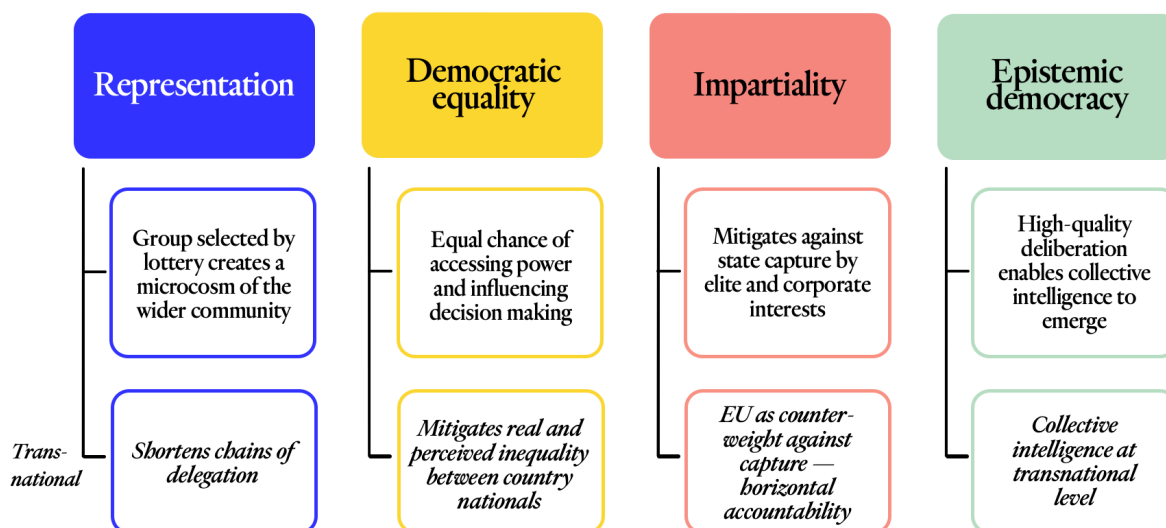# The European Citizens' Assembly: Designing the missing branch of the EU government
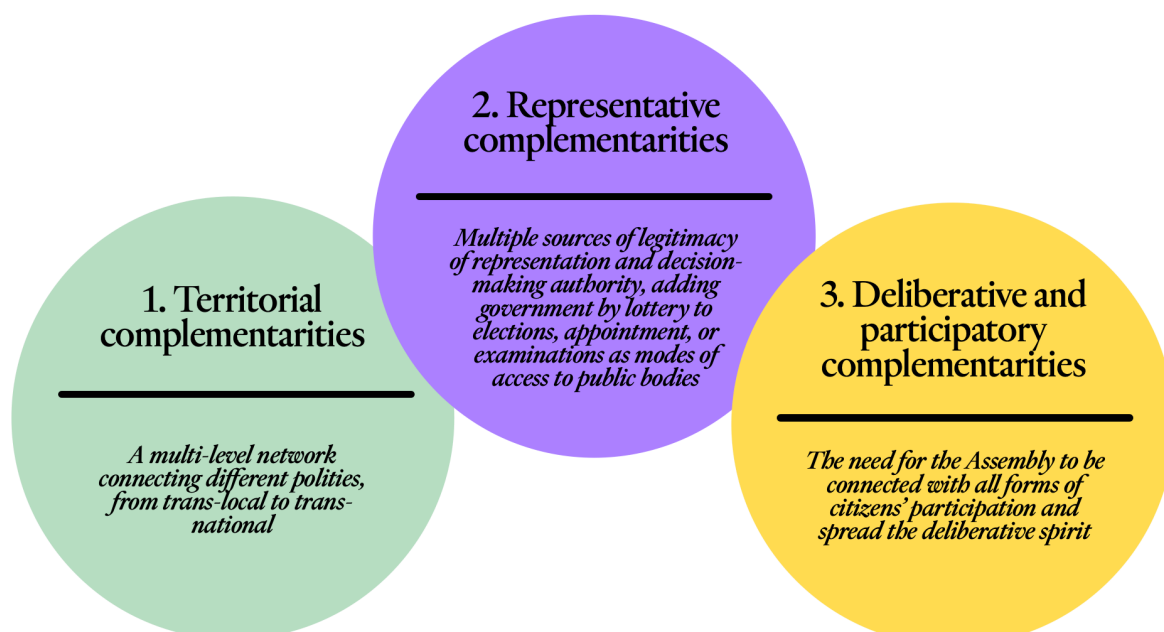
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In this paper, we outline *why* we need a European Citizens' Assembly — a political institution of everyday people from across the European Union (EU) selected by sortition — why it should share real *power* with the other institutions of the EU, its core *principles* and *design features*, and we suggest pathways for *implementation*.

Four arguments for the EU Citizens' Assembly:

Representation	Democratic equality	Impartiality	Epistemic democracy
Group selected by lottery creates a microcosm of the wider community	Equal chance of accessing power and influencing decision making	Mitigates against state capture by elite and corporate interests	High-quality deliberation enables collective intelligence to emerge
Shortens chains of delegation	*Mitigates real and perceived inequality between country nationals*	*EU as counter-weight against capture — horizontal accountability*	*Collective intelligence at transnational level*

Trans-national

Three core defining principles:

2. Representative complementarities

Multiple sources of legitimacy of representation and decision-making authority, adding government by lottery to elections, appointment, or examinations as modes of access to public bodies

1. Territorial complementarities

A multi-level network connecting different polities, from trans-local to trans-national

3. Deliberative and participatory complementarities

The need for the Assembly to be connected with all forms of citizens' participation and spread the deliberative spirit

Five features of a multi-faceted EU Citizens' Assembly:

1. Empowered	*People perceive it as impactful*	• More than just advisory • No EU institution has binding authority, but the Assembly should have ethos of empowerment
2. Familiar	*People see themselves in its composition*	• The Assembly will be made up of several hundred ordinary citizens selected by sortition for a defined period of time, with rotation
3. Rooted	*People see it as a bridge between themselves and places of power*	• Bottom-up *and* top-down dynamics • Connected to an ever-growing network of participatory and deliberative spaces
4. Ubiquitous	*People can meet it, as it travels across Europe, reflecting the EU's breadth, diversity, and ethos of translation*	• A multilingual Assembly taking place around Europe and in places from theatres to parks to parliaments and virtual worlds
5. Tech-enhanced	*People's experience in the Assembly is improved and people's trust in it is strengthened thanks to AI-powered tools*	• Sense-making, analytic listening, preference mapping, and aggregation • Within the Assembly's deliberations • Used for evidence-gathering from wider public

Three sets of questions for design variations:

1. *Initiation: Multiple triggers*
2. *Authorship: Variable configurations*
3. *Decision making: Impact, authority, and accountability*

How do we get there?

- The process of establishing the EUCA will be *iterative and dynamic*.

- The EU Citizens' Assembly could be *legally* created in various ways: by a joint decision or inter-institutional agreement between the three existing EU institutions, by a Convention revising the treaties, by an EU referendum, or even as a result of an empowered EU Citizens' Initiative.

- We need the momentum and inspiration provided by a more *radical horizon*. We need both citizen empowerment by EU institutions and the kind of self-empowerment by citizens alongside civil society.

> *In a broader context of democratic crisis and green, digital, and geopolitical transitions, we need to open up our imaginations to radical political change. Political and technocratic elites must start giving up some control and allow for a modicum of self-determination by citizens.*

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