



## Participatory Democracy in Region Poitou-Charentes

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Since 2004, participatory democracy has been a constant and followed approach in Poitou-Charentes. It has been gradually applied from the prior phase of the decisions to their evaluation afterwards.

-since 2004, Participatory Forums bring together actors and citizens to co-elaborate the policies implemented by the Region in all its fields of action (Regional Plan against Global Warming, eco-industries development, water policy, culture, handicap, sport, social links, young farmers installation, health and work, training, TIC, etc.);

-since January 2005, the High Schools Participatory Budget is funded with an annual amount allocated of 10 Millions Euro;

-in 2008, the firsts Participatory workshops and the first Citizens' Jury are hold to evaluate the regional public policies.

Participatory Democracy in Poitou-Charentes has also got an international dimension, through regular international exchanges and european cooperations:

-in 2007, the Regions of Poitou-Charentes, Tuscany and Catalonia launch the project Ideal-EU;

-since 2005, the Maison de la Région welcomes the Europe-Americas meeting on Participatory Democracy;

-in 2008, Poitou-Charentes Region launches an European Network for Participatory Democracy.





## The High School (Lycées) Participatory Budget

In January 2005, the Region Poitou-Charentes created the High School Participatory Budget. It was a premiere in France ... and in the world (the participatory budgets are mainly for municipality and rarely applied to a regional level).

It involves the whole 93 public High School of the Region and since 2008, it has been adapted, according to their demand, to all private schools under contract.

Every pupil, parents, teachers and employees in each school are invited to debate about the projects they consider as priorities « in order to live and work better at school ».

The total amount allocated to this budget is 10 millions Euro. There is no predefined amount for each High School because it would encourage the integral spending of this sum, whereas the most important is to list and answer the major and prior needs. It represents 10% of the regional budget for the High Schools: it is a choice of an effective participatory democracy on public spending.

Two main ideas expressed by Ségolène Royal, President of Poitou-Charentes Region, inspired this participatory budgeting: *“A spent euro must be a useful euro”* and *“Share the decisions to take the good ones”*.

### How it works?

1. A first meeting, at the beginning of the school year in each lycée, introduces the method and is the occasion to discuss participants proposals. During 45 minutes, the participants start a reflexion, in small groups of 12 persons (better for individual expression), over the projects that could improve daily life at school. Those workshops then choose a spokesman who presents the listed propositions and justify them in front of the plenary assembly.

2. During the following weeks, the Region services evaluate and value the technical feasibility of all the projects and their costs.

3. Then during the second meeting, the Region presents to each Participatory Budget Assembly the technical and costs valuation of the projects that the assembly proposed at the first meeting. Then the participants can start the debates with all the elements necessary to the consistence of their judgement. During these deliberations, the general interest of the High School is collectively sought. Finally the participants vote on each project and the ranking of those projects is immediately done.

4. The Regional Council, respecting its commitment, votes the funding of the first projects (in the limit of the 10 Million Euro amount yearly allowed (generally, the three first projects are financed in each school).

The High School Participatory Budget already allowed the Region to finance 1015 projects in the last four years (mainly buying of equipment, improving school life, and fitting out the buildings).

And the participation to this process increases regularly each year.

-2005/2006: 10 702 persons (7 018 pupils)

-2006/2007: 14 043 persons (10 751 pupils)

-2007/2008: 15 399 persons (13 350 pupils)

According to the researchers who have studied the Participatory Budget in High Schools of Poitou-Charentes, it's one of the most successful experience in participatory budgeting in terms of percentage of participants.

Actually, the High School Participatory Budget is annually evaluated thanks to a triple check:

-an independent researcher, specialist in Participatory Democracy, delivers a report to the Region;

-the participants to the assemblies in the High Schools, fulfil a questionnaire during the last session of the participatory assembly;

-through a Participatory Evaluation Day at the end of the school year, where parents, pupils and members of the school staff are invited.

The Participatory Budget, applied to the management of 10% of the Regional Budget for the High Schools, has allowed to execute many projects that springed from proposals made during the Participatory Assemblies such as the implementation of one (at least) cultural animator in each school, cultural programs and events (*Culture Plus* for the development of cultural activities, *Créateuf* that gives a unique opportunity to the pupils to express themselves, etc.), and actions of prevention against school dropout, sexual diseases and contraception, driving dangers, etc.

