



# Practical guides for citizen participation in Barcelona

## Citizens' initiatives



# **Practical guides for citizen participation in Barcelona**

**Promote.  
Citizens' initiatives**

**Debate.  
Participatory processes**

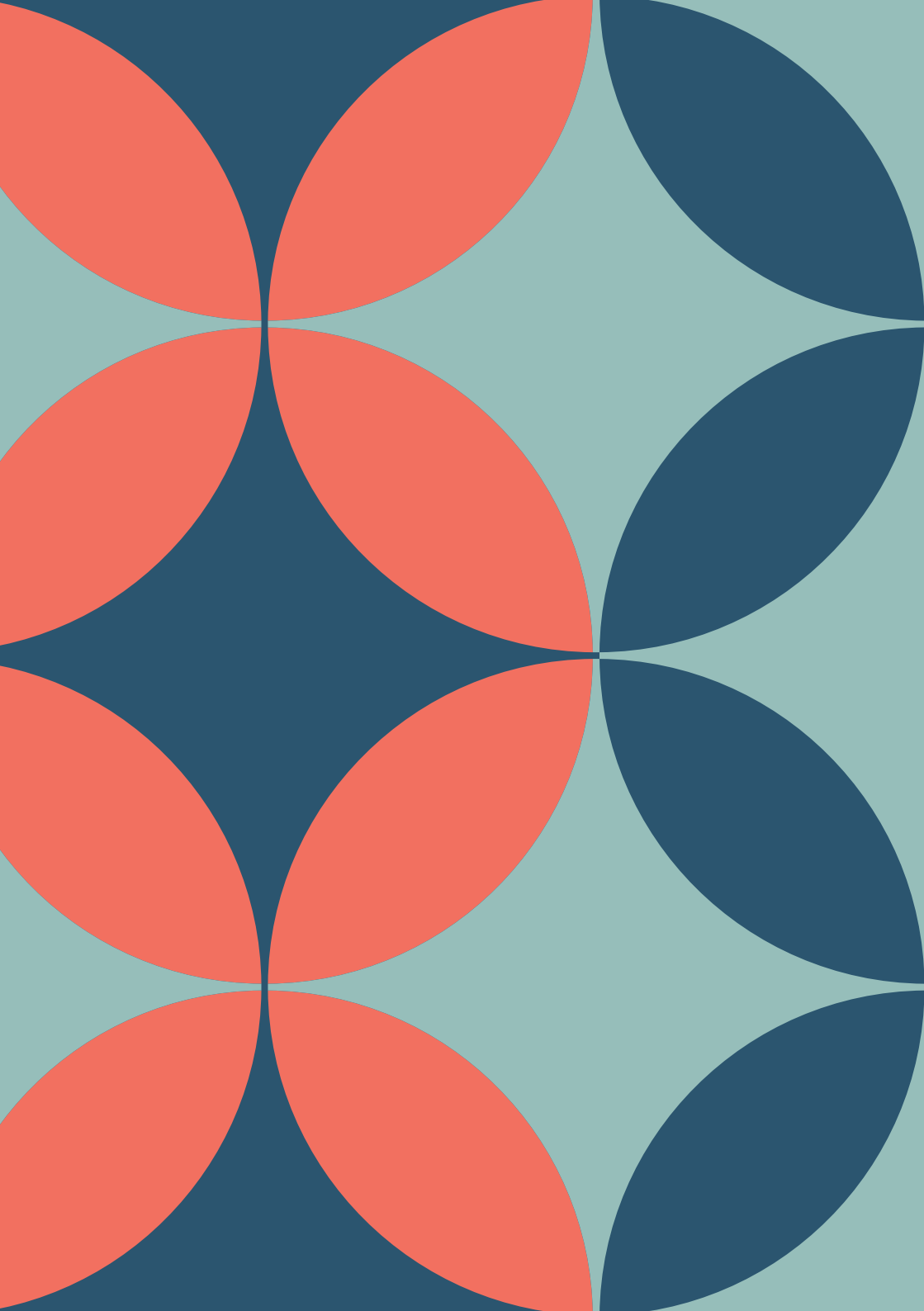
**Co-produce.  
Participatory bodies**

**Decide.  
Citizen consultations**



# Contents

7	Introduction
9	What you will find in this guide
12	Citizens' initiatives
16	Collecting signatures
20	Initiative outcomes
21	Support from the City Council
22	The system of guarantees



# Introduction

As in any city, Barcelona residents have access to certain services such as transport, education, social services and health care, and they share public spaces in the streets and neighbourhoods. Using these services is a collective right, which in a democracy is determined by the policy decisions made by city council or parliamentary representatives.

