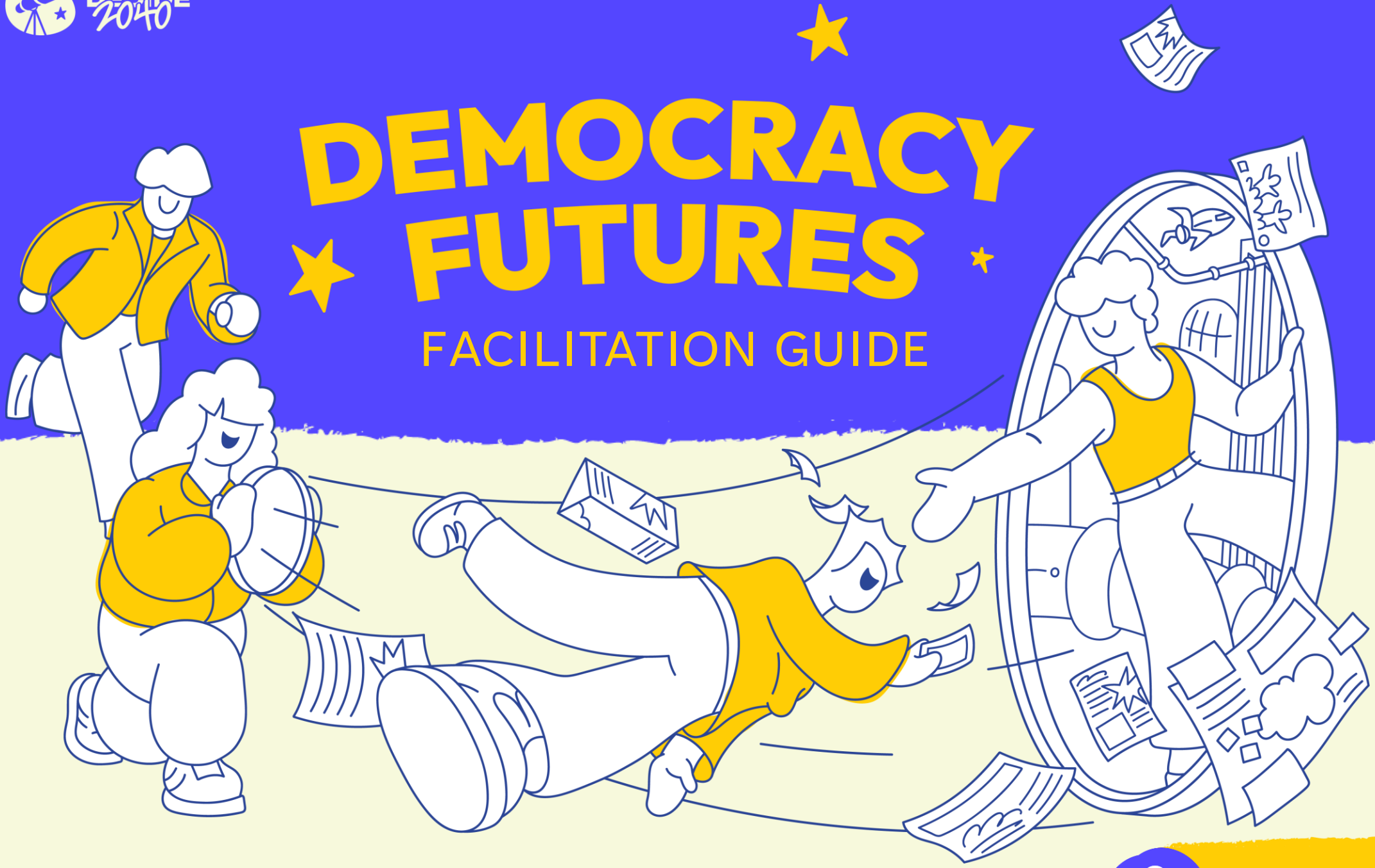
YOUTH DECIDE 2040

DEMOCRACY FUTURES

FACILITATION GUIDE



MIDI

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

FACILITATION GUIDE: MIDI ROUTE

A version of this guide was used by the YouthDecide 2040 research consortium to support the set up and facilitation of workshops on the future of democracy in Europe for the year 2040. It is part of the **DEMOCRACY FUTURES KIT.**

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With thanks to all participants
This material was shaped by the ideas, experiences, questions, and generosity of the people who took part in our workshops and conversations. We thank every participant of YouthDecide 2040 workshops for their time, openness, creativity, and trust. Your contributions are at the heart of this work, and we are grateful for the many perspectives you brought to it.

