



Press File

14 September 2012

G1000, third phase: 32 citizens working... on labour

Friday night, 7:30 PM, 14 September 2012: A diverse group of 32 citizens convenes for the first time. Over the course of three weekends, they will work on a plan, a series of policy recommendations.

They are isolated from the outside world and guided by a group of facilitators and translators.

They can take recourse to specialists to judge and assess their proposals.

Their theme? Labour. And unemployment. And how we could handle these issues in Belgium.

Sunday night, 11 November 2012: Exactly one year after the unforgettable Civilians' Summit in Tour and Taxis, in 2011. During the closing ceremony, the Citizens' Plan will be solemnly presented to the chairpersons of each Parliament, the press and the public.

Why this theme?

"How to manage work and unemployment in our society" is the starting question. The theme was chosen **by the citizens' panel themselves**, from the three main themes of last year's Citizens' Summit (i.e., social security, immigration and wealth distribution). Their argumentation (during individual interviews) led to a focusing of the 'social security' theme to labour issues and unemployment. The subject at hand also involves immigration and wealth distribution, and is broad and complex enough to come to a series of relevant recommendations!

We are already grateful to these 32 citizens, for their engagement. And of course we, the organizers of the G1000, are also hugely curious about what they will decide.

It may be useful to briefly recapitulate **the funnel-shaped process of the G1000**: during Summer 2011, we started with **an on-line consultation** where everyone in Belgium could submit their ideas, and vote on others' proposals. Out of the thousands of suggestions, we chose the **25 most prevalent themes**. On 11 November 2011, at the Citizens' Summit at Tour

and Taxis, **704 citizens deliberated** on which of these themes were the most important for the country. They **chose the three main themes**, and a number of sub-themes within these. **32 participants were randomly selected** from all participants of the G1000 (Tour & Taxis + G'Off + G'Home) this summer. They chose the most important theme in their opinion, and will expand upon it in great detail over the course of three weekends.

For more information about the different stages of the process, see www.g1000.org

What's the goal?

The G1000 wants to prove that deliberative democracy works. We have an unshaken faith in the capacity of ordinary people to arrive at a consensus together, and in the added value such a process can bring to our society.

The G1000 is a **laboratory** we use to experiment with different forms of participation. In Tour and Taxis, on 11 November 2011, hundreds of citizens converged for a day to generate ideas according to the so-called "Town Hall model" (many participants, many ideas, a short session).

This autumn, the Citizens' Panel (or Consensus Conference) continues the proceedings: a small, very diverse group of people executes a thorough analysis according to a well-defined methodology. For instance, think of Iceland, where 25 citizens helped to rewrite the Constitution!



Democracy is more than just elections

The G1000's tenets

- Citizens have a say, even in between elections.
- Practical examples and international research prove that ordinary citizens can bring a fresh approach to the most complex societal questions, if they are allowed enough time and information.
- Citizens' active participation is not an attack on the democratic system, but a necessary addition to it.
- The G1000 is a positive gesture to the political leaders of the country, from its citizens.

The G1000 is dead, long live the G1000!

We were often asked if the team had given up (especially after the media coverage of the dissolution of G1000 asbl – see below). Quite the opposite: the G1000 is alive and kicking!

After the Civilians' Summit of November 2011, it took some searching for the right methodology to sustainably continue our project. The analysis and structuring of the mass of ideas submitted on 11 November also took time. We have worked hard in silence. The G1000's motive force remains enthusiasm. Of the founders, the newer members and the volunteers. We see new faces at every general meeting: for us, this is the best proof that the G1000's ideas are alive and relevant.

And the non-profit we founded, then? We just dissolved it to simplify our administration. **The Foundation for Future Generations**, who managed our finances since the beginning, have completely adopted the G1000.

Deliberative democracy... Excuse me?

Deliberation ≠ **debate** (trying to prove one's right)

Deliberation ≠ **consultation** (listening and deciding by oneself afterwards)

Deliberation ≠ **seeking a compromise** (where self-interest is still primary)

Deliberation = **searching for a consensus, without ignoring conflicts**

The result is also the value of the citizen participation process in itself, the quality of stimulating debate and citizens' consciousness, the creation of a democratic meeting place. The G1000 is an experiment in democratic decision-making.

