

Practical guides for citizen participation in Barcelona

Citizen consultations

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**Promote.
Citizens' initiatives**

**Debate.
Participatory processes**

**Co-produce.
Participatory bodies**

**Decide.
Citizen consultations**

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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 [citizen consultations](#).

What are they?

A channel **for making decisions on important matters in the city via direct vote**



Single
On one issue



Multiple
Various issues



For the city and district

Who can vote?



People > 16 years old

In the municipal register in the area the consultation applies to

Who can organise them?



City Council

Mayor

2/5 of the
Municipal Council
Meeting



Citizens

Citizens' Initiative

By collecting
signatures

Approval and call



Approval by the Municipal Council

By 2/3 of the Municipal Council Meeting, if the consultation is proposed by the City Council

By simple majority, if the consultation is proposed by a citizens' initiative



The period decreed from the call to approval



Call

The Mayor convenes the consultation

- Consultation date
- Period for public debate
- Specific rules

Public debate



Period for debate before the consultation

Voting



In-person



Digital

Citizen consultations

What are they?

Citizen consultations allow citizens to make decisions on important city issues through direct, free, equal and secret ballot.

Voting can be carried out:

- In-person
- Online on the participation platform decidim.barcelona

Citizen consultations must refer to issues that fall within the City Council's competences and over which they have decision-making powers.

Consultations can be for the entire city, one or more districts or smaller geographical areas.

Citizen consultations may be:



Single
On one issue



Multiple
Various issues

A maximum of three citizen consultations can be held in one year. A multiple consultation counts as one consultation. Alternatively, the mayor can concentrate all citizen consultations within a certain period during the year.

Who can vote?

Anyone over 16 years old living in Barcelona and who appears in the municipal register in the area the consultation applies to may vote.

Voting can be done:

- In person, in the designated places
- Online, on the platform decidim.barcelona



In both cases, voters must state their name and surname, national/foreign national ID (DNI/NIE) or passport number, the postcode registered in the municipal register and their date of birth.

How are they organised?

Public consultations may be promoted both by citizens and by the City Council:



Citizens' initiative

The general public can promote a consultation through a citizens' initiative by collecting signatures to show support for the consultation from part of the population.



Municipal initiative

The City Council can promote a consultation at the proposal of the mayor or municipal groups, which must have support from at least two fifths of the Municipal Council Meeting.

Territorial scope of citizen consultations

City As a general criterion, public consultations refer to the city as a whole.



District In exceptional circumstances, citizen consultations may be convened in a district or more than one district, if the effect of the result is so specific that it is possible to clearly determine this territorial scope.



If the budget required to execute the proposal exceeds 5% of the municipal budget, it will be a citywide consultation

Area smaller than a district On certain occasions, which must be justified, consultations may be convened for an area smaller than a district, provided that:



- A prior participatory process is carried out.
- Before proceeding to the Municipal Council Meeting, the consultation is supported by a two-thirds majority in the district council.

Considerations when carrying out a citizen consultation

- Citizen consultations may refer to any issue within the municipal competences, provided it respects basic rights and freedoms, does not paralyse the provision of public services and has no substantial impact on municipal budgets.
- If the matter to be submitted for consultation implies spending more than 3% of the annual municipal budget, the City Council can decide not to allow the citizens' initiative procedure to continue, or inform those promoting it of the conditions required for its execution, if approved.
- Citizen consultations cannot be carried out for issues submitted to a ballot in the preceding two years.
- In order to foster participation, citizen consultations are not organised outside of term time or during municipal election periods.

Promoting consultation through a citizens' initiative

Citizens can promote a consultation through a citizens' initiative, which involves collecting a certain number of signatures supporting the proposal.

An initiative can be started by a minimum of three people over 18 years old who appear in the Barcelona municipal register, or by one or more organisations or bodies. The natural or legal persons promoting the citizens' initiative make up the Promoting Committee.

The steps to promote a citizens' initiative are as follows:

1



Prepare the application

The application must include:

- The questions or proposals being put to a vote
- 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

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.