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DEMOCRACY FUTURES

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE
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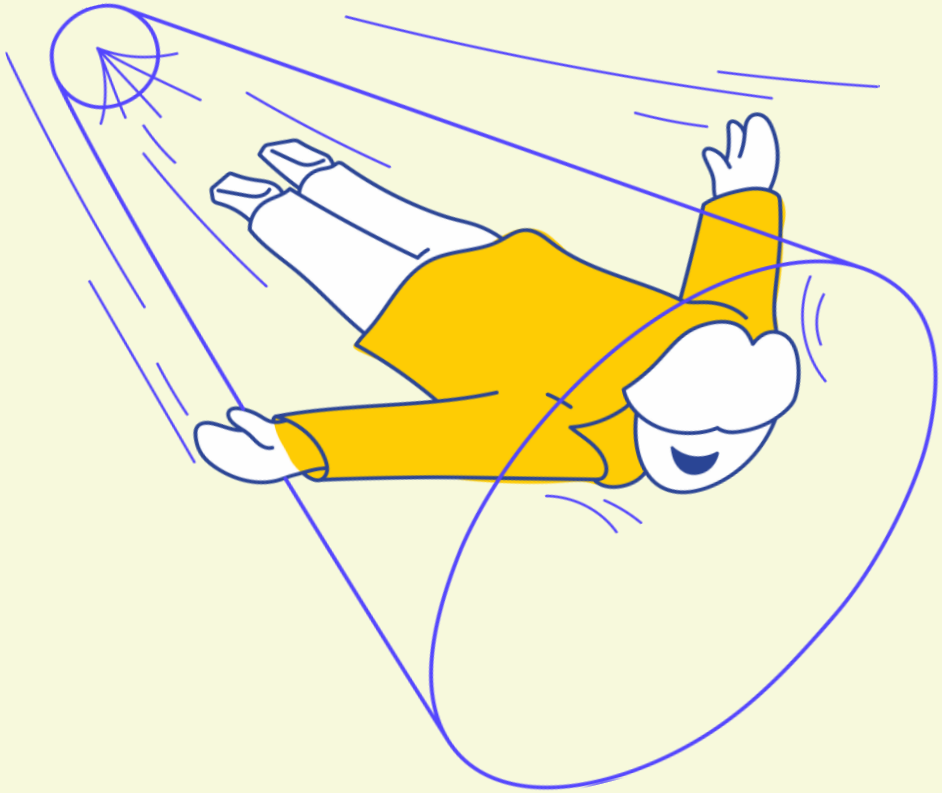


FOREWORD

DEMOCRACY FUTURES is a modular co-creation resource for exploring and shaping democratic futures in small to large groups. Developed and tested in workshops with young people across 19 European countries, **DEMOCRACY FUTURES** invites people to discuss factors that influence the directions of our democracies (***Influencing Factors*** card deck)**;** innovations that have historically or are currently changing how we think about and practice democracy (***Democratic Innovations*** card deck); and problems facing democratic societies across Europe (***Public Problems*** card deck).

Whether through short conversation prompts or full-day events, it helps groups gather, connect, reflect, and share novel conversations about strengthening democracy in Europe and beyond.

Users can adapt activities to their own setting, customizing for time, group size, and interests, or follow the proposed examples. Radically redesigned for public use and accessibility, this release of **DEMOCRACY FUTURES** is meant for wide use in education, civil society, and other participatory settings.

The YouthDecide 2040 project has received funding from the European Union under grant agreement no 101177438

BACKGROUND: FROM RESEARCH TO TOOLKIT

The **YouthDecide 2040** project developed this resource in fulfilment of its research obligations and for the express purpose of enabling more people from diverse backgrounds to participate in a foresight[1] process - the development of desirable futures for Democracy in Europe. This facilitation guide offers a general workflow that we in the **YouthDecide 2040** project think people might enjoy.

At the same time, this **MIDI ROUTE** of the resource is not meant to be a static entity: it is designed to be augmented and updated by YOU. The toolkit's modular design allows for new configurations of creative exercises to emerge, as **DEMOCRACY FUTURES** takes on a life of its own. As a Creative Commons licensed document, we have taken steps to encourage this type of additive and creative use.

We hope **DEMOCRACY FUTURES**, which served us in the **YouthDecide 2040** project, helps YOU envision and take steps toward the future democracies you want to live in and pass on to future generations.



Watch the journey behind DEMOCRACY FUTURES and learn how the YouthDecide 2040 consortium co-created the workflow.

[1] ***foresight*** *(not to be confused with forecasting) is a forward-looking participatory practice that explores plausible and desirable futures to support policymaking and decision-making. It helps anticipate future challenges, consider a range of possible scenarios, and identify potential responses. Foresight is inclusive, creative, interdisciplinary, and participatory. It uses methods such as horizon scanning and scenario building to navigate complexity and uncertainty.*

YOUR JOURNEY

BEGINS!

MIDI ROUTE

START IN THE PRESENT

During the workshop, reflect on what democracy means in your everyday lives today: moments that work well, moments that disappoint, and the hopes you carry for change.

ONE STEP FORWARD

As you move ahead, different forces shaping democracy come into view. Participants consider what kind of society they want to live in, how people might join voices, and how collective decisions can be made. Through these conversations, you begin to see how diverse experiences and perspectives can inform the imagined futures.

Depending on what is relevant to your context and group size, participants can work in small teams or reflect individually. By exchanging ideas, they not only imagine democracy's future but actively shape it.

ARRIVING IN 2040

From there, you jump into the near future. With this step, your journey through time begins. Participants step into year 2040 as an open space for experimentation. This future has no fixed form; it is a blank canvas. Together, they fill it with new ways of participating, making decisions, and living and acting together.

CONCLUSION

The workshop concludes with visions of a democratic future they would want to inhabit. This brings shared ideas, renewed perspectives, and insights into possible democratic futures, developed together back into the present.

ABOUT THE OTHER ROUTES

VISIT THE WEBSITE

MAXI

MINI

FULL

SETTING UP THE

CREATIVE WORK



BE POSITIVE

This workshop should be an enjoyable experience for participants, so as facilitators you want to be friendly and positive. The energy in the room, in part, depends on the energy you bring to it.