"No democracy without the right methodology"

Min Reuchamps (responsible for the Methodology Section): "The G1000's method is based on objective scientific research. We have asked support from the professionals from Levuur (a firm with solid experience in conducting citizens' panels, who also assisted with the G1000's process) to guide the debates. The participants were selected at random by an independent research bureau.

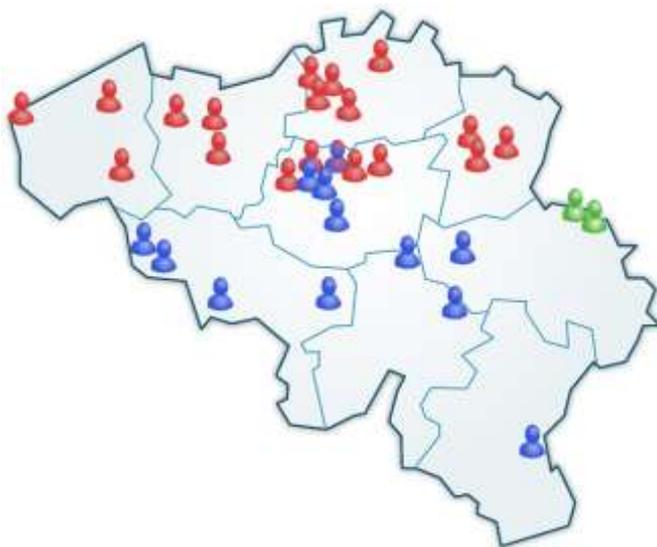
The conclusion of their discussions is not predetermined. The G1000 offers a neutral framework and a well-weighted procedure to discuss new proposals.

The methodology is a kind of "learning process", which enables the participants to integrate their own experiences with those of others, and to reach a consensus in a number of steps."



The Citizens' Panel: who?

They will remain anonymous for the moment, in order to work in peace. The group consists of:



- 18 Dutch speakers - 12 French speakers - 2 German speakers
- 16 men - 16 women
- highly educated – less educated – native Belgian – from foreign origin – from 19 to 66 years old

More details at www.q1000.org

Three symbolic locations

The Citizens' Panel convenes at places that underline how much the G1000 wants to be an enrichment to, and not an attack on, the existing body politic.

14-15-16 September



Flemish Parliament
(Brussels)

6-7 October



Walloon Parliament
(Namur)

9-10-11 November



Senate
(Brussels)

And beyond 11 November 2012?

In the long term, we want the G1000 to become **a permanent platform for participative democracy**, an instrument for citizens who want their voice to be heard, for organisations, for politicians who want to consult the citizenry about sensitive themes.

It has not yet been decided which shape this platform should take in practice. But the name G1000 already embodies **neutrality** and expertise in democratic innovation. We will keep **collecting expertise** about citizens' participation and methodologies for citizens' initiatives in the future, so the whole country can (continue to) participate in debate...

International symposium on 13 December 2012

Citizens' participation is a global phenomenon. The Icelandic example is well-known, just as the citizens' panel that decided about the repurposing of Ground Zero in New York. But in Ireland (education question), Denmark (new technologies and how to approach them) and Belgium (King Baudouin Foundation), likewise, deliberative models are being used, often to surprisingly positive results.

Hence the symposium **"Deliberative Innovations: theory and practice"**, which we will organize in Leuven and Brussels, in the presence of 10 international specialists.

More information will follow at www.g1000.org.

Some of the first 'believers'



Benoît Derenne (Foundation for Future Generations)

"I have a rock-solid belief in *crowd* wisdom. Every citizen is an expert on his own living environment and experiences. And I am equally convinced about the need our democratic system has to do its own Research & Development, in order to safeguard its future. The G1000 combines both convictions!"



David Van Reybrouck (Founder, G1000)

"The G1000's mission is immediately apparent : strengthening democracy through citizens' participation."

