Assemblies typically meet for at least 5-6 days over a significant period of time (usually 3-6 months). Assembly members are compensated for their time, and are supported by a team of specialist facilitators who are brought in to lead the process, and ensure the citizens are well supported. They hear from a breadth and diversity of experts on the topic, including those with personal experience; they deliberate on possible policy fixes in small, usually facilitated groups; and they vote to see which ideas win supermajority approval, then propose these ideas as a package to the mandating authority.

Since the first modern citizens' assembly was held in British Columbia, Canada in 2004, **more than 700 citizens' assemblies** have been held worldwide. Some achieve notable success, like breakthroughs on [abortion and same-sex marriage in Ireland](#). Their numbers have been [snowballing](#) since the late 2010s.

→ Learn more in DemNext's [Assembling an Assembly Guide](#)



DemNext and project partners in Vilnius attending a facilitation training masterclass led by Danish organisation, We Do Democracy

## Our projects | Cities Programme

In 2024, DemocracyNext began work with the cities of **Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg; Kerewan, The Gambia; and Vilnius, Lithuania** to implement citizens' assemblies across multiple municipal institutions.

[Our programme](#) aims to:

- **Support cities in their efforts to become centres of democratic innovation**, using citizens' assemblies to address complex urban challenges and promote civic engagement.
- **Train and mentor city officials and local practitioners** on the design and implementation of citizens' assemblies, fostering the long-term sustainability of these initiatives.
- **Research and evaluate the impact of citizens' assemblies** in city settings, providing insights into best practices and informing future programme development.

→ To find out more, contact James MacDonald-Nelson ([james@demnext.org](mailto:james@demnext.org))



This page and over -Team DemNext in Kerewan (top), Vilnius (left), and Esch-sur-Alzette (right)

*“Ieva, James, and Hannah from DemocracyNext have been the bedrock of our preparations for the assembly — helping us navigate every question with insights from global experience and connecting us with the right people. Their support was invaluable, especially as we were doing this for the very first time.”*

— Beatričė Umbrasaitė, Advisor to the Chief Architect, Vilnius City Municipality Administration





This page and over - Deschutes Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness, September 2024

## Our projects | Deschutes Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness

In 2024, DemocracyNext collaborated with a range of partners in the US county of Deschutes, Oregon, to convene a [citizens' assembly](#) focused on addressing youth homelessness.

Together, we laid the foundation for the first permanent citizens' assembly in the US, and it was the first tech-enhanced citizens' assembly worldwide where the entirety of the deliberations were recorded. This assembly demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach in several ways:

- **Community consensus:** 23 proposals for addressing youth homelessness received over 75% support from the assembly members.
- **Political bridge-building:** The assembly brought together individuals with deeply diverse viewpoints to develop shared solutions.
- **Policy buy-in:** The local authorities at the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council, Deschutes County, and Bend City Council demonstrated strong commitment to the assembly process across political party lines, responding publicly and integrating the assembly's recommendations into their policy planning.
- **Technological innovation:** The Deschutes assembly provided a valuable opportunity to test new technologies and AI applications that will ultimately enable outputs grounded in the voices of assembly members and open new research avenues.

*“These gatherings do what most democracies only pretend to: trust normal people to make decisions on difficult policy questions. Though still rare in America, the model reflects the striking idea that fundamental problems of politics — polarization, apathy, manipulation by special interests — can be transformed through radically direct democracy.”*

— Nick Romeo, writing on the Deschutes Civic Assembly for The New Yorker



*“DemocracyNext is one of the leading organizations promoting citizens' assemblies — they brought invaluable global insights to make our Civic Assembly in Deschutes, Oregon a huge success.”*

— Senator Anthony Broadman, Oregon



Both photos: Deschutes Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness, September 2024

*“It’s hard to be a conservative in Oregon in general and feel validated... I thought there was going to be a lot of arguing, and I thought I was going to have to debate with a lot of people. None of that happened... Looking round the room I couldn’t guess who leaned which way, which was extremely refreshing.*

*All in all I think this was a very good example of how even people with diverse political opinions can come together and solve issues within the community, and we can all just be human beings with each other.”*