IGNITE IMAGINATION

Invite participants to slow down, notice what matters, exchange perspectives, and imagine boldly. Your presence creates the safe, curious, and collaborative atmosphere needed for this journey.



ADAPT THE TOOLKIT TO YOUR CONTEXT

This toolkit is made to be modular, feel free to adjust to the needs of your activity and the group.



GUARANTEE INCLUSION

The workshop should be accessible for all people, of all abilities. Make sure you know the requirements of participants ahead of time, to adapt for accessibility measures as needed.

OFFER A SAFE & INCLUSIVE SPACE AND PLACE

A safe space is an environment, either online or in person, where everyone should be free from violence and discrimination – regardless of their characteristics or identities. **It's a place where participants feel emotionally and physically secure.**

Creating a safe space often requires proactive effort, such as fostering an atmosphere where people feel comfortable being themselves. **To encourage open discussion, it is important to recognize and address power imbalances in the group.**

It also means designating a quiet, comfortable area where participants can go if they need a break. During the preparation phase, take time to develop a safe space protocol and consider your role in responding to any situations that may arise.

As a facilitator, ensure anyone who needs support, whether it's food, accessibility, or simply a conversation, receives the care they require. For example: switching the workshop location to a wheelchair-accessible venue, providing support or accessible documents for blind people, or informing catering about food allergies.

An example of a Safety Protocol:
Feminist Safe Space Protocol, Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF), used under CC BY-NC-SA.
Available at: https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/feminist-safe-space-protocol.pdf

THE MATERIALS

WHAT YOU NEED

These are the materials you will use for the **MIDI route** of **DEMOCRACY FUTURES**. Some are entirely optional. Feel free to be creative and replace them with anything else that fits your needs.

PER WORKSHOP (1 SET)

- ❑ Some tables and chairs*, and ideally natural light
- ❑ Workshop Journey Map

Optional:

- ❑ ***'Time's up'*** sign* printed or written on an A4 sheet
- ❑ ***"I bring home..."*** sign* printed or written on an A4 sheet for the panel discussion.
- ❑ Attendance list or a sign-in sheet
- ❑ One or two Bluetooth speakers to play music during breaks

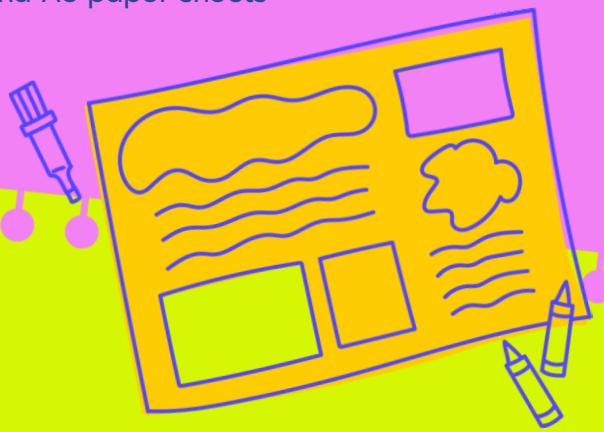
** For larger groups (more than 8-10 people), please arrange tables and chairs for a small-team setting (max. 5-6 people per team).*

*** You can also use any object as a 'talking element' : for example, a ball or a mock microphone. Please feel free to use something that does not require additional printing.*

EQUIPMENT

For the workshop, besides the materials to be printed out and cut, you might (optionally) need:

- ❑ Post-it notes, flip chart, tape
- ❑ Smaller tape rolls, scissors, glue
- ❑ Pens (one per participant) and some coloured pencils and markers
- ❑ White A4 and A3 paper sheets



PER TABLE

- ❑ ***Participant Booklet*** (one per participant)
- ❑ A set of ***Influencing Factors*** A6 cards (+Blank Cards)
- ❑ A set of ***Democratic Innovations*** A6 cards (+Blank Cards)
- ❑ ***Preferred Future Scenario board*** materials: A1 paper board created by taping together A3 sheet with instructions and 3 blank A3 sheets
- ❑ ***Presentation Helper***
- ❑ ***System-level questions***, ***Pictograms***

THE MIDI ROUTE

WAYS OF USING

This guide comes with an example of a one-and-a-half-hour format. However, YOU can decide on other ways to run it. For example, you could run a **longer session** with the same time windows per activity. You could also run a **shorter activity** that focuses only on pulling a card from the *Card Decks* to spark a conversation.

This format fits easily into an **existing meeting,** a **class session,** or a **team event.** We recommend keeping the group small enough for everyone to participate in discussion and leaving a few minutes at the end for reflection.

Apart from this Facilitation Guide, other workshop materials can be downloaded via this link:

DOWNLOAD THE MATERIALS

We encourage you to adapt the materials to your context of use: for example, feel free to select or add other *Democratic Innovations* or *Influencing Factors*. You can also include relevant things your communities may currently be facing or are interested in as an Influencing Factor, Public Problem, or Democratic Innovation, these additional resource packs include blank cards which you can customize.

