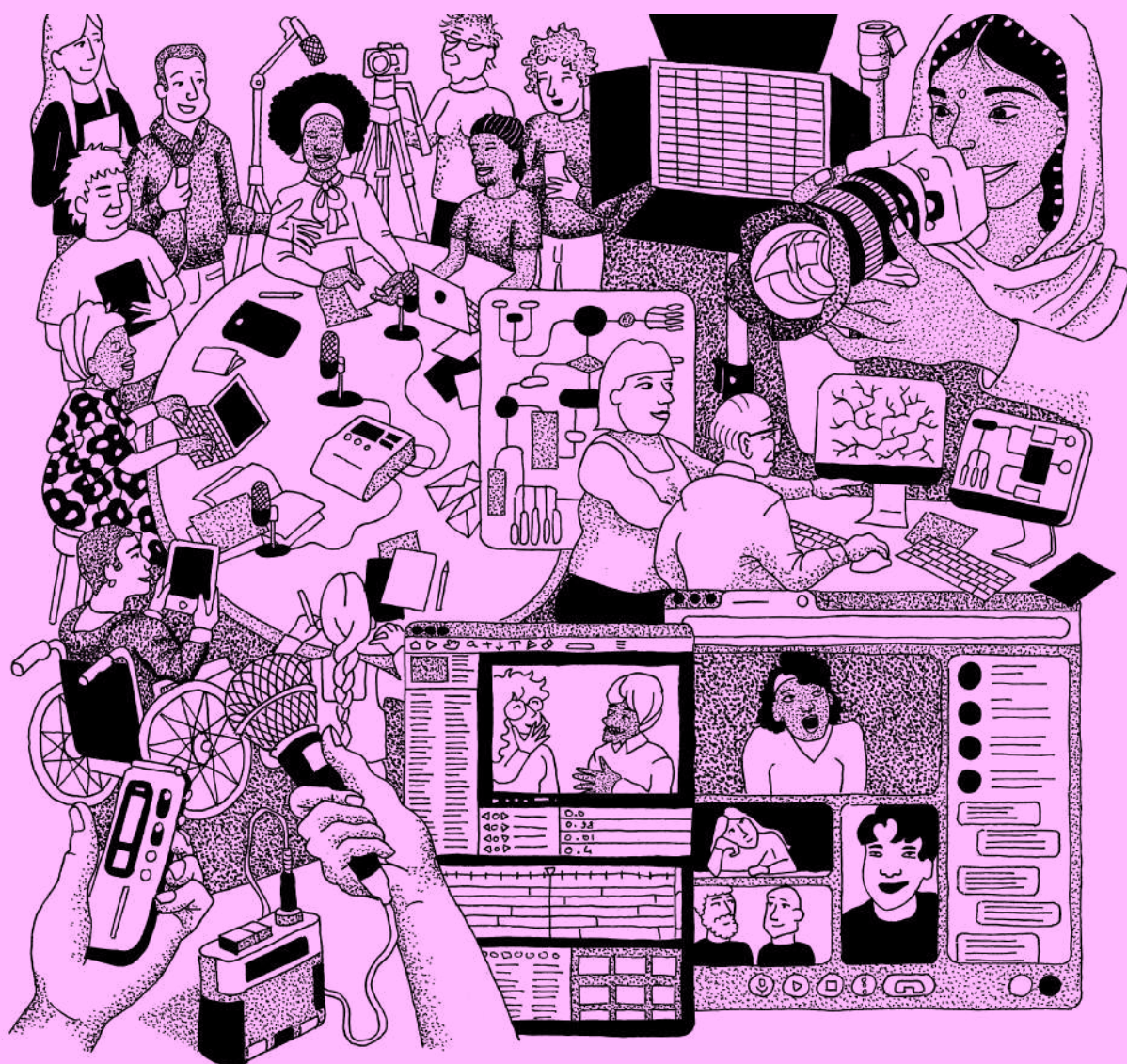




Stichting DemocracyNext

Beleidsplan

Policy Plan

August 2026, The Hague

DemocracyNext

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1. An introduction to our work

