



DEMOCRACY BITES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**SECOND
EDITION!**

As democracy faces mounting pressure worldwide, despair about its future is understandable. We can find hope in the innovations emerging across the globe that are bringing citizens closer to a democracy that truly represents them. **We call these stories “Democracy Bites.” Dig in!**

FRANCE’S CITIZENS’ CONVENTION ON CLIMATE

In 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the Citizens’ Convention on Climate, an innovative initiative tasking citizens with creating measures to reduce France’s greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 (compared to 1990 levels). The initiative brought together 150 citizens, between the ages of 16 and 80, to discuss housing, labor and production, transportation, food, and consumption. During their deliberations, they heard from climate experts and received guidance from policy-drafting specialists. President Macron pledged to submit the proposals “without a filter” for parliamentary debate, a referendum, or direct implementation.

The participants created 149 proposals, including proposals to bolster green vehicles through zero-interest loans, taxes on high emission vehicles, and new measures for carbon neutral housing projects. Currently, around 20% of recommendations have been translated into policy. And 40% have been adopted in modified form. Many were incorporated into the Climate and Resilience bill adopted by parliament in 2021. Following the convention, participants issued a statement urging the French legislature to implement their proposals and to request additional citizen conventions on other major national issues. The Citizens’ Convention on Climate demonstrates the power of deliberative democracy by showing how informed citizens can work together to develop groundbreaking policy, creating laws driving positive change.

DEMOCRACY BITES CONTINUED



SPAIN'S DIGITAL DEMOCRACY INITIATIVES

Spain has emerged as a global leader in digital democracy by modernizing public services and protecting citizens' rights online. Through its Ministry for Digital and Civil Service Transformation, the nation is advancing the digitization of government functions and strengthening oversight of digital infrastructure. Spain's digital rights charter, or "Carta de Derechos Digitales," extends traditional rights, like equality, privacy, and freedom of expression, to AI and cyberspace. These administrative and legislative measures are reinforced by judicial requirements for algorithmic transparency, which mandate that public authorities ensure transparency, accountability, and public oversight of the algorithms and government code used in every new initiative. At the local level, online civic platforms like Decidim Barcelona and Decide Madrid enable residents to propose policies and participate in public decision making. Together, these platforms have engaged hundreds of thousands of citizens, generated tens of thousands of policy proposals and discussions, and demonstrated how digital tools can make government more transparent, participatory, and responsive.



MEXICO'S GENDER PARITY POLICIES

Mexico, along with other Latin American countries, has emerged as a global leader in promoting gender equity in public offices through policies requiring equal representation of men and women in elected office and public institutions. Mexico first introduced a gender quota in politics in 2002, passing a legislative requirement that 30% of candidates running for office be women. This quota was raised to 40% in 2008, and in 2014, Mexico transitioned from a quota system to a full gender parity system, mandating equal opportunity for candidates based on gender across local and national offices. Through each of these changes, representation steadily improved.

Female legislators recognized that candidate parity alone did not guarantee equality within the government hierarchy itself. In 2019, Mexican congresswomen passed a landmark constitutional reform known as "Parity in Everything" (Paridad en Todo). The mandate established that equality was necessary across all public offices, making it the most advanced gender parity law in Latin America. In 2024, Mexico elected its first female president. Notably, the top two contenders for office were women from two different minority groups, and together they received 90% of the vote.



FINLAND'S YOUTH ELECTIONS AND PUBLIC DELIBERATIONS

In 2026, Finland was the only country to receive a perfect 100 score in Freedom House's Freedom in the World Report. Part of this success must be attributed to Finland's investment in democratic participation through innovative civic and voting initiatives. One of Finland's most notable initiatives is Youth Election, a national voting event in which upper and vocational school students cast ballots during national elections. The program not only gives policymakers insight into the political standing of the younger generation but also fosters lifelong voting habits.

To translate public deliberation into policy, Finland has adopted participatory budgeting in many of its municipalities. Residents are given the opportunity to propose ideas and vote on how a certain amount of the municipality's budget is used, giving citizens a direct role in local decision-making. Several municipalities also set aside youth budgets for students aged 13–17, ensuring that younger residents have a voice in funding youth-focused projects. These initiatives foster civic engagement and voting habits among Finns from a young age, ultimately contributing to a more active adult electorate.

Thank you for reading! For more positive democracy stories, please visit our website at smallplanet.org.