— Deschutes Civic Assembly delegate



→ For more information, please contact Josh Burgess ([josh@demnext.org](mailto:josh@demnext.org)), read about the assembly in [The New Yorker](#), and follow us for updates



Members of the Bundeskunsthalle Citizens' Assembly, 5 November 2023, Photo credit: Bundeskunsthalle / Art: Lerato Shadi, Batho ba ha ba Tlhalonganye, 2023

## Our projects | Museum assemblies

DemocracyNext has actively supported the implementation of citizens' assemblies in cultural institutions. We have:

- **Collaborated with museums in Dresden and Bonn** to host groundbreaking [four-day assemblies](#) in 2023 and exhibitions in 2024-26, exploring the role of museums in contemporary society.
- **Advised and supported Birmingham Museums Trust** as they held the [first citizens' jury](#) in a UK museum, acting as a critical friend and advisor throughout the process, with the story of the assembly told in a [short film](#).
- **Attracted growing requests for advice and collaboration** from other museums and cultural institutions as spaces for democratic deliberation, recognising their potential to engage diverse communities and foster civic dialogue.

- [Read](#) Lucy Reid's first-hand experience from Birmingham, and for more information please contact her ([lucy@demnext.org](mailto:lucy@demnext.org))

*“DemNext brought a depth of experience and rigour to our work with the Citizens’ Jury. Their collegiate and inspiring approach taught us the value of this work and gave us a confidence to do the first Citizens’ Jury for any museum in the UK”*

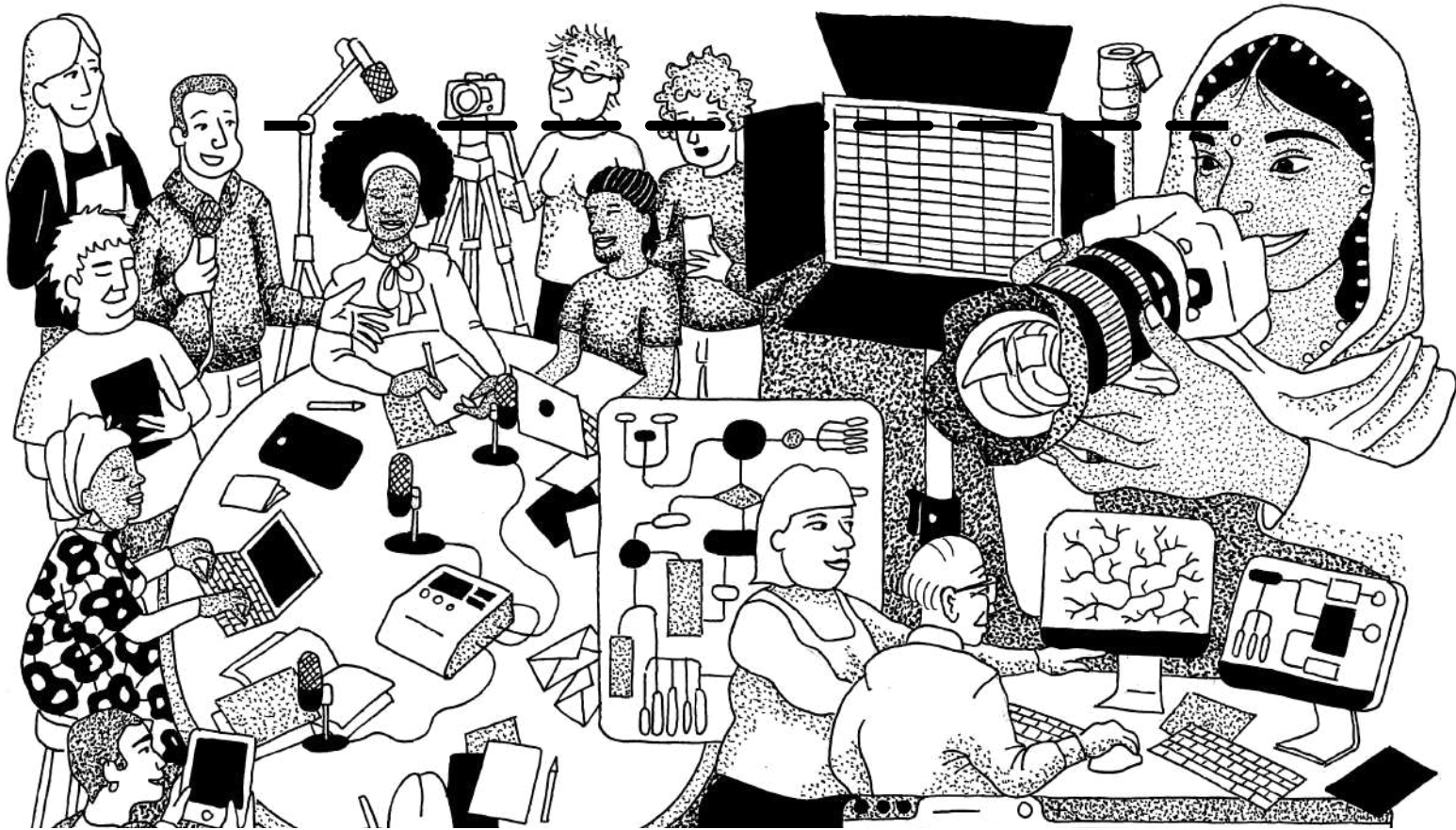
– Sara Wajid, Co-CEO, Birmingham Museums Trust