About us

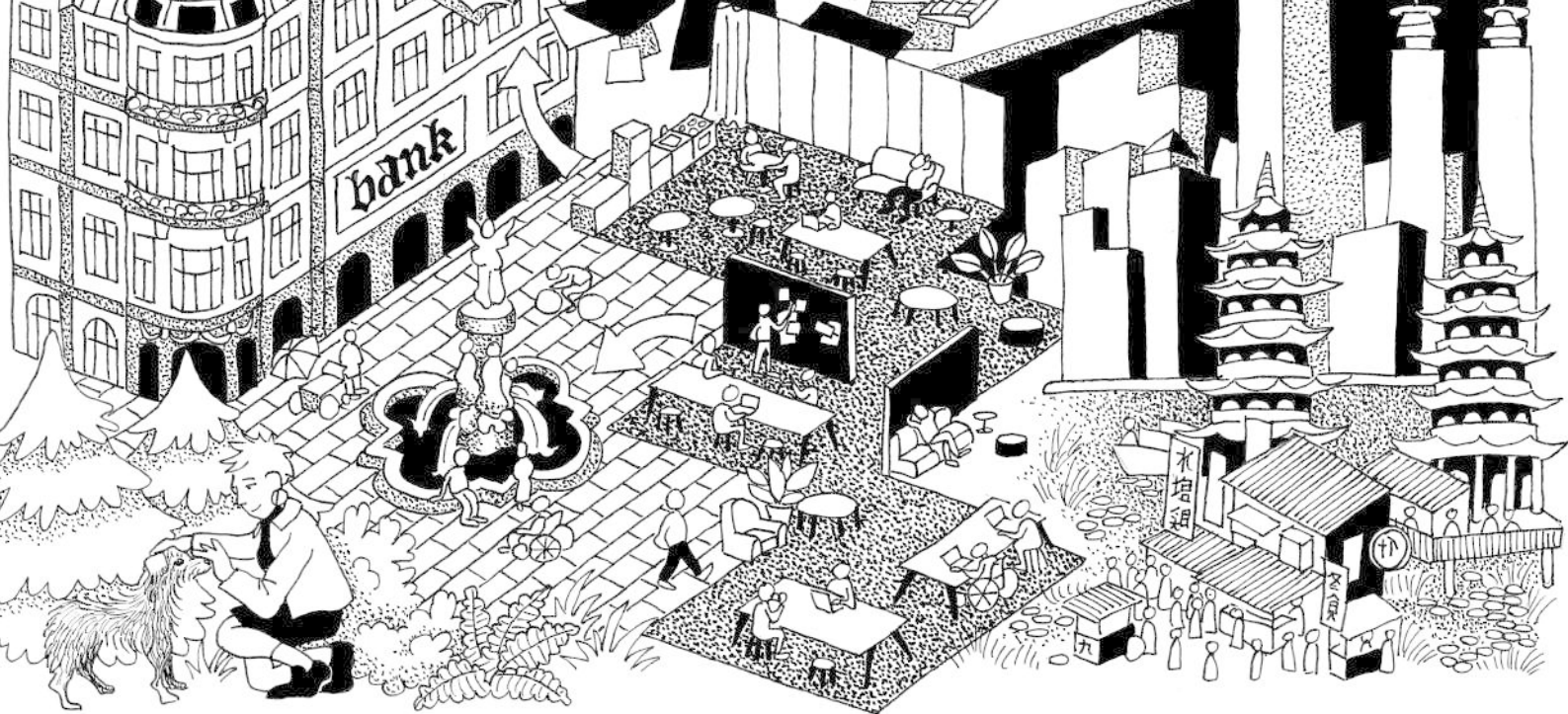
DemocracyNext is an international research & action institute focused on broadening who has power and enhancing how we make decisions together.

We champion three democratic practices – *sortition* (choosing decision makers by lottery), *deliberation* (structured collective decision making), and *rotation* (taking turns to represent and be represented) – that together make democracy more legitimate, more trustworthy, and more effective.

Our hypothesis is that if people have *greater agency* in decision making, the ripple effects contribute to a *thriving, resilient society of active citizens*, where people have stronger trust in one another, a meaningful sense of belonging, and are less polarised. Sortition-based deliberations, like citizens' assemblies, lead to more legitimate and informed decisions, policies, and resource allocations.

Our values

DemocracyNext's values inform how we approach our work – with rigour, curiosity, in collaboration with others, and with an ambition to be visionary. We don't just tinker at the margins of the status quo. We seed the change we want to see.