The High-School Participatory Budget is a way for the Regional expenditures to better fit with the expectations of the educative community members and to improve regional efficiency

It also allows the regional services, during the meetings and on a side of the debates, to understand more directly and quickly the concretes problems of the high schools (renovation in dormitories, toilets, etc., a construction site getting late, etc.).

Debates public nature, financial transparency, increased reactivity, accountability during the participatory assemblies: the High-School Participatory Budget has strongly influenced the way of doing in the regional administration and lead to the necessary reorganisation for a better attention to the schools' needs, and more effectiveness in real time.

It shows how much participatory democracy is a way of modernising public administrations and working with all schools on an equal footing (between urban and rural schools, general and professional lycées, etc.).



## Citizens' Jury

On 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> of April and 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> of May, the first Citizens' Jury has met in the House of the Region. Composed of inhabitants of Poitou-Charentes sorted by lot, the jury's goal is an evaluation a regional public policy. The actions concerned were the Regional policies to struggle against Climate Change and GHG (GreenHouse Gazes) emissions since 2004.

It gathered together 25 persons reflecting the territorial, generational, professional and social diversity of Poitou-Charentes, with different careers and life pathes and points of view.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2008, this Jury delivered the Report-out created thanks to those four days of audition and deliberation to the Regional Council meeting in plenary session.

### A random selection

The participatory democracy devices based on voluntary participation (call for volunteers, or random selection based on a list of volunteers) generally have an important disadvantage: the most graduated, the most sure of their abilities (technical or civical), the most used to talk in public are the ones who come spontaneously to participate. Working women, unemployed persons and low-qualified working-class, from all origins and finally youngsters are really unrepresented in those devices.

The Participatory Budget in Poitou-Charentes avoids this « sociological bias » because it is implemented in all High Schools of the Region (general education, technological, professional or agriculture lycées, etc.) and fairly hands over to the pupils as to the teachers and to the parents.

But these ways to practice Participatory Democracy, for example in neighborhood councils are vulnerable to the over-representating of those who have time, experience, etc.. Taking this into account, Region Poitou-Charentes made the choice of a random selection (entrusted to a specialised company), based on regional socio-demographic statistics. This method guarantees a better representation of the regional social diversity.

### How it works?

Climate change is a complex topic and involves many issues to overcome in order to appreciate and evaluate the consistence of the regional policies.

That's why moments of information and training have been planned so that the citizens adopt the problems and issues presented: collective reading and common commentaries of given documents in the « participant file » (presenting different aspects of the climate crisis, factual elements about regional goals and actions); exhibition « Naturalibus » about climate change with an animator; auditions of experts, regional actors (associations, professionals), majority and opposition elected representatives.

Each audition has been prepared by questions elaborated by the Jury and followed by a debriefing

about the information brought as about the possible ways and conclusions to be written in the Citizens' Jury Report. This latter has, by the way, completed its information asking files and audition that were not initially scheduled.

A team of professionals specialised in the animation and facilitation of participatory workshops and meetings (citizens conferences) led the workshops and debates. *Missions Publiques* has been chosen after a public invitation to tender, and integrated to the regional steering commission which elaborated the method.

This « neutral third party » brought a know-how that guaranty the information quality, the participation of each one, the listening of all points of view and the real collective elaboration of the Report. It allows the Region, launcher and organiser of the Citizens' Jury, to keep out of the deliberation times of the Jury in order not to risk, being there, to influence, even unintentionally, the freedom of speech and the independence of the judgement of the participants.

The work has been done in small tables, more suitable for individual expression, and in plenary sessions (to put in common the observations and the writing of the recommendations). It allowed the elaboration of a Report step by step, which propositions has been fixed during the final session on 17<sup>th</sup> of May and were delivered to the elected of the Regional Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> of June.

The participants has fulfilled some evaluation forms of this first experience – a premiere in France. The results of this evaluation was published at the same time than the Report, and on the regional website [www.democratie-participative.fr](http://www.democratie-participative.fr).



