



Online Debate / E-Consultation / Discussion



Enables citizens to discuss and prioritize proposed topics by sharing and commenting their opinion and ideas in written form, gathering widely diversified conceptions.



Information
Ideation
Consultation
Co-Decision



<15 people
15-30 people
30-100 people
100-250 people
> 250 people



Preparation:
1-6 months for set up of tool, invitations etc.
Implementation:
1-6 months
Follow-up:
1-5 days for analysis and documentation



\$
\$\$
\$\$\$
Cost for tool, moderation etc.



At least one person for preparation, moderation and documentation

The Method: What is it, when to use it and what outcome to expect

Online Debate helps (invited) citizens to express and exchange their opinion on a public subject, usually via a digital platform. Discussions vary in their set up: e.g. they be self- or externally moderated, anonymous or official, allow comment threads and reactions/rating, public or private.

Online Debate can be useful for agenda setting and topic prioritization, collecting pros & cons, gathering citizen opinion on and co-developing local projects, ideas and issues, preparation and legitimation of formal proceedings or defusing conflict in a community.

Online Debate brings forth diverse feedback on often pressing issues from a wider audience independent of time and place to inform citizen-centered governmental actions and avoid unconstructive, controversial discussions on social media.

The Process: How to conduct it in an in-person setting or online using a PC/laptop with video option

- 1. Preparation:** Decide on an appropriate tool or platform that offers desired features, a time span for citizens to debate, and a promotion strategy to reach all desired citizen (groups). Collect all necessary information for the topics that are useful for debate and set them up online. Set up a point of contact for the debaters. Hire or assign professionals to moderate the process. Invite participants and provide access and process information. Schedule in-person events before or after the online debate if desired.
- 2. Conduction:** Consider a (virtual) kick-off event prior to the debate where the community can bring in their questions towards the process and connect with each other to create better debating quality. Launch and monitor the debate, compile interim analysis if needed. Answer questions that arise during the debate.
- 3. Analysis:** Analyze the debate, draw conclusions to the outcome, compile a report and share it with the debaters, the interested public and to officials if desired.

Blended participation

The debate is conducted online, using one of the available online tools. However you can accompany the process with face-to-face meetings where the debate topic is discussed to give further background information or to answer questions by citizens.

Digital communication

- It is recommended to use one of the existing online tools – see "Read Further".

Good to know

- Ensure to reach all desired groups of citizens for representative, balanced debating
- Also applicable for children and teenagers and citizens with little (online) participation experience
- Be aware of and defuse domination bias of some
- Consider offering help with or alternative ways of contribution (e.g. for citizens without internet access or analphabetism)
- Read further:
 - <https://participedia.net/method/733>
 - https://youtu.be/zU_OUN4VajY
 - <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods/online-consultations>
 - <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods/written-consultations>
 - <https://adhocracy.plus/info/use-cases/online-diskussionen/>