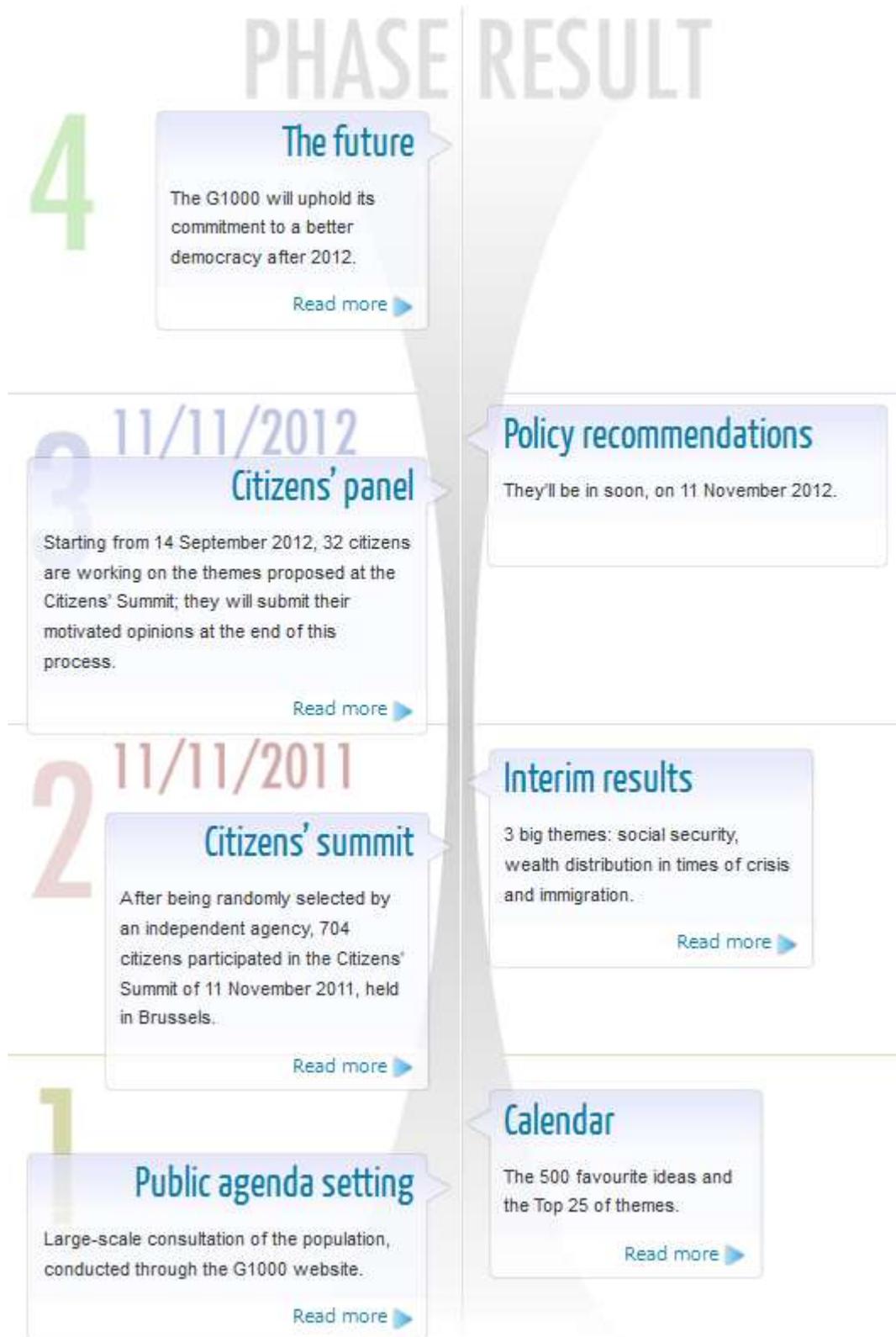


Didier Caluwaerts (Free University of Brussels)

"The deliberative ideal proposes a political system based on talking, where decisions are not taken by way of power politics, but through the judgment of reasonable arguments."

The G1000's history in a nutshell

For a complete timeline, please refer to our updated website: www.g1000.org.



See you on 11 November 2012!

For the closing ceremony and the press conference, to meet the 32 citizens and receive the final report.



To lend us a hand

The Foundation for Future Generations

As early as June 2011, the Foundation for Future Generations adopted the G1000, which has become an integral constituent of its programme. As such, the G1000 can wholly concentrate its efforts on its citizens' objective, and find support in a well-established Foundation with years of experience in the field of democratic innovation. The non-profit organisation set up by the G1000's founders (in May 2011) has since been dissolved, so as to improve governance and cut back on administration work .

