

Do Multilingual Citizens' Assemblies Work?

Lessons from different approaches with interpreters and technology

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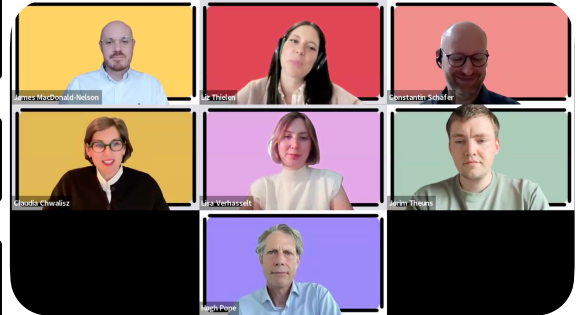
11 June 2026 - [Event page](#) - [Video](#)

Read [Hugh's paper](#) & [James & Hannah's paper](#)

In many contexts, multilingualism is a major design consideration for citizens' assemblies. Typically it means some mixture of live interpretation, language buddies, multilingual facilitation, and technology.

In this DemocracyNext webinar, we explored:

- Do multilingual citizens' assemblies actually work, and how?
- What are the trade-offs and considerations of the different approaches available?
- How are facilitators seizing the challenge as an opportunity to design a smooth and inclusive process?



Speakers

- [Hugh Pope](#), International Advisory Council Member, DemocracyNext
- [James MacDonald-Nelson](#), Cities Lead, DemocracyNext
- [Constantin Schäfer](#), Director of EU Relations & Projects, IFOK
- [Liz Thielen](#), Lead Facilitator, Snakke & Co
- [Lisa Verhasselt](#), Research Associate, Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER)
- [Jorim Theuns](#), Co-Founder, Dembrane

Key ideas & takeaways

- The informal moments need particular attention in multilingual settings to help people connect; in the EU the interpreters have been joining these to great success.
- Visualisation can go beyond language, for example using art or music.
- Important to remember that not all languages have sound.
- The cost of interpretation is worthwhile - it's a public service, but it also conveys a sense of weight.
- Simple language makes the process more inclusive for everybody.
- Talking conveys information, but also emotions; it's been powerful to see interpreters be able to do this so well.
- Multilingualism also relates to the question of power - it's not only about who enters the room, but whose voices carry weight once they're there.
- Giving everyone a meaningful chance to be part of an assembly by having a multilingual process without one dominant language also strengthens people's sense of belonging to place - whether that's local or EU.

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