How to run a *We, the Internet* Citizens’ Dialogue

*Bringing Citizens’ into Internet Governance*

Created by Missions Publiques for all

Want to start? Contact us for a sync meeting
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Executive summary

Internet impacts all Humanity, even the 50% still not online. There is also a necessity and relevance to engage citizens into the shaping and governance of the Internet. *We, the Internet* aims at making this engagement possible and of high quality.

To learn more, go to [Missions Publiques website](#)

The toolkit you have in your hands aims at helping you organize your own Dialogue on the Future of the Internet. It is based on the protocol developed by Missions Publiques and its partners around the world. This toolkit consists of a design based on Missions Publiques’ method of citizens’ participation and 4 modules that include step-by-step guidance, case studies, references, as well as key questions for launching group discussions and individual questionnaires. All tools are grounded in research and contextualized for the diverse operating realities of global stakeholders, whether the COVID-19 pandemic refrains organisations to have face-to-face dialogues or not. Help us collect stories of use and iteration of the *We, The Internet* Toolkit – share your experience with us, and contribute to making Internet governance with citizens’ deliberations the new normal!

What is a Citizens’ Dialogue?

A Citizens’ Dialogue is a place which ordinary people gather and learn, explore a topic and express their hopes, concerns and opinions on it. **There are no winners or losers: all voices are heard and all opinions help decision-makers make legitimate choices.**

Whether you work with undergrads, with council services, whether you are a proactive member of a local community or any sort of community, you can give your local, regional or national leaders the possibility to make decisions not relying exclusively on their special advisers and experts but also on local, ordinary citizens. These people are often closer to the issues at stake than what we believe.

What is *We, the Internet*?

In 2020, Missions Publiques engaged thousands of citizens in a deliberative process on the future of the Internet and its governance. This global deliberation comes under the banner *We, The Internet*. It was a worlds’ first that covered more than 80 countries. It showcased the possibility and relevance of having deliberative governance at scale on critical topics of our digital future.

Our vision? Institutionalize Internet governance with and for citizens by 2025, by putting into action participation at global level through Citizens’ Dialogues on the Future of the Internet

To learn more, go to [wetheinternet.org](#)

Who is behind *We, the Internet*?

*We, the Internet* is one of Missions Publiques’ global projects, alongside the [French Citizens’ Convention for Climate](#), [Franco-German Citizens’ dialogue](#) on the cross border cooperation or the [Global Citizens’ Assembly on Genome editing](#).

Learn more on [Missions Publiques website](#).
Deciding whether or not to run a Citizens’ Dialogue

COVID-19 context

We, the Internet was born in a world without COVID-19. The global pandemic has both put us in front of significant challenges but also opened many opportunities.

If the COVID-19 social distancing rules in your country make it impossible to hold face-to-face dialogues, we advise you to go online. Although it seems less accommodating, over 40 national partners implemented an online format during the pandemic in 2020. Online format is way cheaper and enables people to attend from more diverse regions without needing transport or accommodation, even though only people with access to the Internet can participate. It may be a bit cheaper by some aspects and can enable people to attend from more diverse regions without needing transport or accommodation. It also has some limitations as human interactions are more limited, collective intelligence refrained and an online format demands for a very careful recruitment and a more resources to onboard and keep participants.

Needs and expenses

To run a successful citizens’ dialogue, you will need to invest sufficient time and money. As said above online formats have a different structure of costs: you don’t need to pay for food or accommodation but you need to pay for hardware and software, send devices all over the country, take time to have a more thorough recruitment and a good onboarding of participants.

### Online dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>40 days of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>30 days of work or external service provider Social media campaigns Flyers/Ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td>Software Devices and data packages to send and get back</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Face-to-face dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>40 days of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>20 days of work or external service provider Social media campaigns Flyers/Ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td>1 room with sound and video 500 copies Catering for 120 for one day Video team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Hybrid dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>40 days of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>25 days of work or external service provider Social media campaigns Flyers/Ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td>Software Devices and data packages to send and get back 1 room with sound and video 500 copies Catering for 60 for one day Video team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Designing the *We, the Internet* Citizens’ Dialogue

Informing citizens early on

This briefing material is an introductory document to send to citizens a few days before the sessions. These have been translated into many languages, contact us if you need them in French, German, Russian, Spanish or any other language.