FACILITATION TOOLBOX (variable depending on the route)



Facilitation Guide
Facilitators support and workshop flow

Participant Booklet
Participants note-taking and support

CARD DECKS (fixed artifacts stay the same for all Routes)



INFLUENCING FACTORS
A collection of cards describing the phenomena affecting democracy

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS
A collection of cards describing efforts and approaches to support democracy





PUBLIC PROBLEMS
A collection of cards describing efforts and approaches to support democracy

SUPPORTING MATERIALS (fixed artifacts, that can be used optionally)

Lab Sign, System Sketch, System Level Questions
Optional supportive materials

Scenario Canvas, Scenario Presentation Helper
Optional supportive materials

AGENDA EXAMPLE

3,5 HOUR WORKSHOP

MIDI

TIME		ACTIVITY
(START IN THE MORNING OR AFTER LUNCH)		
	12:20 – 13:00	***0.0 – (Optional) Welcome Lunch*** (± 30 min) ***and Registration*** *(± 10 min)*
9:00 – 9:10	13:00 – 13:10	0.1 – Presenting the Workshop Journey (± 10 min)
9:10 – 9:20	13:10 – 13:20	1.1 – (Optional) Introducing participants (± 5 min) & 1.2 Workshop Solidarity Principles (± 5 min)
9:20 – 9:30	13:20 – 13:30	1.3 – "What do I like and dislike about democracy?" (± 10 min)
9:30 – 10:00	13:30 – 14:00	2.1 – Exploring Influencing Factors (± 30 min)
10:00 – 10:30	14:00 – 14:30	2.2 – Exploring Democratic Innovations (± 30 min)
10:30 – 10:45	14:30 – 14:45	BREAK (± 15 min)
10:45 – 11:00	14:45 – 15:00	3.1 – Wishes for the Future (± 10 min) *or* pick an Issue that matters (± 10 min)
11:00 – 12:05	15:00 - 16:05	3.2 – Team up (± 10 min) and 5.1 - Build your Scenario (± 60 min)
12:05 – 12:20	16:05 - 16:20	6.1 & 6.2 – Share your Scenario and 6.3 - Closing: "*We bring home...*" (± 15 min)

Notes:

- Depending on your start time, the size of your group, and how well the participants know one another, you may have extra time towards the end of the session. This can be particularly useful for 5.1 – *Build Your Scenario*, 6.1 – *Share Your Scenario*, and 6.3 – *Closing*. For larger groups, you might need to extend the last session. Feel free to schedule breaks wherever they best suit your group's needs.

INTRODUCING

THE WORKSHOP JOURNEY

⏱ ± 10 min

GOAL

Clarify the objectives and phases of the workshop

YOU'LL NEED

- The “Journey Map”

SET THE SCENE – read aloud:

Today is your space to imagine, discuss, and shape the future, and to explore what life could be like in 2040.

- This workshop is a time-travel mission: you stay in the present but look ahead to your desirable future. What needs to happen to get there?
- The aim is not to debate which political party or policy is right or wrong, but to reflect on democracy itself. How are decisions made? Who gets to have a say, and in what ways? Who holds power, and who does not? How could democratic processes work in ways that are fairer, more inclusive, and more transparent?
- You will explore ideas individually and in small groups, using tools to build and visualise your preferred future scenario.
- The future isn’t fixed and your perspective helps to shape what comes next. Our focus is: What kind of democracy do young people wish for?

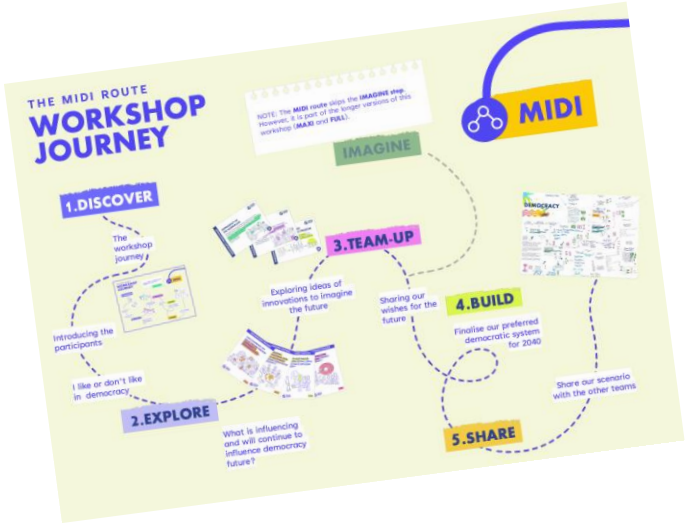
STEPS

EXPLORING POSSIBLE FUTURES

Explain what foresight means: exploring possible futures to imagine which ones we would like and what changes could help bring them about. Make it clear that futures are uncertain! The aim is not to predict what will happen, but to open-up our imagination and explore possibilities for democracy, including ideas that may seem surprising or contradictory.

THE ACTIVITY AND MATERIALS

Introduce the participatory foresight activity as a journey from the present to 2040. Explain that the steps are connected: participants will start by reflecting on democracy today, explore factors and innovations, and finally develop wishes of these futures. Introduce the two card decks, which are based on the project’s research.



THE MIDI ROUTE

WORKSHOP JOURNEY

NOTE: The **MIDI route** skips the **IMAGINE step**. However, it is part of the longer versions of this workshop (**MAXI** and **FULL**).

MIDI

1.DISCOVER

The workshop journey



Introducing the participants

I like or don't like in democracy

2.EXPLORE

What is influencing and will continue to influence democracy future?



Exploring ideas of innovations to imagine the future

IMAGINE



3.TEAM-UP

Sharing our wishes for the future



4.BUILD

Finalise our preferred democratic system for 2040

Share our scenario with the other teams

5.SHARE

WORKSHOP PHASES:

ACTIVITIES

MIDI

1.DISCOVER

3 ACTIVITIES – (± 20 min)
Today's workshop and (optional) getting to know each other

1.1 Introducing the participants (optional)
⏱ ± 5 min

1.2 Workshop solidarity principles
⏱ ± 5 min

1.3 What do I like & dislike about democracy?
⏱ ± 10 min

2.EXPLORE

2 ACTIVITIES – (± 60 min)
Exploring what influences democratic futures: which factors give hope or raise concern? Exploring democratic innovations.