Citizens choose their councillors via elections, which are one of many ways to participate. But citizen participation goes much further than voting in elections. Policy decisions, which affect all citizens, should not be limited to interactions between different political parties. Citizens need to have an active presence in proposals, opinions and initiatives.

Complex societies such as ours encompass a wide range of interests, which may contradict each other and which require rich and innovative solutions. In a democracy, as many different perspectives and outlooks as possible need to be heard and considered when making policy decisions. Pluralism is a value within a democratic system.

A democracy that incorporates this plurality consistently, inclusively and directly is the ideal system to achieve a better quality of life, fight inequality, obtain higher rates of justice and equality and for personal and community aspirations to develop with freedom and dignity.

That said, for a democracy to truly be transformative and representative of this wealth of perspectives, we need channels that recognise citizens as active subjects. Channels that ultimately allow their voices and ideas to be heard, expanding the spaces for dialogue and for the opportunity for collective proposals to be made.

Over the years, Barcelona, its inhabitants, social organisations and the other players that make up the city have consistently tried to improve the democratic quality of the city. This legacy has now been consolidated and shaped into the Regulation for Citizen Participation, with the aim of providing different channels for city residents to exercise their right to participation and thereby demonstrate their transformative energy.





# What you will find in this guide

Barcelona City Council has created these guides as a simple way for anyone living in Barcelona to familiarise themselves with the Regulation for Citizen Participation and to discover and use all the related resources available.

The participation system described in this Regulation brings together three channels:

- Participatory processes
- Participatory bodies
- Citizen consultations

All three may be instigated by the City Council or through a citizens' initiative. In other words, citizens have the opportunity and ability to set any of these channels in motion. Citizens can also make regulatory proposals (byelaws and regulations) and instigate actions by government bodies in the city or district by proposing points for their meeting agendas.

Even though the Regulation has a system in place to guarantee the efficacy and efficiency of these channels, the best way to ensure this is for citizens to use them regularly.

To bring it into force, a regulation needs to be put into practice in the social sphere, not just published in an official organ. We therefore suggest that citizens of Barcelona make it their own: only then will it become truly useful and innovative.

The following guide refers to [citizens' initiatives](#).

## What are they?

A way for citizens to promote a municipal action by collecting signatures



It may affect the **city** or a **district**

## Who can organise them?



**Minimum 3 people > 18 years old** in the Barcelona municipal register



**Organisations and entities**

## How are they organised?



Submit an **application**



**In-person**

Citizen Help and Information Office



**Digitally**

Participation platform

*decidim.barcelona*



Submission period (City Council)

## Who can sign the petition?



Signature collection period

\*Can be extended by a maximum of 2 months with justification



> **16 years old**

In the electoral register of the area covered by the initiative

**Attestors:** people in charge of collecting and ensuring the authenticity of signatures



Signature validation period (City Council)

## What can they relate to?

## What result could they have?

Include a point on the **agenda** of the **Municipal/District Council Meeting**

Debate in the next session

Carry out a **participatory process**

Process begins in max. 3 months

Hold a **public hearing**

Hearing convened max. 30 days

Set up a new **participatory body**

Body set up

Approve or modify a **municipal regulation**

Start of proceedings

Hold a **citizen consultation**

Approval of the consultation

Hold a **neighbourhood council**

Neighbourhood council convened max. 30 days

# Citizens' initiatives

## What are they?

Citizens' initiatives consist of collecting signatures in order to encourage the City Council to carry out a specific action of collective interest, providing it is within its competences.

They are therefore a mechanism that recognises people's ability to be active players in matters that affect the community as a whole, and that encourage citizens to play a leading role in defining the priorities on the city's policy agenda.

Citizens' initiatives may affect the entire city, one or more districts, or in exceptional cases, areas smaller than a district. An initiative can drive any of the following actions.



Include a point on the agenda of the Municipal or District Council Meeting



Carry out a participatory process



Hold a public hearing



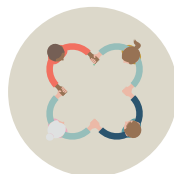
Set up a new participatory body



Approve or modify a municipal regulation



Hold a citizen consultation



Hold a neighbourhood council

## Who can support them?

Citizens' initiatives can be supported by anyone over 16 years old in the municipal register in the area covered by the initiative.