Our vision

Imagine political headlines aren't filled with campaigning soundbites, stories about corrupt political financing, or it taking months and months to form government coalitions. Imagine if what mattered in politics was citizens - people with no political career ambitions - getting together to do the hard work of figuring out how to collectively solve the problems facing their families, neighbourhoods, schools, cities, regions, and countries.

Entire places buzzing with groups of citizens from all walks of life – activated and transformed after their lucky lottery selections – deliberating together on different decisions.

Deliberation instead of debating clubs in schools. Student councils chosen by sortition rather than popularity contests, with power rotating, and young people sharing power from an early age.

Academics, staff, and students coming together to make decisions affecting the future of universities. About use of AI, environmental policies, diversity and inclusion, free speech, and other values-driven, political decisions that affect them all.

Local residents working with museum directors, staff, and curators to make culture something for everybody. Making people feel part of the places they live. Contributing as citizens.

In places all over the world, people flexing their civic muscles. Feeling heard and empowered. Their agency awakened. Three-way trust rebuilt. Society's democratic resilience stronger than ever.

Pockets of this vision are already a reality in some places.

For this vision to become reality more widely, we need more people to know: what these democratic methods are; how effective they can be; how to implement them; and how to make them permanent features of institutional decision making, not just one-off initiatives.

Why this matters

People are losing faith in politics. There is a ‘triple trust’ dilemma: people’s trust in institutions, institutions’ trust in people, and people’s trust in one another are alarmingly low. Important decisions get stuck or ignored. Meanwhile, many are drawn to authoritarian alternatives.

We believe people are right to be frustrated. Our current democratic institutions are failing to give people real agency over the decisions that shape their lives. In its true meaning, democracy is about more than elections. Rather than simply defending the status quo, we need to shift power to citizens through new democratic processes that actually work.

Moreover, for the cost of one day of US election spending, we could fund hundreds of citizens' assemblies worldwide – it's time to rebalance.

Sortition and deliberation offer a better way forward. When people are randomly selected and given time, information, and structured conversation to work through complex problems together, remarkable things happen:

- **Better decisions:** Diverse groups free from electoral pressures can tackle long-term challenges that politicians avoid
- **Trust is rebuilt:** People regain confidence in democracy - and in each other - when they see fellow citizens making thoughtful, informed decisions
- **Genuine representation:** Random selection ensures decision-makers truly reflect the communities they serve – across age, background, geography, and perspective
- **Broken deadlocks:** Deliberation moves beyond polarised debate to find common ground on seemingly intractable issues
- **Empowered citizens:** Deliberators gain skills, confidence, and lasting engagement in civic life

Our hypothesis is that if people have greater agency in decision making, the ripple effects contribute to a thriving, resilient society of active citizens, where people have stronger trust in one another, a meaningful sense of belonging, and are less polarised. Sortition-based deliberations, like citizens’ assemblies, lead to more legitimate and informed decisions, policies, and resource allocations.

The *challenge*

Despite approximately 1,000 examples worldwide – a genuine deliberative wave – sortition and deliberation remain little-known as pragmatic alternatives for democratic renewal. Whilst many people get excited when they learn about these methods, most don't know where to start if they want to use them.

The real transformation requires moving beyond one-off initiatives. As David Van Reybrouck said: "One-off assemblies are like one healthy meal. Better than nothing, but it won't give you a healthy lifestyle. To rebuild trust in democracy, we need something lasting."

Only a handful of deliberative bodies using sortition have been institutionalised as permanent features of decision-making, genuinely shifting power. One citizens' assembly with one group of people might lead to better decisions for those involved, but it won't transform democracy and power structures in a meaningful way.