Setting the topic of national session

To be in line with your local political, social and economic context you can run a national session which will be fully dedicated to the current affairs in your country.

During the 2020 edition, our partners decided to carry out national sessions on online child protection (Romania), Role of Social and promoting sustainable local development (Algeria), Internet blackout during election time (Ivory Coast), Optimizing Internet access in rural communities (Haiti) or even censorship (India).

COVID-19: Adapting the formats

The question here is how to adapt the format WHILE respecting the minimal standards set by Missions Publiques.

The current context is marked by the economic and social impacts of the crisis, compounding the vulnerability of the people furthest removed from decision-making processes. These impacts require us to further strengthen the procedures for mobilizing and including the most vulnerable groups and those furthest removed from public decision-making.

Protecting each other

1. Start by training your staff on the new health rules and remind the participants about the safety and social distancing measures orally on a regular basis (each time they return to the room, for example).

2. Clearly organize the entrance and exit of the venue in compliance with the rules on social distancing (floor markings, clear signs of entry and exit times, hand sanitizer etc.)

3. Paper or fabric masks must be available for each participant. Alternatively, the participation may be notified to come with their own mask. Facilitators must always wear a mask. Disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

4. Designate a single person to complete the documents for a group of people (e.g. facilitators could be the only ones to touch the group work materials).
Going online and understanding the digital tools you need

At Missions Publiques, we use Zoom. It is cheap, you can take an account for one month only (USD13) and all the options you need for an online deliberation are available.

Key elements to a successful online dialogue

BREAK THE ICE FROM A DISTANCE

The first contact is usually made by telephone. An e-mail or an explanatory letter, personalised with offbeat questions, can help to “break the ice” and remove any reluctance on the part of the inhabitants who are being asked to participate, who thus enter into the process beforehand.

ALL DIGITAL SITUATIONS ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

Going online can accentuate certain divides: that of digital illiteracy of course, but also disparities in tools: no smartphone, computer or tablet, poor connection etc. Train them on how to access the platform via their mobile phone or computer, how to activate or deactivate their microphone and/or camera, how to request speech and how to use the chat to interact etc.

ADAPT TO THE CITIZENS’ COMFORT ZONES

When you go online, you have to accept that participants (and facilitators) are at home and sometimes with children, pets and that they do not have a dedicated quiet room. It is better to laugh about it than to be embarrassed and make it an opportunity to create support and conviviality. Welcome to real life... citizens and organizers alike!

4 tips to make an online Citizens’ Dialogue a great online Citizens’ Dialogue

Read the best of Missions Publiques’ tips for making a (great) online deliberation on Missions Publiques’ blog.

“To be sure that people understand how Zoom is working and to avoid wasting time on the dialogue day, don’t hesitate to organize a test beforehand to let the participants try the technicalities and functionalities of the platform (mute/unmute, open/close camera,...).”

Antoine VERGNE
Co-Director at Missions Publiques

BE CREATIVE!

Going online puts our creativity to the test: instant polls, viewing of videos, live co-writing via the conversation chat or tools such as Miro Boards, Google Docs, flash alternation between subgroups and plenary sessions thanks to instant distribution...
The quality and the credibility of the project depend on a good citizen recruitment. This task needs to be well estimated as it requires a great deal of time. You will find in the Recruitment Kit below socio-demographic criteria to build your panel of citizens, our suggestion of methods and a timeline.

**Recruiting citizens in an inclusive and diverse way**

**Recruitment kit**

If you want a hundred citizens in the room on the deliberation day, you need to confirm 140 citizens as a certain percentage of people do not come finally. In order to make sure that you will get a varied group of citizens according to the parameters mentioned above you will need to get around 200 citizens registered for the dialogue. This means that you need to contact more citizens to have about 200 citizens registered. In Missions Publiques we usually contact between 5,000 and 10,000 persons, plus many associations and organizations, to end up with 200 citizens registered.