*“DemNext opened up new pathways for a deliberative museum – our citizens’ assembly was a pioneering move into the right direction.”*

– Thomas A. Geisler, Director Museum of Decorative Arts / Design Campus, Dresden State Art Collections

Photos from Birmingham Museums’ Citizens’ Jury and All In! Redesigning Democracy in Bonn . Image credit River Rea Film and Vera Sacchetti



## Innovation

DemocracyNext constantly seeks to push the boundaries of deliberative democracy through experimentation and research. This includes:

- **Improving quality and legitimacy:** Our [Assembling an Assembly Guide](#) was published in 2024 and was immediately popular, and has already been translated into [Basque](#), [Spanish](#), and [Japanese](#). In 2024, the Assembly Guide had almost 8,000 views, with over 25,000 views since we published in 2023.
- **Accelerating spread:** Just as we helped catalyse the technologically pioneering Deschutes Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness, we aim to seize every opportunity to test new ways to make citizens' assemblies more accessible, less expensive, and deeply impactful.
- **Technological innovation:** In partnership with the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for Constructive Communication](#), we conducted a series of experiments in 2024 - both in the lab and during the Deschutes Assembly - exploring how artificial intelligence can enhance citizens' assembly set-ups, support deliberation, and assist in producing actionable deliverables.

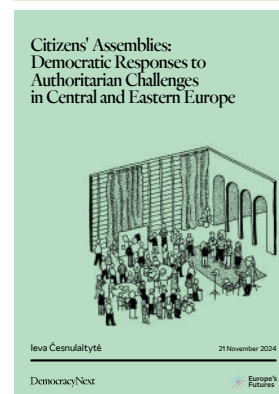
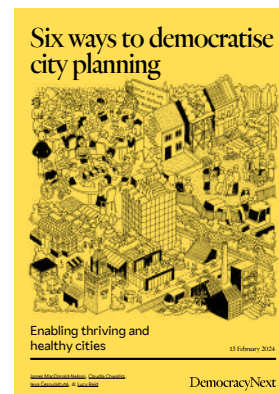
→ Please contact Claudia Chwalisz for more information ([claudia@demnext.org](mailto:claudia@demnext.org))

# Inspiring storytelling

DemocracyNext constantly seeks to push the boundaries of deliberative democracy through experimentation and research. This includes:

- **Growing the DemNext community:** Expanding our online community – largely through our newsletter, which in 2024 expanded its reach to 11,000 subscribers on [Substack](#) and [LinkedIn](#) – to connect individuals interested in deliberative democracy, fostering dialogue, resource sharing, and collaborative action.
- **Showcasing stories:** Using our engaged audience to give examples of citizens' assemblies and interview [deliberative democracy pioneers](#) from around the world, highlighting their impact on people and policies. This platform aims to demonstrate the real-world benefits of these processes, inspiring others to consider their implementation.
- **Publishing in-depth papers:** In 2024, we published papers on [city planning](#), [more-than-human governance](#) and "[Citizens' Assemblies, Democratic Responses to Authoritarian Challenges in Central and Eastern Europe](#)". The latter highlighted unique, original research into the Eastern European spread of the movement by our Senior Adviser Ieva Česnulaitytė.
- **Creating engaging media:** Developing accessible videos like these in 2024 [from Deschutes, Oregon](#), organising [webinars](#), and doing [media interviews](#) to share information about citizens' assemblies and their impact.