How many signatures are required?

A set of requirements have to be met to promote a public consultation:

- An initiative on an issue that affects the entire **city** must have at least **15,000** signatures in support of it.
- An initiative on an issue that affects one or more districts or a smaller geographical area needs a certain amount of support **on a case by case basis**.

Signatures can be collected over two months, with a maximum extension of two further months with justification.

For consultations affecting one particular district

1- Ciutat Vella- 2,500

2- Eixample- 6,500

3- Sants-Montjuïc- 4,500

4- Les Corts- 2,000

5- Sarrià-Sant Gervasi- 3,500

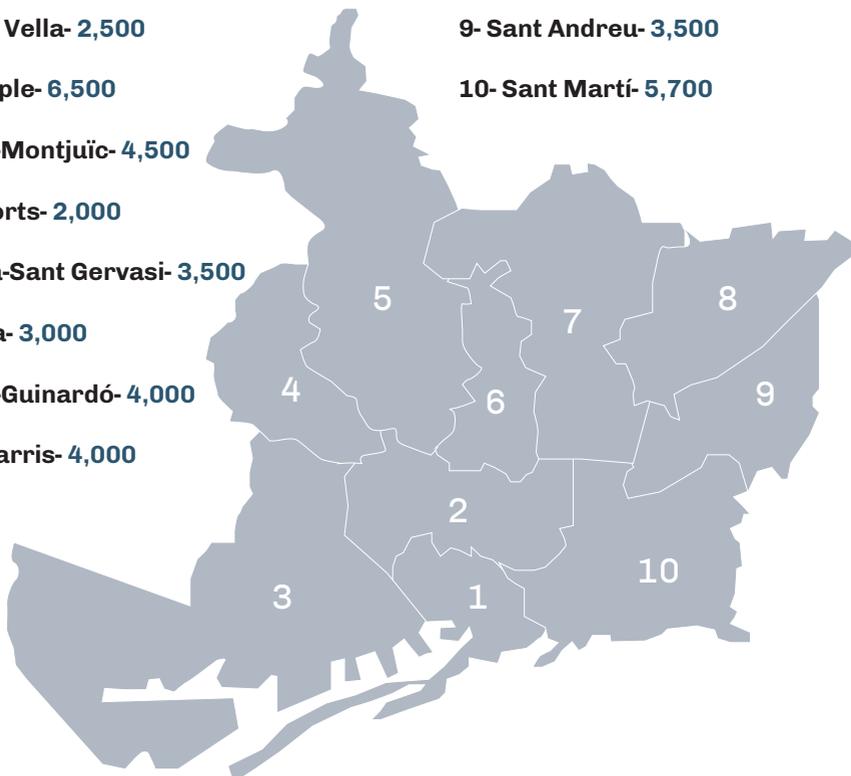
6- Gràcia- 3,000

7- Horta-Guinardó- 4,000

8- Nou Barris- 4,000

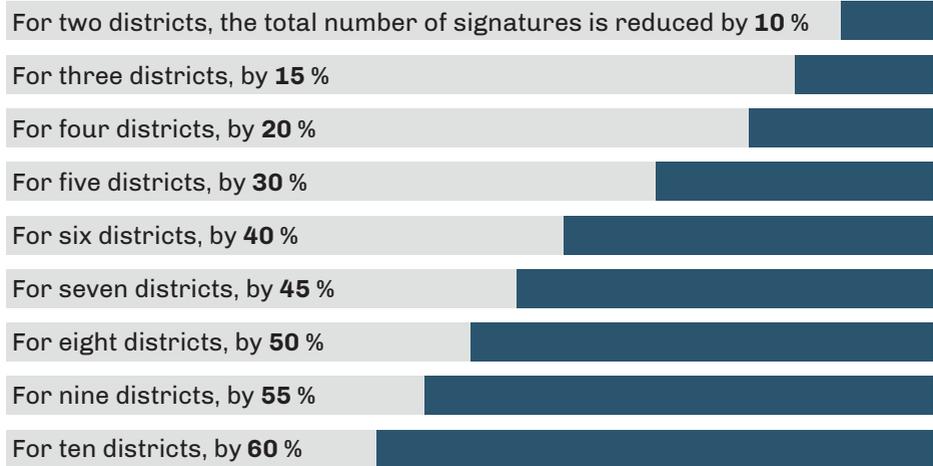
9- Sant Andreu- 3,500

10- Sant Martí- 5,700



For consultations affecting more than one district

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



For consultations affecting areas smaller than a district

The number of signatures that must be collected to promote a consultation in an area smaller than a district is equal to 10% of the affected population, with a minimum of 250 signatures.

Approval and call

Citizen consultations must be approved by the Full Municipal Council.

- If promoted by a citizens' initiative, the Council can only reject it (by simple majority) when it falls outside the law.
- When the consultation is promoted by the City Council, it must be supported by two-thirds of the Full Council.

Once approved by the Full Council, the mayor must issue a decree to convene the consultation within 60 days maximum.

The call decree specifies the details of the citizen consultation and its technical and logistical characteristics: methods of voting; number, location and schedule of the polling stations; media for its promotion and facilities available during the period of public debate, etc.

The period for public debate

To facilitate the exchange of opinions and compare points of view, a period of public debate between 30 and 60 days will be organised.

During this period, the City Council must:

- Facilitate channels for information, debate and communication that enable citizens to familiarise themselves with the purpose of the consultation and access the most important information.
- Make public spaces available for municipal groups and interested parties to hold debates they believe to be relevant, so that everyone can freely express different opinions and points of view.
- Open the digital space for debate on the participation platform decidim.barcelona.

During the public debate period, the municipal media must respect the principles of social and political pluralism, neutrality and equal opportunities regarding the various positions defended during the consultation.

The City Council cannot take a position on the consultation so as not to influence voting. Political groups, on the other hand, may take a position.