Our experience in Europe is that you need 4,000 to 8,000 contacts to end up with enough participants. In some countries and if your recruitment strategy is built around the right incentives you will need much less efforts to have the required number.
Communicating on your We, the Internet Citizens’ Dialogue

Staying true to the message and values of We, The Internet

We, The Internet is a unique deliberative process, which can be re-implemented, if and only if the principles and values of the project are respected at all stages and by all stakeholders and if our brand and logo is respected in all your communication content.

Diversity: having different minds come together for a common purpose is possible only when their diverse strengths, abilities, interests and perspectives are understood and supported.

Inclusion: inclusion efforts are vital for everyone to be able to be their best self and experience the full richness of their co-participants as no one feels the need to suppress who they are.

Equality: all citizens, regardless of their level of education, origin or religion opinions, must be treated fairly and with dignity and all should be able to speak their mind without being judged.

Respect: respect helps to frame a message so others want to hear it too, while being straight and kind at the same time.

Find us on social media #WeTheInternet

Respecting the branding identity is a must

The visual identity around We, The Internet must be consistent for all your communications. To keep the standard while using our brand names, logos, typefaces and other design elements in advertisements, brochures, newsletters, packaging and online communications, please find the visual identity guidelines here.

Involving stakeholders to speak or observe

In France, Missions Publiques invited the French Ambassador to Digital Affairs, Henri Verdier, to come to the Citizens’ Dialogue, give an introductory speech and observe. Local or national stakeholders can attend as observers to see for themselves the quality and integrity of the process. They can appear as a speaker to put forward their point of view or share their personal experience.
During Deliberation Day

The importance of good facilitation

A facilitator has one of the most important roles during the day. They are the guarantor of the quality of the deliberation. Quality of the results often depends on the quality of the facilitation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should be</th>
<th>Shouldn’t be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>An expert of Internet governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert to the dynamics between participants</td>
<td>An expert of deliberations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear and precise</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Keep in mind: **there is absolutely no prerequisite to be a good facilitator.** The only prerequisite is that facilitators follow a 2-hour training that the organiser will provide.

“**You don’t need any previous experience. Facilitation is a skill you can learn anytime. You don’t need any previous experience.**”

Manon POTET
Consultant at Missions Publiques

Hello, I will be facilitating the discussion with you and I will make sure that you talk to each other about the questions that are put to you. I am not here to influence your exchanges. So, why did you decide to come today?

No one here is an expert on the Internet and its issues. We are here to listen to you and to give you the keys you need to make yourself an opinion.
For each situation, the wording that can come in handy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advice</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make sure people understand what is discussed, and the questions that are asked</td>
<td>“I remind you of the questions we will have to answer on this subject.” (…) “Is it clear to everyone? Do you need further explanation?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help participants express their thoughts, facilitators can reword or ask for rewording</td>
<td>“I’m not sure I understand. Can someone explain to others what he/she understood?” “If I reformulate what you just said, I would say (…). Is that what you mean?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulate speaking</td>
<td>“Thank you for sharing with the group your opinion on (…). Perhaps other people have a different point of view on this subject, which should be mentioned here?” “Thank you for sharing with the group your opinion on (…). We have 25 minutes left and there are still many topics to discuss…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You might have to reframe the discussion</td>
<td>“What you are telling us is very interesting, and those who wish will be able to discuss it later, but I remind you that we are working on…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure the filling of the group worksheets is essential in your role</td>
<td>“I remind you that it is important to write down all these ideas.” “Do you want me to take notes?” “What do you think? Do I write this on the group sheet?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some (essential) housekeeping

- **Conflicts** will inevitably arise, but frustration should never turn into a personal attack. It is not okay to insult, demean or belittle others. Facilitators must guarantee this regard at tables and in zoom rooms.

- **Unwelcome sexual attention or unwelcome physical contact** is not acceptable.

- If a participant violates these guidelines, facilitators must inform the main moderator who will ask them to kindly leave the event.

Extra tips for online facilitation

**Setting up the technical conditions for an online deliberation.**

We advise organisers to have a “back-up operator” to answer all requests about connection and technical issues. Do not forget to write his/her number to guide participants with connection problems.

Before the start of each session facilitators have to check that:

- They are affected by the host of the online session (which is supposed to be the main moderator) as co-host.