- Read the [latest papers here](#), and please contact Ruba Asfahani for more information ([ruba@demnext.org](mailto:ruba@demnext.org))





*“DemNext is one of the most exciting and innovative organisations operating in this space, making important practical and theoretical contributions to the field of democratic innovations. It has been a pleasure working with them on a collaborative project about embedding deliberative processes within democracies.”*

— Professor David Farrell, University College Dublin

*“DemocracyNext is the leading source of inspiration and guidance for the deliberative movement. Their experience, evidence, and tools make it possible to use citizen assemblies to solve tough problems and bridge deep divides, from the local to the global.”*

— Kevin O’Neil, Managing Director, New Frontiers, Rockefeller Foundation

*“DemNext plays a key role in the world of democratic innovation, raising awareness of the promise of deliberative methods and supporting real-world deliberative events — in sum, pioneering the best version of our shared future.”*

— Matt Botvinick, Senior Research Director, Google DeepMind

*"DemocracyNext's work contributes to creating a society that future generations will be grateful for!"*

— Professor Tatsuyoshi Saijo, Director,  
Future Design Research Center, Kyoto  
University of Advanced Science



*"DemocracyNext is at the cutting edge of thinking and practice on democracy and technological innovation. Their papers and events are an important source of ideas, information, and calls to action."*

— Bruce Schneier, Fellow and Lecturer in Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, co-author of "Rewiring Democracy: How AI Will Transform Our Politics, Government, and Citizenship"

*"In contrast to the headlines, democratic innovation is spreading throughout the world, using digital tools and tried and tested methodologies such as citizens' assemblies. DemocracyNext is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the subject, because in just a few years the small team has carried out some inspiring work and documented pioneering projects on all continents like no other. I have been working in this field for a decade, these achievements are unprecedented, impressive and very stimulating."*

— Valentin Chaput, Co-founder and Managing Director at Open Source Politics

*"For us, creating an exhibition about democracy also meant working democratically. DemNext supported us in making our museum a place for more democracy and showed us how deliberative decision-making works."*

— Johanna Adam, Curator, Bundeskunsthalle Germany



*"The world is orienting itself toward a better future for all thanks to Claudia's leadership. DemocracyNext powers experimentations and work indispensable to revitalise the democratic project at 360 degrees."*

— Isabelle Ferreras, Research Director, Fonds national de la recherche scientifique (FNRS), Bruxelles, Belgium and Professor, Université de Louvain (UCLouvain)

*"Working with the DemocracyNext team has been an absolute pleasure. Every engagement has brought thoughtfulness, rigor, and depth to advancing the conversation on citizens' assemblies around the country. Our collaboration has been a true joy, thanks to a deeply passionate, knowledgeable, and organized team."*

— Hollie Russon Gilman PhD, Senior Fellow, New America

*"DemocracyNext, run by Claudia Chwalisz, is really one of the leading organisations in the world promoting citizens' assemblies."*

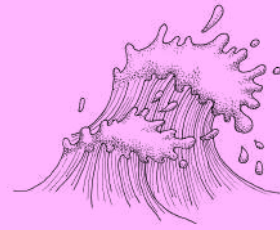
— Roger Berkowitz, Founder and Academic Director, Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at Bard College

*"The DemNext cities program allowed us to discuss and explore facilitation of deliberation in depth with the spearhead of deliberation in the Baltics. For me, as a 'young' facilitator, it was inspiring to be in a learning environment with so many people dedicated to innovating and building democracy".*