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twitter.com/G1000org

Contacts

Spokespersons

Francesca Vanthielen



vanthielen.francesca@gmail.com

Benoît Derenne (Foundation for Future Generations)



0474 / 756 206

b.derenne@stg.be

David Van Reybrouck



Available from 16 September on.

david.vanreybrouck@g1000.org

Campaign Executive

Cato Léonard



0495 / 297 440

catoleonard@hotmail.com

Methodology / International symposium

Min Reuchamps



min.reuchamps@uclouvain.be



Credits...

The team

We do not keep offices or a meeting room, don't have an organization plan or business cards... And still, we move mountains' worth of work. The G1000 is a very horizontal, open organisation that runs only on the goodwill of its volunteers (the external consultants in charge of process management excepted).

<p>General coordination David Van Reybrouck Benoît Derenne Min Reuchamps Cato Léonard</p> <p>Campaign executive Cato Léonard</p> <p>Spokespersons David Van Reybrouck Benoît Derenne Francesca Vanthielen</p> <p>International relations David Van Reybrouck Peter Vermeersch</p> <p>Fundraising section Benoît Derenne Cato Léonard David Van Reybrouck</p>	<p>Methodology section</p> <p><u>Coordination</u> Min Reuchamps</p> <p><u>Research</u> Didier Caluwaerts Jérémy Dodeigne Dirk Jacobs Dave Sinardet Sébastien Van Drooghenbroeck Peter Vermeersch</p> <p><u>Data analysis</u> Didier Caluwaerts Sarah Carpentier François Ghesquière François Xavier Lefebvre Jan Keustermans Vincent Vandermeeren Peter Van Praet</p> <p><u>Reporters</u> Margot Van de Put Christophe Bell François Xavier Lefebvre</p> <p><u>Supporting facilitators</u> Didier Caluwaerts Aurélie Leflère</p> <p><u>Final reporter</u> Miriana Frattarola</p> <p><u>POC participators</u> Nathalie Goethals</p> <p><u>External consultants in charge of process management</u> Stef Steyaert Stéphane Delberghe Mark Hongenaert</p>
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<p>In-/external communication section</p> <p><u>Coordination and content</u> Miriana Frattarola Geertrui Heyvaert Lieve Van den Broeck Jonathan Van Parijs</p> <p><u>Website</u> Paul Barbieux (webmaster) Charlotte Bonduel Lieve Van den Broeck David Van Reybrouck</p> <p><u>News letters</u> Emmy Deschuttere Geertrui Heyvaert Anne-Sophie Igot</p> <p><u>Final publication (content and design)</u> Christophe Bell Martine Deré Benoît Derenne Miriana Frattarola Fatma Girretz Inge Henneman Jelle Henneman Ken Lambeets Jelle Meys Jean-Luc Tillière Iyallola Tillieu David Van Reybrouck</p> <p><u>Photo- and videography</u> Atelier en Tik Gérard Lambot Jean-Luc Tillière</p> <p><u>Advice</u> Marc Michils</p> <p><u>Translation coordination</u> Véronique Phillips</p>	<p>Logistics section</p> <p><u>Catering, accommodation, transport and coordination</u> Ronny David Aline Goethals Alice Naveau Vincent Vandermeeren Raf Knops</p> <p><u>Final ceremony organisation</u> Aline Goethals Alice Naveau Vincent Vandermeeren Raf Knops</p> <p>Volunteers' section Fatma Girretz François Jeanjean Benjamin Rieder Fatima Zibouh</p> <p>Interpreters/translators' section Astrid Baeten, Philippe Beck Joris Beckers, Christophe Bell Evelyne Bellemans, Bart Defrancq Mark De Geest, Douchka De Groote Yves Dejaeghere, Ellen De Vlaminck Aline Goethals Thierry Jiménez-Scholberg Vincent Larondelle, Pauline Lemaire Reinhilde Pulinx, Patrick Rondou Gerda Schaut, Simon Schunz Heleen Touquet, Rudi Thomassen Brunhilde Vandenbulcke, Peter Van Praet Ruth Van Wassenhove, Peter Vermeersch Dirk Verbeeck, Georg Weinand</p>
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... and all those we may have forgotten to mention, with our apologies !