- Participants have their name written and not something else (company name, wife’s or husband’s name…).

- Facilitators’ role is mentioned, i.e “John S. (Facilitator)”

**Good to know !**

If a guest or journalist joined the dialogue, citizens (and you) have to identify them as non-participants or by their status. For instance: “Melina J. (journalist)”. Also, make sure that they don’t intervene too much in the discussions: we want to hear citizens, not experts or journalists!
Global highlights from *We, the Internet* 2020 edition

On social media

join us at  
#WeTheInternet
After the deliberation

Reporting the results

Once you have your results and have produced your report, contact us back to make sure we publish them on the global website and include them in our global impact strategy.

We are also happy to support impact activities in your country.

Communicating the results

To make it simple, we recommend you report the results of your Dialogue with a Typeform (it’s free). You will have to be much more proactive with your communications once the dialogue gets going.

The key is not to justify each individual decision at the end of the process, but to explain the process and show that it works.

There are several key objectives in this regard:

1. To show that the assembly is a trustworthy and effective way of making decisions.
2. Make sure participants are having a good time and showcase their appreciation of the day, and the overall process.
3. Illustrate that decision makers are “on board” with the assembly, understand the process and its value and are willing to absorb wider lessons of the process.

“A good way to engage the discussion here is to give citizens disinformation facts related to Covid-19 in their country.”

Lucile PHILIP
We, The Internet Core team
Leading your 2 to 3 hour long mini Citizens’ Dialogue

• Artificial Intelligence
• My data, your data, our data
• Disinformation
• Digital Identity
Beforehand

The thematic introductory video that you need are at your disposal. They have all been translated in several languages. Please contact us if you need any help with finding your language.

Don’t miss out on the special introductory video with Vint Cerf (a), Founder of the Internet, Vice President at Google; Lynn St-Amour (b), CEO Internet Matters—Former Chair of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group and Fabrizio Hochschild (c), Under Secretary-General of the United Nations.

All three welcome participants warmly to the Citizens’ Dialogues and wish them a good deliberation day!

Video links

Welcome words by the three VIPs
Click here

Artificial Intelligence
Click here

Data
Click here

Disinformation (1)
Click here

Disinformation (2)
Click here

Digital Identity
Click here
Artificial Intelligence

How to do this?
Ensuring that everyone knows what AI is

6 key questions for individual questionnaires
• For you, AI is more a threat or an opportunity?
• What should the priority be for a good development of AI?
• It should be able to deliver accurate results
• It should be driven towards sustainability (minimize the impact on environment)
• Should the following organizations hire ethicists to advise them on major decisions involving AI?
• How would you advise (...) to legally protect bus drivers, teachers, artists, surgeons of losing their jobs?

That’s a wrap! What now?
If you include appropriate local, regional or national stakeholders and communicate the process effectively you can expect the final recommendations to carry some force.
1. List the results in a written report
2. Organise a formal handover process with your target stakeholders
3. Participants can form a group to monitor the outcome of the results
My data, your data, our data

How to do this?
Ensuring that everyone understands what data means and what it can reveal from Internet users.

Group discussions

- How important is data in combating the spread of Covid-19, and why?
- What are for you the main differences between the online world and the real world in relation to data (e.g. usage, storage, transmission)?

4 key questions for individual questionnaires

- How many accounts do you have on the Internet? (0/less than 5/5 to 10/10 to 50/50+)
- Has your use of the Internet affected your privacy and anonymity?
- How do you feel about data collection? People who go on the Internet put their privacy at risk - Data can be used against me to discriminate me - People are sufficiently aware of their rights regarding their personal data - Companies who suffer data theft should immediately notify citizens who have been affected
- Has your understanding of data improved? yes or no - If your understanding of data has improved, will you try and share less data in the future? yes or no.

Data can be seen as many things. Here are 4 different perceptions of data, which participants will be asked to reflect upon.

- Data as labor/contribution
- Data as our personal reflection and a Human right
- Data as infrastructure
- Data as a resource

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Disinformation

How to do this?
Ensuring that everyone understands what disinformation means, what effects it can have and how to counter it.