— Klara Sørensen, consultant and facilitator, We Do Democracy



# DemocracyNext's goals for the next 5 years



**Our mission is to scale high-quality, empowered, and permanent citizens' assemblies around the world – for government and for decision-making in other organisations.** At a time of geopolitical instability and democracy under threat, this work to empower people, strengthen citizen agency, and increase democratic resilience feel more urgent than ever. Our ambitions are commensurately big. We want more people in more places to know about assemblies and have the tools to set them up and make them sustainable. How we'll do that:

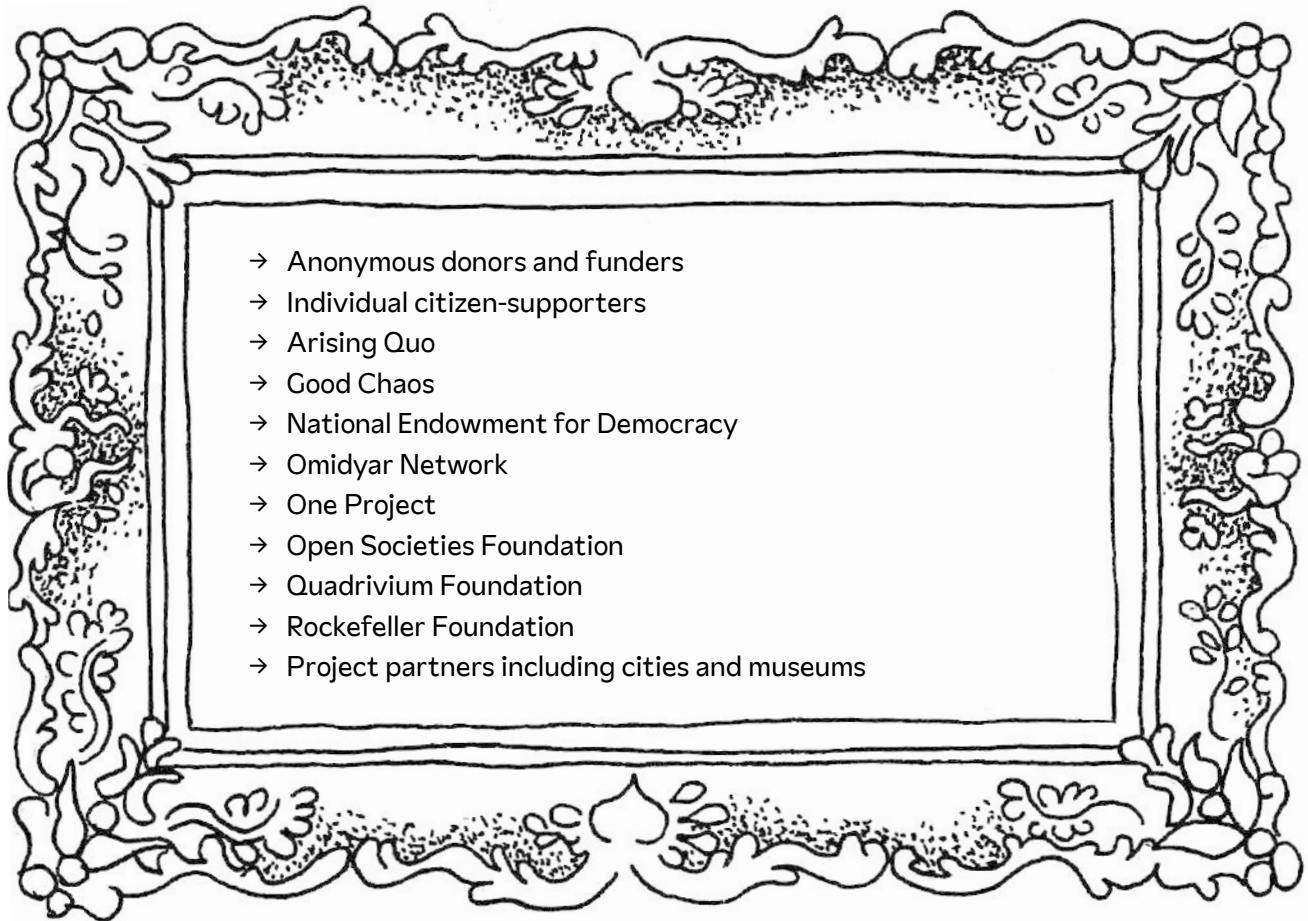
- **Continue publishing research, creating resources, and hosting convenings that enable scaling - with and beyond technology:** Building on our [scaling white paper](#), we are launching a Deliberation & Technology (DelibTech) Network with the AI & Democracy Foundation, conducting research on democratic infrastructure for catalysing scaling, creating an AI & Tech Ecosystem Map, and other activities.
- **Establish the DemNext Citizens' Assemblies Hub:** Including an Assemblies Tracker (past and forthcoming), inspiring case studies, as well as databases of templates and examples of procurement documents, information kits, evaluations, and other related assembly-planning materials – with sections for cities, museums, universities, and others.
- **Create the Institutionalising Assemblies Guide:** Developing a legal and political blueprint needed to integrate citizens' assemblies in an ongoing way.
- **Launch DemFest:** A festival-conference that celebrates deliberative and participatory democratic innovation.
- **Publish a Deliberative Systems Impact Framework:** A new way of measuring the impact and effectiveness of assemblies on people and policies.
- **Establish a Global Democracy Innovation Index:** Building on the impact research and tracker activities.
- **Build an Alumni Network of Former Assembly Members:** To facilitate knowledge exchange, peer support, and advocacy.
- **Support the spread of non-governmental assemblies to new sectors:** Continuing to support the spread of citizens' assemblies within cultural, educational, economic, and financial institutions, and experiment with more-than-human governance approaches.
- **Develop "Deliberative Cities":** Work with several cities each year to implement and report back on permanent citizens' assemblies across multiple institutions.