What are 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*

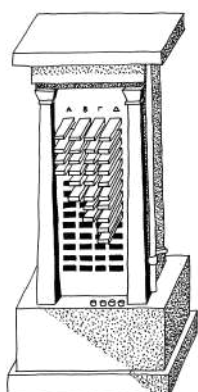
A citizens' assembly can range in size from roughly 20-200 people. Selected at random from a community or nation, they ideally have a mandate from a public authority, which can be a government entity or the leaders of a museum, school, university, or other institution. Assemblies typically meet for at 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](#)

Three pillars of our work: *Spreading the ideas, enabling the practice, and embedding the power*

We work strategically and in collaboration with others to support and grow the global deliberative democracy movement through three interconnected approaches:

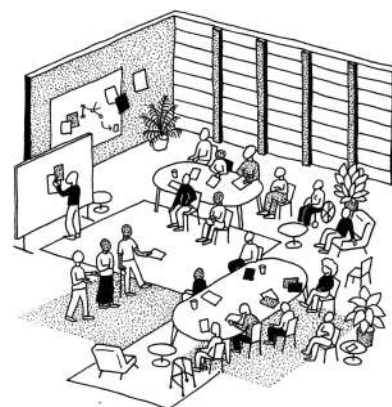


01 Spreading the ideas

Making sortition, deliberation, and citizens' assemblies widely known and wanted. We engage in creative storytelling and advocacy that inspires people to learn about and champion another democratic future, powered by real stories from around the world.

02 Enabling the practice

Making it easy to implement and innovate with these democratic methods. We create the tools, guides, and resources needed to help people and organisations implement deliberative processes using sortition, whilst experimenting with and researching innovations that improve quality, enhance legitimacy, and accelerate their spread.



03 Embedding the power

Embedding these democratic methods as permanent features of decision making. We are a scaling catalyst for sustainable, democratic systems change. This means that we advise ambitious leaders across multiple sectors to establish deliberative processes using sortition as new institutions that lead to systemic change and shift power. Our future ambitions involve becoming a funder that invests in local and regional scaling catalysts that scale this new vision of democracy.

In all of this, our role as a field-builder is to equip more people and organisations with the knowledge, skills, and infrastructure to design, implement, and evaluate citizens' assemblies and other democratic innovations; to uphold high standards and push the field to continue evolving, experimenting, and learning; and to give people hope that another democratic future is possible.

2. Our statutory objectives

As a Stichting, our statutory objects, and activities to serve these objects, are set out in our founding Deed of Incorporation, and are as follows:

Our public benefit objectives

The Foundation's objective is for the benefit of the public. The objects of the Foundation are:

- (a) To advance a more just, joyful, and collaborative future where everyone has meaningful power to shape their societies;
- (b) To transform political systems, institutions, and organisations through the principles of sortition, deliberation, and participation;
- (c) To enable a society where people have greater agency and dignity, and where we leverage our collective intelligence, and find common ground;
- (d) To advance a democracy where we are in a more harmonious relationship with each other and with the planet;
- (e) And all other acts and things which may be conducive to the aforesaid objects, all such to promote the democratic order.

How we achieve our objectives

The Foundation aims to achieve its objects by, inter alia:

- VI. **Advocating** for sortition, deliberation, participation as defining principles of a new democratic paradigm.
- VII. **Experimenting** with, creating, and evaluating new practices, technology, spatial infrastructure, systems, and institutions that advance the field of democratic innovation.
- VIII. **Researching** the practices and impacts of new forms of democracy, notably those that are anchored in the principles of deliberation, sortition (representation by lottery), and participation, such as Citizens' Assemblies and other deliberative and participatory forums.
- IX. **Creating** tools, resources, learning, as well as field- and capacity-building programmes and convening networks that enable more people to have the knowledge and skills to be able to advocate for, design, and implement new democratic practices and institutions.
- X. **Working** with governments, policy makers, practitioners, civil society organisations, international organisations, and other actors about how to design new democratic institutions, such as Citizens' Assemblies.
- XI. **Collaborating** with other actors to promote the ideas of a new democratic paradigm in creative ways that engage a wider public's imagination through exhibitions, public installations, programming, and other initiatives.
- XII. **Co-operating** in any way with organisations with similar objects and achievements.

And all other acts and things which may be conducive to the aforesaid objects.

All the activities to serve the objective will be performed without the aim of generating profit.

The foundation is an ANBI (Algemeen nut beogende instelling) - a Dutch non-profit.

3. Our planned activities & public benefit

As a non-profit, non-partisan institution, all of our work is for the public benefit.