## The Europe-Americas Meetings on Participatory Democracy

The implementation of Participatory Democracy in Poitou-Charentes benefits since the very first time of the help of researchers who analyse the most innovative international experiences. That's how, the yearly Europe-American Meeting about Participatory Democracy spring from these cooperations, in partnership with Sciences Po Paris (which 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of ibero-american studies is in Poitiers).

Each year, in the hemicycle of the Regional Council, this meeting bring together scientists of both continents, european and american local authorities repressentants involved in the implementation of:

- participatory budgets (more than 1200 in Latin America today, developing in Europe);
- citizens' juries (Germany, Italy, Spain, U.K....);
- deliberative referendums, town-meeting, e-participation, etc.

Some dates:

-Juin 2005, the first meeting emphasise about « local and regional experiences of Participatory Democracy ». The Region Poitou-Charentes presented its High School Participatory Budget created in January 2005.

-April 2006, the second meeting deals with « Participatory Democracy and public services quality » (how the real participation of citizens and users, impacting the ordinary administration mechanisms, contribute to the improving of public policies?)

-June 2007, the third meeting ask another in-depth question « till where can we share the decision process? » (no sustainable participation without stakes, complementarity of representative and participatory democracy).

-May 2008, the fourth meeting dealt with the « quality of deliberation in participatory processes » (impacts of voluntary participation or random selection, information, debates, opinions elaboration processes, etc.) in light of the experiences in Canada, Brasil, Spain, Venezuela, Sweden, Dominican Republic, Italy, Argentina, U.K. and France.



## The Regional Website

**[www.democratie-participative.fr](http://www.democratie-participative.fr)**

The Region's website [www.democratie-participative.fr](http://www.democratie-participative.fr) deals with the implemented participatory democracy since 2004 and with the progresses performed each year.

The website is full of substantial contents as the Region Poitou-Charentes creates new participation skills. It allows to access to :

- the whole minutes and critical reviews of the participatory forums organised since 2004 in different sectors of the regional prerogative;
- all the past and current events of the High School Participatory Budget since its creation in January 2005 (minutes of the assemblies, projects' votes, following of the projects, etc.);
- documents about Participatory Workshops and Citizens' Juries created in 2008 to evaluate the Regional policies and the reports that follows those assemblies and their debates;
- information, regularly updated, about Poitou-Charentes' international cooperations for Participatory Democracy;
- different documents, that definite the stages and steps of the permanent approach, extended and detailed since 2004, in accordance with the commitment presented to all citizens.



## **The European Network for Participatory Democracy**

This project born from a proposition of Ségolène Royal and through the Europe-Americas Meetings about Participatory Democracy, and the relationships generated there.

Poitou-Charentes, Tuscany and Catalonia, three Regions at the cutting edge of Participatory Democracy with, as example, the High School Participatory Budget in Poitou-Charentes., the participatory construction of the autonomy status of Catalonia, or the tuscan law on Participatory Democracy.

We can found all across Europe:

- local authorities innovating, experiences to compare, some « good practices » to share, skills to adapt to diferent territorial contexts;
- more and more investigators and researchers who observe, analyse, and bring an independant and stimulating point of view on the participatory democracy plans implemented everywhere;
- but, between ones and the others, only weak links.

The European Network for Participatory Democracy will be a place of exchanges between diferent stakeholders of this movement that renew the policy approach and public action.

It will be a ressource centre for the hands-on actors, supported by research to promote an evaluation culture indivisible from any real participatory democracy and will encourage the building of a common knowledge giving to all the possibility to consult researchs works and documents. Finally the Network will offer to all electeds and public agents trainings about Participatory Democracy.

The draft-agreement creating the European Network for Participatory Democracy will be officially signed by the Presidents of the Regions funders by summer or fall 2008.

The website of the Network ([www.demo-part.org](http://www.demo-part.org)) will be launched at the same period: multilingual (french, english, spanish, catalan, italian, portuguese) it will be feeded thanks to the contributions of the authorities, scientits and actors of the Participatory Democracy. This will also be a public information platform, for debates, initiatives and impulsing new cooperations.

The Network, after a first period of experimentation, bent to become a Foundation, certified of public interest.