2.1 What will influence democracy?
⏱ ± 30 min

2.2 Explore democratic innovations
⏱ ± 30 min

3.WISHES & TEAM-UP

3 ACTIVITIES – (± 90 min)
Sharing our wishes for the future and start creating it

3.1 Wishes for the future
⏱ ± 10 min

3.2 Team Up ***(Optional for smaller groups)***
⏱ ± 10 min

IMAGINE

*NOTE: The **MIDI route** skips the **IMAGINE step**. However, it is part of the longer versions of this workshop (**MAXI** and **FULL**).*

4.BUILD

1 ACTIVITY – (± 60 min)
Designing our preferred future scenario for 2040

4.1 Preferred future scenario
⏱ ± 1 hour

5.SHARE

2 ACTIVITIES – (± 15 min)
Presenting the scenarios and closing.
Note: depending on your group size, this session might need to be extended.

5.1 Sharing of preferred future scenarios
⏱ ± 10 min

5.2 Closing: "I bring home..."
⏱ ± 5 min

PHASE 1

DISCOVER

GOALS

- To start discussing the workshop subject, while getting to know one another.

YOU'LL NEED

- Sticky notes (one per participant)
- Two notes: one with year "1990" and the other with year "2026" (or any other years that make sense for your group age and workshop context) written on them by facilitator



Display of the 'Time Line' with sticky notes

1.1 INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS (OPTIONAL)

⏱ ± 5 min

You can **SKIP THIS STEP** if you are working in a very large group or if participants already know each other.

STEPS

1. Form a circle and ask each participant to grab some sticky notes.
2. Ask each participant to share their first (or most vivid) memory of democracy: - *"Please recall a time in your life when you experienced democracy or heard about it for the first time or perhaps the most memorable time. Reflect in silence* for a moment and write it down."

   Meanwhile, place a sticky note with "1990" written on it on one end of the circle and a sticky note with "2026" on the opposite end.
3. Ask participants to share their memory in a minute or less and place their sticky note on an imaginary timeline between 1990 and 2026 (or the year your workshop is taking place in.)

PHASE 1

DISCOVER

GOALS

- Read the Solidarity Principles for a respectful and friendly workshop.

YOU'LL NEED

- Participants Booklet

SET THE SCENE – read out loud:

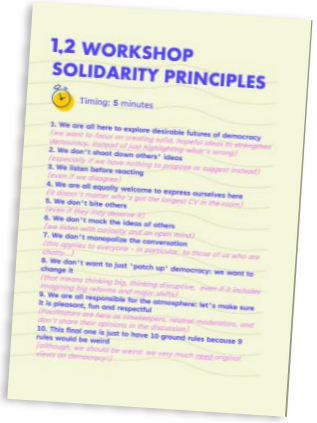
Before we begin creating together, we take a moment to ground ourselves in a few solidarity principles that help everyone feel supported, heard, and safe during the journey. These 10 principles are here to guide us whenever we need them, and you can find them anytime in your booklet.

1.2 WORKSHOP SOLIDARITY PRINCIPLES

⏱ ± 5 min

STEPS

1. Stay in the circle from the last activity
2. Ask participants to read the 10 principles in their booklet. You can also read them aloud for everyone.



PHASE 1

DISCOVER

GOALS

- To start reflecting on democracy and to explain perceived positive and negative aspects of democracy today



1.3 WHAT DO I LIKE AND DISLIKE ABOUT DEMOCRACY

⏱ ± 10 min

STEPS

Start with the present. Invite participants to share what they like and dislike about democracies today, and to listen to one another's perspectives. You can open the conversation with this question:

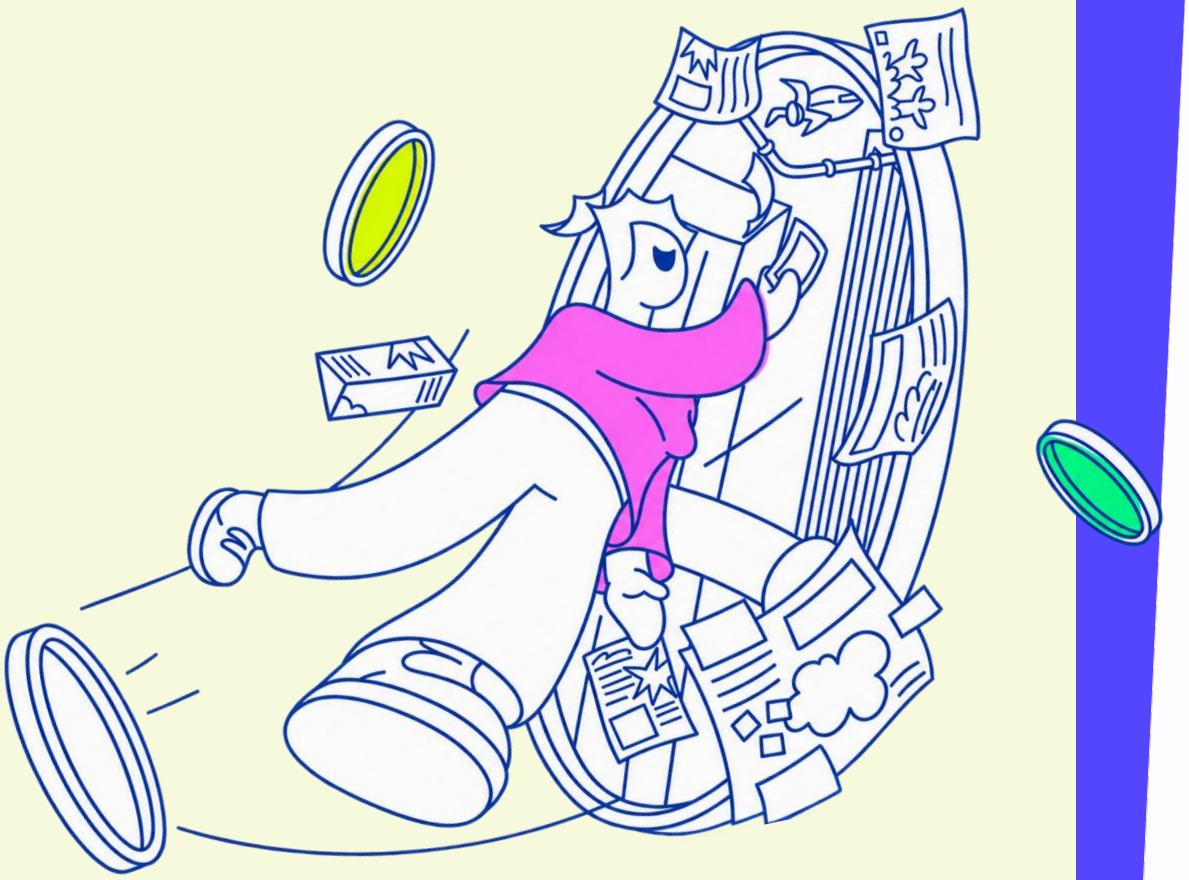
'Before travelling into the future, let's look at the present. What three things do you like about democracy today, and what three things would you like to change?'

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Ask participants to take their seats and reflect individually, writing notes in their booklets. Finally, they should share their answers with the larger group or with the people at their table.

TIME-BRIDGE

PAST TO PRESENT



SET THE SCENE — read aloud:

Before moving towards 2040, let's pause and look at where we are today.

We are starting our journey in the present.

For this first step, you have already shared how democracy feels for you.

Your mission right now is to explore what is influencing democracy today and will continue to shape its futures.

PHASE 2

EXPLORE

GOALS

- Discovering and discussing what is influencing democratic futures and picking a factor or two that give hope or raise concern.

YOU'LL NEED

- ***Influencing Factors*** Deck.



Influencing Factors Card Deck

2.1 WHAT IS INFLUENCING DEMOCRATIC FUTURES?

⏱ ± 30 min

STEPS

Invite the group to explore the *Influencing Factors* card deck. Explain that they will find three symbols (+, -, =) on the backs of three cards. Ask them to place these on the table and to organise the rest of the cards with factors according to how concerned they feel about them:

Hope Concern Ambivalence

For larger groups working in smaller teams (max. 5-6): participants can sort the cards into these three categories through a brief discussion and a collective decision. If opinions differ, they can deliberate.

For smaller groups working individually: ask each participant to choose one or two factors that shape the future of democracy. It could be a *Hope*, a *Concern*, and/or an *Ambivalence*. Participants may choose the same factors and write down notes if needed.

Finally, participants share the factors that prompted the most concern or discussion (individually with the rest of the group or within their small teams).

PHASE 2

EXPLORE

GOALS

- Exploring different ways of organizing a society and making decisions, using the ***Democratic Innovations*** card deck to inspire better futures.

YOU'LL NEED

- ***Democratic Innovations*** Deck.