Since incorporation, DemocracyNext has completed its start-up phase (2022–2025) and is now delivering its Phase 2.0 strategy (2026–2028), organised around the three pillars of our work. Current and recent projects and programmes include:

Catalysing new institutions: from pilots towards permanence

- **Cities Programme** (Vilnius, Lithuania; Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg; Kerewan, The Gambia). Our flagship programme supporting cities to run citizens' assemblies and explore pathways to making them permanent institutions. Each assembly is independently evaluated in partnership with a local academic institution, and each has begun to seed a local ecosystem of practitioners, advocates, and experts – including the formalisation of the Katcha Network for deliberative democracy across Africa.
- **Museums & Cultural Institutions**
We supported the first citizens' jury in a UK museum at **Birmingham Museums Trust (UK)**; its recommendations have become a cornerstone of the Trust's wider transformation. We advise other museums and cultural institutions around the world who are taking steps to their first assemblies.
- **Scaling Catalysts: Deschutes Civic Assembly (Oregon, USA)**
The assembly catalysed the creation of the Central Oregon Civic Action Project (COCAP), now a learning site for civic leaders across Oregon and the wider US.
- **Workplace assemblies: Mondragon (Basque Country, Spain)**
A collaboration with Mondragon, the MIT Center for Constructive Communication, and Arantzazulab exploring how sortition, deliberation, and rotation can be applied to cooperative decision making and governance – democratising not just governments and cultural institutions, but economies.



Research, tools & field-building



→ **Deliberation & Technology (DelibTech) Network**

Co-convened with the AI & Democracy Foundation, an international community of technologists, practitioners, and experts building, studying, and using technology to enhance deliberation and create digital infrastructure for deliberative democracy.

→ **Research and publications**

Papers including Five Dimensions of Scaling Democratic Deliberation: With and Beyond AI and Scaling Catalysts; a forthcoming co-edited book, Anchoring Deliberative Institutions (De Gruyter); and research on the Paris Citizens' Assembly's Citizen Bill on Homelessness – the first legislation drafted by a citizens' assembly to be passed directly into law by a major political body.

→ **Assembly Commons**

An open-access knowledge hub building on our Assembling an Assembly Guide (read over 30,000 times and translated into multiple languages), including databases about assemblies around the world and, with NYU's GovLab, exploration of a Deliberation Data Commons to make data from deliberative processes securely available to researchers, technologists, and the public.

→ **Assembly Voices Network**

A network of former assembly members as advocates and storytellers for deliberative democracy in their own cities and languages.

→ **Including the More-than-Human in Decision Making**

A two-year project with the University of Sydney to inventory existing methods, run original experiments, and support a global community of practice on how decision making might meaningfully account for our relationship with the living world.

Target Audiences

We help ambitious leaders across government, culture, and education learn, establish, and permanently embed these practices. And we share compelling stories about citizen-led decision making across our social media platforms to inspire a wider audience.

The most up-to-date information on projects, and further reading on DemocracyNext's work, can be found at www.demnext.org.

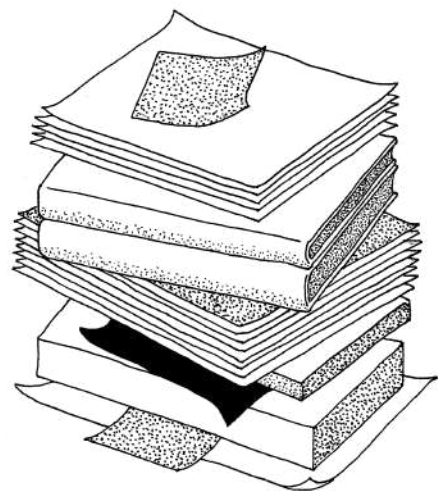
4. Source, management & destination of funds

Source of funds

DemocracyNext received initial start-up funding of just under one million euros for the period 2022–2024 from several foundations via a fiscal sponsorship with Open Collective Europe. Since then, the organisation has raised approximately €3 million in total start-up funding for its first phase (2022–2025). In 2025, total operating income was €811,714, of which €743,514 came from grants. Recent institutional funders include the Quadrivium Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Evens Foundation, alongside anonymous donors and individual citizen-supporters.

As a Stichting, DemocracyNext raises funds from a variety of sources, principally through grants from trusts, foundations, and public grant-giving bodies, and through individual donations. Contributions may also be received from corporations, governments or other authorities, and public institutions. DemocracyNext invites and welcomes members of the public to make donations to support its objectives, including through monthly pledges on its Substack newsletter.

