

Practical guides for citizen participation in Barcelona

Participatory processes

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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 [participatory processes](#).

What are they?

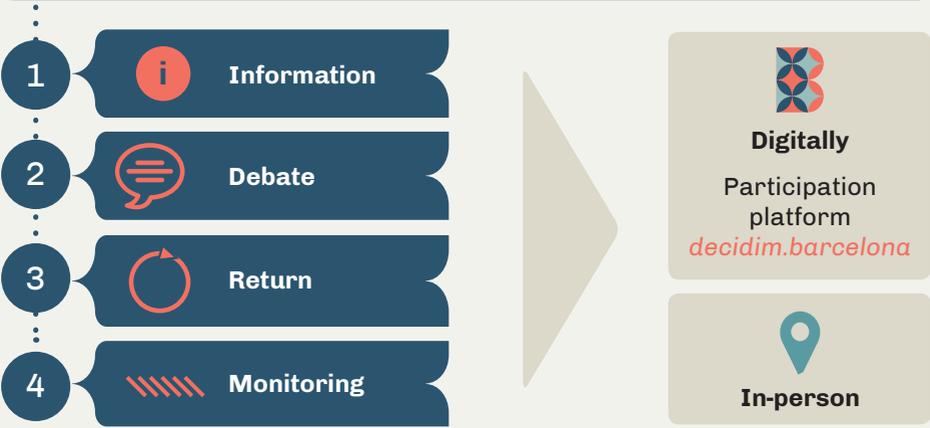
Meetings scheduled between citizens and the City Council to promote debate on specific issues in the city.



Who can organise them?



Stages of a process



Their impact



System of guarantees



Participatory processes

What are they?

Participatory processes are a series of meetings within a specific time frame to promote debate and contrasting arguments among the general public or between the general public and municipal authorities.

A participatory process may deal with almost any issue, and can apply to one or several neighbourhoods and districts or the entire city. Examples: consider how a street or public square should be remodelled; diagnose problems within a neighbourhood; or contribute specific ideas about how public policy could be developed.

The most important participatory process in Barcelona is the Municipal Action Plan (PAM), carried out at the start of each term of office to define government actions over the next four years.

The purpose of a participatory processes may be to:

- Diagnose a particular situation
- Find creative ideas for an action
- Evaluate or propose specific actions

You can participate in processes via the spaces for debate, which include face-to-face and online channels:



Face-to-face – In spaces set up for debate in each process.

All participatory processes include spaces for face-to-face debate. These spaces must be open to speakers from any interested parties and ensure full accessibility and equality in participation.



Digital – Through the participation platform

decidim.barcelona

All participatory processes include digital spaces for debate accessed through the platform *decidim.barcelona*, in order to:

- Obtain information
- Participate in open debates
- Make proposals
- Follow the process

Who can organise a participatory process?

A participatory process can be driven by citizens or the City Council:



Citizens

Citizens can instigate a participatory process through a petition to the Municipal Citizen Council, a district citizen council or via a citizens' initiative.



City Council

The City Council can convene a participatory process as the city government when it deems appropriate, or at the proposal of a municipal political group up to a maximum of two a year per group.

The people or organisations instigating the participatory process make up the Participatory process driving group. This group is responsible for organising the process, defining the profile of those called to take part in it and the methodology to be used.

Stages of participatory processes

1

i

Information stage

This is the time to make the process public and encourage debate, by providing:

- Information on the stages and characteristics of the process
- Documentation related to the issue being debated



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Barcelona

Information available on the digital participation platform

2



Debate stage

This is the time for dialogue, to hear opposing views and to generate proposals based on participants' contributions.

During this stage the most suitable methodologies must be used and conditions of the debate adapted to the specific needs of the groups involved.



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Barcelona

- Information on meetings
- Collecting proposals
- Prioritising proposals



Maximum period
for debate

3



Return stage

This phase brings the elements of the process together and consolidates the main conclusions of the debate. These are passed to the authorities, who will state how the results will be applied.

The implementation calendar and how and with what means the resulting proposal will be carried out must be stated.



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Publication of the results for the general public



Announcement of the commitment to implement the results

4



Monitoring stage

This period is for following up the results of the process.