3 key questions for individual questionnaires
- Have you been faced with disinformation during the spread Covid-19? If yes, how?
- What do you think is the number one priority for public and private sector?
- Has your understanding of disinformation improved? Do you think citizens should have a greater role in supporting public sector, private sector and civil society in taking efficient decisions regarding fighting disinformation?

Group discussions
After having learned about disinformation, ask them decision makers should act against it? What would they like them to do? Show them the overview of the solutions and ask them what solutions private sector, public sector and civil society should focus on?

That’s a wrap! What now?
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Digital Identity

How to do this?
Ensuring that everyone understands how the Internet works and that they have a digital identity.

The Internet was invented by scientists who wanted to link their computers to one another, becoming a network of networks. They soon began to discover the broader potential of this early project, and found a way for computers and individuals to share information.

Group discussions
Let’s talk about your relation to the Internet. The first round of discussion is about what you perceive as your “Internet profile”. Ask the participants to take 5 minutes to gather thoughts individually. Participants position themselves in the table (they put a cross in a cell) and comment why they decided to position themselves in that cell.

4 key questions for individual questionnaires
• If you have the Internet, what is your #1 main joy of using it? Your #1 main constraint of using?
• If you don’t use the Internet, what is your main frustration and joy in not using it?

Special COVID-19 “Infodemic” questions
• Has the Internet changed anything for you during the outbreak and spread of COVID-19?
• Have you changed the way you used the Internet?

"A good way to engage the discussion here is to give citizens disinformation facts related to Covid-19 in their country."

Maria TAZI
Core We, the Internet team member
Making *We, the Internet* integral part of Internet Governance

From a Day 0 event with 25 participants in the basement of the Conference Center of Geneva in 2017 to a Global Citizens’ and Stakeholders’ Dialogue in more than 80 countries in 2020, *We, the Internet* has grown to become a strong coalition of strategic and national partners that together have built a worldwide infrastructure. It is now possible to discuss key challenges of our digital future with ordinary citizens.

Participants have delivered a series of key messages that we have translated into visions, key findings, and recommendations.

At the metalevel, citizens and stakeholders have emphasized the necessity to have an inclusive, multistakeholder, and deliberative governance of the Internet\(^3\). Our ambition is to support the realization of this demand by 2025 and the next World Summit on the Information Society. To achieve this goal, we will pursue the following activities in 2021 and beyond:

- Design and implement citizens and stakeholders deliberations around the world with our national partners to feed the global and national discussion on new topics or the same issues as in 2020.
- Proactively engage in the Internet governance space to make sure that by 2025 the deliberative way of doing things is not a question of “if” but of “how.”
- Extend and strengthen the global coalition to reach out to new countries, new citizens, new partners.

Potential topics for 2021 that emerge from the results are:

- Focus on encryption as a way to pursue the discussion on Data and trust. Encryption will allow exploring the delicate balance between individual rights and societal needs. Citizens want a data-driven society based on trust and control. But how exactly should that play out?
- Further explore the governance of Artificial Intelligence. This is the topic for which citizens say that they need more time, more information, and more precise questioning. Given the global agenda on AI for 2021, this seems to be a priority that will match a vital need.
- Dive deeper into concrete arbitrages on the question of governance. Citizens want shared governance. But how should this look like concretely? How do they see smart governance?

To go further

To roll out your own dialogue, please find all the necessary resources here: [wetheinternet.org/resources/](http://wetheinternet.org/resources/)

Videos can be found at: [bit.ly/37cxLYS](http://bit.ly/37cxLYS)

The recording of the Open Forum session at vIGF 2020 during which we presented the preliminary results of the process can be viewed here: [bit.ly/37eTuPZ](http://bit.ly/37eTuPZ)
Partners

Global strategic partners

Google  FACEBOOK

WORLD WIDE WEB FOUNDATION  UNESCO

GLOBAL ECONOMIC FORUM  INTERNET SOCIETY  WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION

Global Cooperation partners

UN75  JOIN AID NETWORK  E3  Approximate for Science, Policy & Citizens

DIPOLO  A CIVIC ACTION  Liquid Democracy

National strategic partners

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