In addition, DemocracyNext may fund its Object Activities by performing some limited Object Activities against a remuneration – namely speaking events, consultancy services, training, capacity building, advisory work to set up assemblies, and community and/or corporate membership models. Any such activities undertaken are in service of the Object, and have a non-profit motive.



Management of funds

DemocracyNext aims to maintain stable and reasonable operating funds, and over time to build reasonable reserves necessary to guarantee the continuity of the organisation's work in pursuit of its objectives, in line with best practice for non-profits. All administrative costs are kept at a reasonable level in order to focus as much resource as possible in support of the cause.

The Stichting holds funds in a designated Dutch bank account with Ebury Partners. The Foundation's annual accounts are prepared by independent Hague-based accounting firm Schipper & Paul, and financial results are published in its annual impact report.

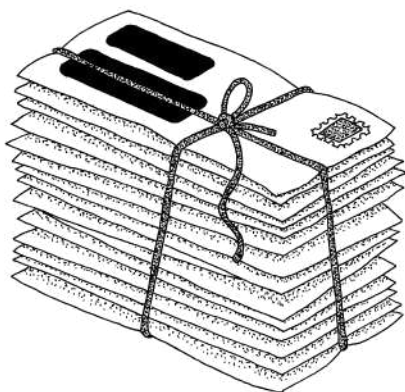
DemocracyNext believes in the importance of transparency in its finances. The Foundation applies a donation due diligence policy to the acceptance of gifts.

Spending allocation

DemocracyNext uses all funds received in pursuit of its objectives, and on maintaining DemocracyNext. Funds are deployed across the three pillars of the organisation's work: spreading the ideas, enabling the practice, and embedding the power of sortition, deliberation, and rotation.

In line with its objects, DemocracyNext's future ambitions include acting as a catalytic funder – making grants to local and regional 'scaling catalyst' organisations that spread these democratic practices in their own contexts. Any such re-granting would be undertaken exclusively in pursuit of the Foundation's objects and without profit motive. No capital funds are held.

No individual or legal entity may dispose of the Foundation's assets as if they were their own. In the event of dissolution, any surplus would be applied to a purpose consistent with the Foundation's objects.



5. Governance & remuneration

Board positions

DemocracyNext was set up on 15 September 2022 – International Day of Democracy – initially through a fiscal sponsorship with Open Collective Europe.

In December 2023, the organisation was incorporated as Stichting DemocracyNext (known as 'DemocracyNext'), an ANBI Stichting (Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling) in The Hague, in The Netherlands. We are an independent non-profit organisation focused on public benefit (specifically 'the promotion of the democratic legal order'), in line with our articles of association.

The Board of directors of DemocracyNext (the “Board”) consists of Executive and non-Executive Board Members. As such, the Board is a so-called “one-tier” board that has been implemented in the articles of association. Claudia Chwalisz (Founder & Chief Executive Officer), and Lucy Reid (Chief Strategy & Creative Officer; Treasurer; Secretary), are the two Executive Board Members. The Executive Directors are charged in particular with the day-to-day management of the Foundation, and have employment agreements for these executive tasks.

Robbie Stamp is the Chair of the Board, and is joined by two other non-Executive Board Members, Matt Abrams, Panthea Lee (2023-2026), and Michelle Wisson Clements (from 2026). The non-executive directors are charged in particular with supervising the execution of tasks by the executive directors. The task of supervising the execution of tasks by executive directors cannot be taken away from non-executive directors by division of tasks.

Remuneration policy

The members of the Board do not receive any remuneration, with the exception that (i) all members of the Board may receive a reimbursement of expenses incurred and/or non-excessive attendance fees (vacatiegelden), and (ii) members of the Board with the title “executive director” may receive a remuneration for executive duties performed.

DemocracyNext is also supported by an International Advisory Council and works with a wide network of partners, practitioners, and collaborating organisations around the world.

The Stichting publishes an annual Impact Report, including Financial Statement, and ANBI statement annually. This Policy Plan will be regularly updated.



6. Contact & registration details

Legal form

Stichting (Dutch Foundation / Charity)

ANBI status

Registered ANBI since December 2023

KvK number (Chamber of Commerce)

92237444

RSIN (Tax number)

865949347

Bank account (IBAN)

NL64EBPB2845878907 (Euros account)

Get in touch:

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

[Website](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Assembly Guide](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#) | hello@demnext.org

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