Democratic Innovation Card Deck

2.2 EXPLORING DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

⏱ ± 30 min

STEPS

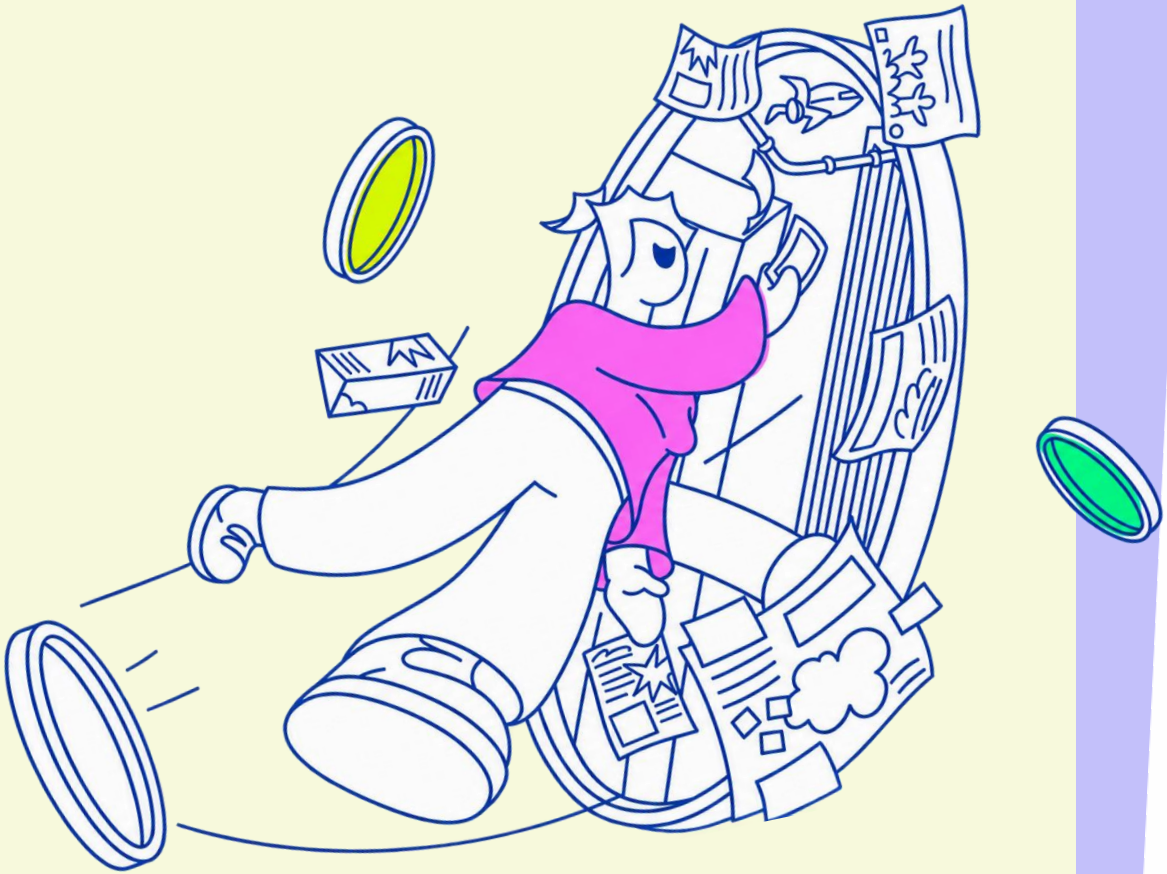
Introduce the second deck and explain that it brings together Democratic Innovations already used in different parts of the world. These offer ideas for rethinking and strengthening democratic participation in response to changes in society.

Ask each participant to choose one or two innovations and discuss them at their table or in smaller teams, if working in teams. Invite them to explore how these could address the factors they identified as *Hopes* or *Concerns* and how different innovations can be combined to form *participatory chains*.

**Note: The concept of participatory chains was developed during the YouthDecide 2040 project research. Encourage participants to combine different innovations and explore how they could complement one another.*

TIME-BRIDGE

PRESENT TO FUTURES



SET THE SCENE — read aloud:

You have taken time to look at the world as it is today.

Now, it is time to move forward.

Imagine you are standing on a bridge between two moments in time. Behind you: the present. Ahead of you: the year 2040. You carry your observations with you as you cross this bridge. What you noticed, felt, and questioned will now help you imagine how things could be different.

Imagine how old you are in 2040. What makes you feel hopeful or concerned? How would you like society to work?

Let us cross the bridge together.

PHASE 3

WISHES

GOALS

- Participants will formulate their wishes for the future or decide on a common important issue to solve.

YOU'LL NEED

- *Participant Booklet*



3.1 WISHES FOR THE FUTURE

⏱ ± 10 min

STEPS

Invite the group to imagine they have arrived in 2040, the activity's time horizon. Ask each participant to find this step in their ***Participant Booklet*** and formulate wishes for the future of democracy, connecting the factors they noted down with the innovations they have explored. Alternatively, these wishes can relate directly to an issue relevant for your context or community.

Read aloud: 'We are in 2040. What does democracy look and feel like? Express wishes or visions based on the themes we have explored.'

Alternative script: *'We are in 2040. What does our _____ (community issue) look and feel like? Express wishes or visions based on the themes we have explored.'*

EXAMPLE AND DISCUSSION

Share your own three wishes as an example and briefly explain how they relate to the cards, or to your context or community.

Allow a few minutes for individual reflection and/or five minutes for participants to discuss their wishes at their tables if they are working in small teams. Then invite participants to get ready to share their wishes with the whole group.

PHASE 3

TEAM-UP

GOALS

- Participants will find their people: teammates who share their wishes for the future or have a similar important issue to solve.



3.2 TEAM UP

⏱ ± 10 min

STEPS

Invite participants to share their wishes. Ask them to listen carefully to their peers' reflections and identify potential teammates with similar wishes and interests!

They then share their reflections with the whole group, listening for common interests and aspirations.

Based on these connections, participants form teams with others whose wishes are similar or resonate with their own, with a maximum of 5–6 people per team.

CLOSING

Conclude by highlighting some of the ideas shared. Remind participants that imagining desirable futures helps us consider the changes that are needed in the present to bring these futures about. If the issue relevant to your context or community emerged, highlight and formulate it at this stage.

PHASE 4

BUILD

GOALS

- Start sharing and thinking collectively, with a newly formed team based on their wishes for the future.

As an alternative:

- Identify a local issue that matters and develop a democratic system around it. Frame the problem together, surfacing different perspectives and shaping a way of responding to it democratically. What type of democratic system would be able to resolve the issue in a way that feels fair, inclusive and genuinely workable?

- Turn your shared vision into a final scenario of European Democracy 2040. Rely on what you already learned and create a system around it.

YOU'LL NEED

- ***Scenario Board*** template + three A3 Sheets
- On each table: one deck of ***Influencing Factors*** and one deck of ***Democratic Innovations*** cards
- On each table: Pictograms, tape, glue, scissors, colour pencils, etc.