Some of these ideas are partially funded. For most of them, we are seeking support to bring them to life. If you would like to support and/or partner on any of these initiatives, please contact Claudia Chwalisz ([claudia@demnext.org](mailto:claudia@demnext.org)).

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## With thanks and appreciation

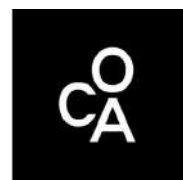
DemocracyNext is grateful for support from a wide range of foundations, funders, and individuals who have made our work this year possible:



We are also appreciative of those individuals who support us, whether through a [monthly pledge on our Substack newsletter](#) or as philanthropists convinced of the need to help us forge this new way out of the crisis in democracy.

- If you would like to support our work financially, please contact Claudia Chwalisz ([claudia@demnext.org](mailto:claudia@demnext.org)) or Lucy Reid ([lucy@demnext.org](mailto:lucy@demnext.org))

Thank you to our 2024 project partners & collaborators



# 2024 financial statement

|                               | €              |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Grants                        | 745 190        |
| Other income                  | 128 212        |
| <b>Total operating income</b> | <b>873 402</b> |
| <b>Gross margin</b>           | <b>873 402</b> |
| Employee benefits             | 612 222        |
| Other operating expenses      |                |
| Accommodation costs           | 2 986          |
| Office related expenses       | 50 245         |
| General expenses              | 66 030         |
| <b>Total costs</b>            | <b>731 483</b> |
| <b>Operating result</b>       | <b>141 919</b> |
| <b>Result after tax</b>       | <b>141 919</b> |

## Foundation details

- **Name** Stichting DemocracyNext
- **CoC number (Kvk)** - 92237444
- **Tax number (RSIN)** - 865949347
- **Address** The Hague Humanity Hub, Fluwelen Burgwal 58, 2511 CJ, The Hague, Netherlands
- **Email** | [hello@demnext.org](mailto:hello@demnext.org)
- **Accounts** prepared by Schipper & Paul, The Hague





DemocracyNext team during a team retreat in The Hague spring 2025

# Support us!

We seek endowed, project, and core support for DemocracyNext from foundations and individuals who want the systemic, long-term nature of change our work will bring.

If you share our ambitious vision and mission that citizens' assemblies can create another democratic future, we'd be delighted if you joined our funders, partners and supporters!

Get in touch:

The Hague Humanity Hub, Fluwelen Burgwal 58,  
2511 CJ The Hague, Netherlands



[Website](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Assembly Guide](#) | [YouTube](#)

[claudia@demnext.org](mailto:claudia@demnext.org) | [lucy@demnext.org](mailto:lucy@demnext.org)