Initiatives can be supported by:



Signing in-person at  
the places designated  
for this purpose



**Decidim  
Barcelona**

Signing digitally on the  
participation platform  
*[decidim.barcelona](https://decidim.barcelona)*

In both cases, the signature must be accompanied by the following details: name and surname; national/foreign national ID (DNI/NIE) or passport number, postcode of the area where registered and date of birth.



## How are they implemented?

At least three people over 18 who do not hold an elected position and who appear in the municipal register can instigate a citizens' initiative, in addition to any entity, not-for-profit association, business association, union or professional body, provided their activity takes place within the city of Barcelona.



Natural or legal persons promoting the citizens' initiative form the Promoting Committee

To promote a citizens' initiative, the following steps must be taken:

1



**Prepare the application**

The application must include:

- The demand, territorial scope and motivation for the initiative
- Personal details, if promoted by individuals
- The minutes of the meeting approving promotion of the initiative, if being promoted by an organisation or body
- The list of people authorised to collect signatures (attestors)

2



**Submit the application**

The application and accompanying documentation must be submitted to the City Council Registry:

- In-person, to any Citizen Help and Information Office
- Online, on the platform [decidim.barcelona](https://decidim.barcelona)

3



### Collect authorisation

The following must be collected in-person from the City Council:

- Authorisation for the initiative and signature sheets
- Validation of people acting as attestors

4



### Publication of the initiative on the participation platform *decidim.barcelona*

The participation platform *decidim.barcelona* is a space for the Promoting Committee to post information and collect digital signatures, provided by the City Council.

#### Specific conditions for the application and admission to proceedings of certain initiatives

- To **instigate a citizens' initiative calling for a consultation**, please note that:
  - The application for the initiative must contain the question to be voted on, the area affected and a description of the reasons behind it.
  - Consultations on matters that may limit or restrict basic rights and freedoms are not permitted.
  - If the matter to be presented for consultation implies spending greater than 3% of the annual municipal budget, the City Council can decide not to allow the citizens' initiative procedure to continue, or inform the organisers of the conditions required for its execution, if approved.
- To **instigate a citizens' initiative proposing a new municipal regulation be passed**, the initiative must be accompanied by the full text or a general description of the proposal.
- To **instigate a citizens' initiative proposing a modification to a municipal regulation**, the initiative must include the articles to be modified and the proposed alternative text.

# Collecting signatures

Collecting a minimum number of signatures is essential to proceed with a citizens' initiative.

Signatures can be collected in-person in the spaces designated for doing so by the Promoting Committee, and digitally via the participation platform [decidim.barcelona](https://decidim.barcelona).

Signatures can be collected over a period of two months, which may be extended for a further two months with just cause.

## Who can collect signatures?

Attestors – who are responsible for the authenticity of signatures – can collect signatures in-person, using the signature sheets provided by the City Council.

The Promoting Committee assigns the attestors. They must be of legal age and appear in the municipal register of any municipality in Catalonia.

There is no limit to the number of attestors, but they must sign a declaration of compliance and be validated by the City Council.

Once signatures have been collected, the Promoting Committee hands in the signature sheets. The City Council then has one month to check and validate them.

### Valid signatures

Valid signatures are those from people over 16 years old who appear in the municipal register of the territorial area covered by the consultation.

A check for duplicate signatures will be carried out between in-person and digital signatures. Where duplicates are found, the in-person signature will be counted.



## How many signatures are required?

The minimum number of signatures required depends on the objective and the territorial scope covered by the citizens' initiative:

### For city initiatives

Type of action	Signatures
Include a point on the agenda of the Municipal or District Council Meeting	3,750
Hold a public hearing	7,000
Carry out a participatory process	9,000
Set up a new participatory body	9,000
Approve or modify a municipal regulation	15,000
Hold a citizen consultation	15,000
Hold a neighbourhood council	1% of the total population of the neighbourhood affected (minimum 25, maximum 450)