4.1 PREFERRED FUTURE SCENARIO

⏱ ± 60 min

STEPS

Ask each team to assemble their A1 board by taping the A3 instruction sheet together with three blank A3 sheets.

Invite teams to start building their scenarios based on everything they have explored earlier in the day. They can use pictograms, tape, markers, or any other materials they need. Encourage them to build a comprehensive scenario of their desirable future.



Future Scenario board during presentations

PHASE 4

SUPPORT

GOALS

- Facilitate the scenario-development process and support the participants as needed.



Presentation Helper

4.1 PREFERRED FUTURE SCENARIO

⏱ ± 60 min

A FACILITATION MOMENT

Remain in the room throughout the one-hour scenario development session to support participants, clarify instructions, and answer questions. Move between tables and listen to the teams' discussions.

If a question or comment raises a point that is relevant to everyone, briefly get the whole group's attention and share the clarification.

For example:

" Remember, you can use any of the materials on your tables – including the card decks – to create your scenario board."

Ten minutes before the end, remind teams to start getting ready for their presentations. They can refer to the *Presentation Helper* template to prepare.

PHASE 5

SHARE

GOALS

- Sharing and discussing the Preferred Future Scenarios designed by each team

YOU'LL NEED

- Scenario Boards of each team
- 'Time is Up' sign (optional)



A group sharing their Preferred Future Scenario

5.1 PRESENTING PREFERED FUTURE SCENARIOS

⏱ ± 10 min

STEPS

1. This is the moment for teams to start presenting their scenario.
2. After each presentation, open the floor for questions, comments or group reflection time.

**Note: If you would like to process the results after the workshop, you can ask participants for permission to record the presentations and take photos of the final scenario boards.*

Depending on context, you might also keep the final scenario boards and display these at your event, in your organisation, school or community centre.

PHASE 5

CLOSE

GOALS

- Closing the workshop with a calm, reflective moment on the journey taken together

YOU'LL NEED

- ***"I bring home..."*** sign printed or written on A4 sheet. You can also use any object as a 'talking element' (for example, a ball or a mock microphone). Please feel free to choose something that doesn't require additional printing.

5.2 CLOSING 'I BRING HOME...'

⏱ ± 5 min

STEPS

1. Form a circle with the group
2. Each person shares what they bring home (what they learned from this activity, an emotion or a thought...)



NEED SOME...

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT?

Get to know the **DEMOCRACY FUTURES** materials through this video tutorial, originally developed for facilitators of the YouthDecide 2040 National Workshops.

It introduces the materials used in the **FULL route**, alongside those included in the other routes, explaining their purpose and how to use them during your workshop.

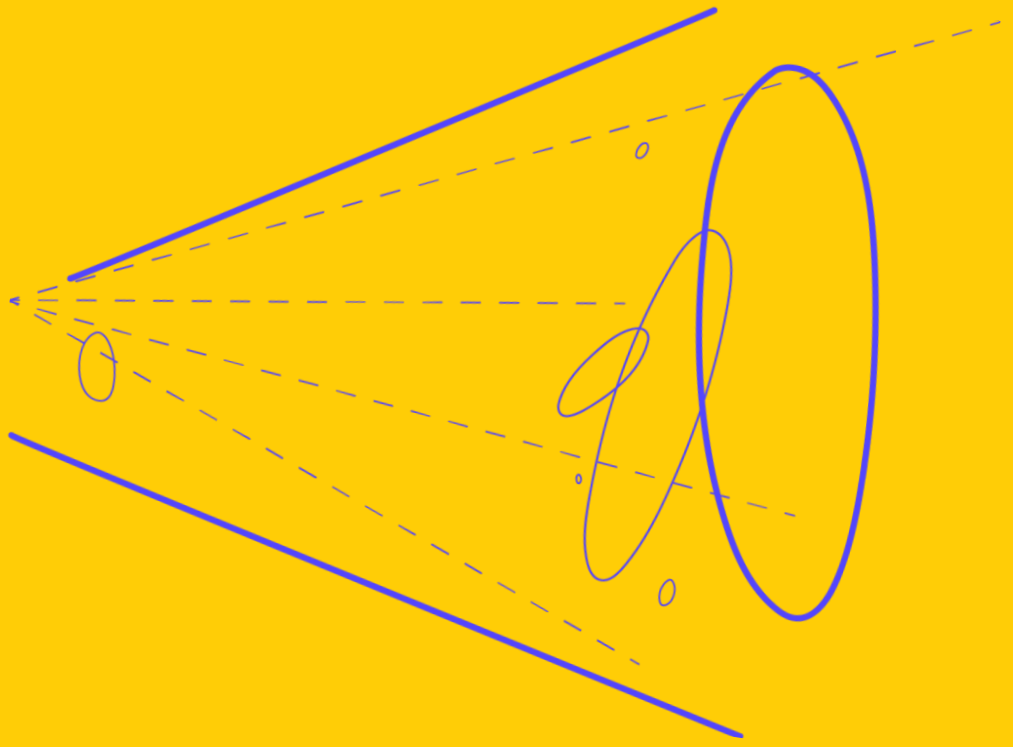
Watch it as you prepare your session to familiarise yourself with the resources and choose the materials that suit your group and chosen route.

ENJOY FACILITATING!

THE YOUTH DECIDE 2040 CONSORTIUM



Watch a practical walkthrough of the DEMOCRACY FUTURES workshop materials.



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DEMOCRACY FUTURES

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