Interested organisations

These are social organisations that believe the consultation particularly affects them, or that are interested in being active players during the public debate prior to the consultation.

To become an interested organisation, a written request stating the motivation must be made in the period before the consultation.

Interested organisations have the right to use public spaces free of charge to provide information on the consultation and conduct events and debates.

In the case of citizen-initiated consultations, the Promoting Committee of the initiative shall always be deemed the interested entity.

Voting and results

Voting period

Once the consultation has been convened, the City Council will draw up a provisional list of people called to vote from the census.

The specific consultation rules set out the procedure, conditions and requirements applicable to the different methods of voting, which may be in-person or online via the participation platform decidim.barcelona.

If someone uses both systems, the in-person vote will nullify the online vote.

There is no minimum participation required for a citizen consultation to be considered valid.

Consultation outcomes

The Regulation on Citizen Participation facilitates political commitment to the outcome of the consultations by allowing municipal groups to state their position on the potential outcomes in the call agreement itself.

Afterwards, the Full Municipal Council will state how it will act on the outcome of the consultation, no more than two months after voting.

The system of guarantees

The Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee is the body responsible for ensuring that public consultations are held in accordance with the regulatory framework and guaranteeing their transparency and impartiality.

This Committee is created specifically for each public consultation and is made up of ordinary citizens. It aspires to include as many different voices as possible to ensure the quality of the consultation.

The Committee's functions are to:

- Provide information on incidents, petitions, complaints or discrepancies
- Produce the minutes of the consultation results
- Inform the mayor of the results of the consultation

The Monitoring Committee must be made up of:

 <p>3-15 people</p>	<p>They must be</p>	<p>They cannot be</p>
	<p>Independent of the Municipal Government</p>	
<p>Maximum plurality and diversity</p>	<p>Municipal staff</p>	
<p>1/3 proposed by the Municipal Council</p>		
<p>2/3 proposed by city residents</p>		



Decidim
Barcelona

Anyone can apply to be on the Monitoring Committee on the decidim.barcelona platform.

If the number of candidates exceeds the available places, selection will be via a draw.

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 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

Or call
010 Informació
Barcelona
Trucada gratuïta



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