## For district initiatives

**1- Ciutat Vella**

2,500 / 1,500 / 1,000 / 500

**2- Eixample**

6,500 / 3,900 / 2,600 / 1,300

**3- Sants-Montjuïc**

4,500 / 2,700 / 1,800 / 900

**4- Les Corts**

2,000 / 1,200 / 800 / 400

**5- Sarrià-Sant Gervasi**

3,500 / 2,200 / 1,500 / 700

**6- Gràcia**

3,000 / 1,800 / 1,200 / 600

**7- Horta-Guinardó**

4,000 / 2,500 / 1,700 / 800

**8- Nou Barris**

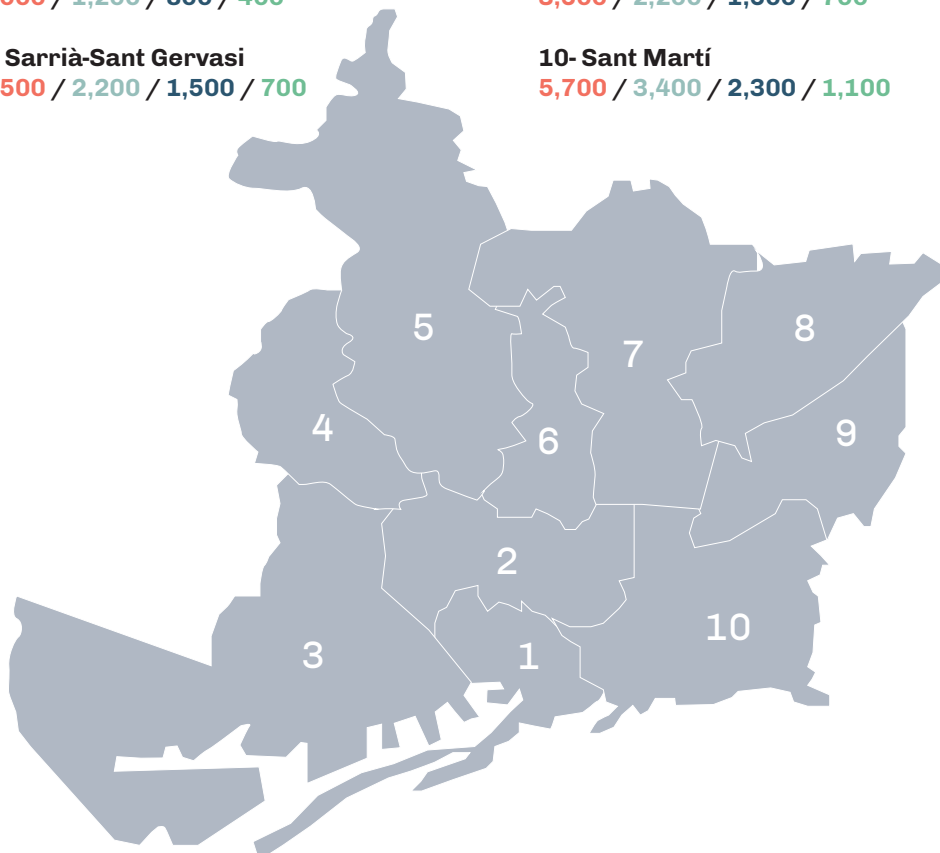
4,000 / 2,400 / 1,700 / 800

**9- Sant Andreu**

3,500 / 2,200 / 1,500 / 700

**10- Sant Martí**

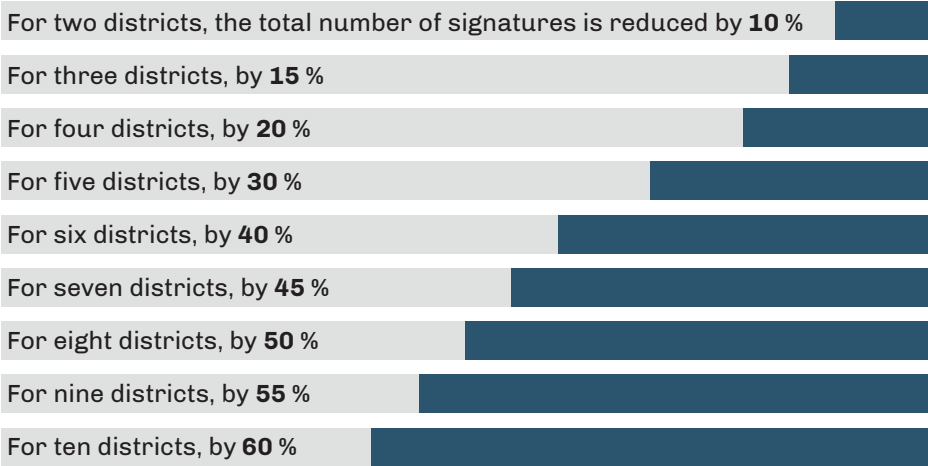
5,700 / 3,400 / 2,300 / 1,100







\* The order of the signatures corresponds to **Consultations and regulations / Processes and bodies / Hearings / Points for the agenda**

## For initiatives affecting more than one district

When the initiative proposed affects more than one district, signatures must be collected equal to the total signatures required for the affected districts and the following reduction applied:



## For initiatives affecting areas smaller than a district

 <p>Carry out a participatory process</p>	 <p>Set up a new participatory body</p>	 <p>Hold a citizen consultation</p>	 <p>Hold a neighbourhood council</p>
<p><b>2% of the total population of the affected area</b> (minimum 50 and maximum 900 signatures)</p>	<p><b>2% of the total population of the affected area</b> (minimum 50 and maximum 900 signatures)</p>	<p><b>10% of the total population affected</b> (minimum 250 signatures)</p>	<p><b>1% of the total population of the affected neighbourhood</b> (minimum 25 and maximum 450 signatures)</p>

## Initiative outcomes

If a citizens' initiative receives the necessary support, the City Council shall carry out the following municipal actions according to the type of initiative:



Include a point on the agenda of the Municipal or District Council Meeting

It will be agreed to include it in the following Meeting and will be debated among all municipal groups



Carry out a participatory process

The process will be started in a maximum of three months



Hold a public hearing

The hearing will be convened in a maximum of 30 days



Set up a new participatory body

The body will be created once the Municipal Council or District Council issues a favourable decision prior to the Municipal Citizen Council or the District Citizen Council



Approve or modify a municipal regulation

Proceedings will begin within the next three months



Hold a citizen consultation

The consultation will be approved by the Municipal Council



Hold a neighbourhood council

The neighbourhood council will be convened within 30 days maximum (maximum four per year, provided two months have passed since the last call)

When the citizens' initiative consists of actions that require agreement of the Municipal Council Meeting, a member of the Promoting Committee can participate in the session in which it is debated.



## Support from the City Council

The City Council provides technical and financial support to promote equality among all citizens when organising citizens' initiatives:

- It advises the Promoting Committee on the procedures to carry out the initiative.
- It offers the Promoting Committee the participation platform [decidim.barcelona](https://decidim.barcelona) to disseminate information and collect signatures online.
- It prints signature sheets and offers a free permit to collect signatures face-to-face on the street.
- It offers financial support through an extraordinary subsidy of one euro per validated signature, with a maximum equal to the total number of required signatures. In order to qualify for this financial support, you must collect the minimum number of required valid signatures and justify all expenses related to the initiative.

# The system of guarantees

## Safeguards Committee

If at any time any person considers that the participation regulations have not been correctly applied, or that the rights to participation have been breached, they can submit a query or written complaint to the Safeguards Committee.

This Committee is a consultative body within the Municipal Citizen Council and is made up of experts outside the City Council. The committee aims to ensure citizens' rights to participation.

**The Safeguards Committee is made up of 6 members with gender parity distributed between:**



2 proposed by the **Municipal Council**



2 proposed by the **Government Commission**



1 proposed by the **Municipal Citizen Council**



1 proposed by the **Ombudsman's Office**

### They must be

Independent of the Municipal Government

People of recognised standing and experts in citizen participation

Maximum plurality and diversity

### They cannot be

Elected positions

Municipal staff

### How to appeal to the Safeguards Committee

A written complaint can be submitted to the Safeguards Committee online using the participation platform [decidim.barcelona](https://decidim.barcelona) or by filing a request in-person at any Citizen Help and Information Office.

The Safeguards Committee will issue a report and make a recommendation to the City Council, if applicable.



*decidim.barcelona* is a digital platform built using free software. It is a space to coordinate any participation mechanism in the city of Barcelona. This tool is available to all citizens to organise democratic processes in the city at all levels.

*decidim.barcelona* makes it possible to instigate and support citizens' initiatives, play a direct role in participatory processes in the city, find out about debates being held in the participatory bodies and vote in citizen consultations.

For further information, go to [decidim.barcelona  
barcelona.cat/participaciociudadana](https://decidim.barcelona.barcelona.cat/participaciociudadana)

Or call

**010** Informació  
Barcelona  
Trucada gratuïta



The content of this guide is subject to a Creative Commons By-SA license. You are free to use, copy, modify and redistribute this work under the same license.