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Details of the level of execution of each result

Promoting consultation through citizens' initiatives

A participatory process can be instigated through a citizens' initiative by collecting a certain number of signatures supporting it. A citizens' initiative must be instigated by a minimum of three people over 18 years old in the Barcelona municipal register, or one or more legal persons (i.e. entities, associations, business organisations, unions or professional bodies in Barcelona). These people make up 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

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?

Promoting a participatory process via a citizens' initiative has several characteristics:

- An initiative to instigate a process that affects the entire **city** must have at least **9,000** valid signatures supporting it
- An initiative to instigate a process 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 processes affecting one particular district

1- Ciutat Vella- 1,500

2- Eixample- 3,900

3- Sants-Montjuïc- 2,700

4- Les Corts- 1,200

5- Sarrià- Sant Gervasi- 2,200

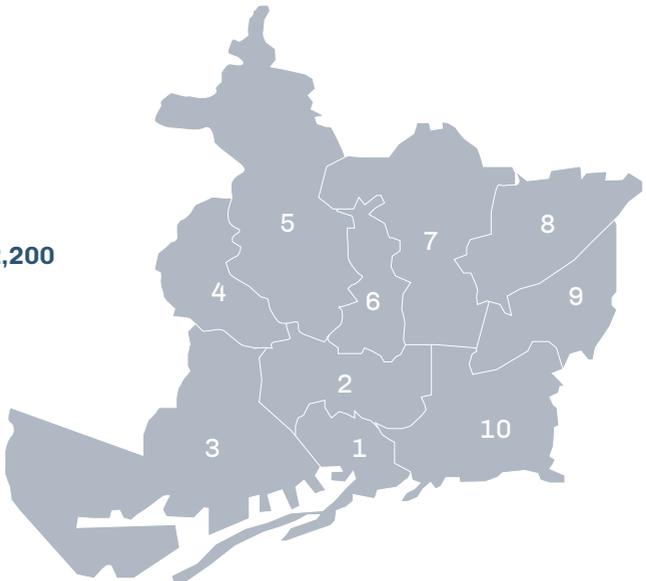
6- Gràcia- 1,800

7- Horta-Guinardó- 2,500

8- Nou Barris- 2,400

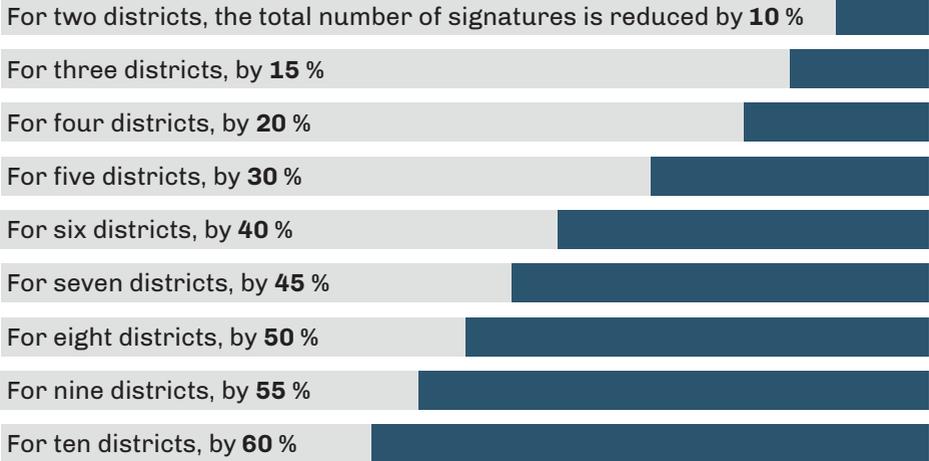
9- Sant Andreu- 2,200

10- Sant Martí- 3,400



For processes affecting more than one district

When the process 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 processes affecting areas smaller than a district

To promote a participatory process in a neighbourhood or area smaller than a district, the number of signatures that must be collected is 2% of the affected population, with a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 900 signatures.

If the initiative achieves the minimum number of signatures, the City Council must verify them before starting the participatory process

Mandatory participatory processes

The City Council is obliged to consult citizens on certain municipal actions during their definition and before their final approval.

The Full City Council and the investment budget for the term of office

- E.g. the Municipal Action Plan (PAM), District Action Plan (PAD) and Municipal Investment Plan (PIM)

Municipal actions affecting at least an entire district or that imply investment of over €100,000,000

- E.g. Urban Mobility Plan for 2019-2024

Significant urban development, such as public planning, district use plans or infrastructure plans

- E.g. Nou Barris Facilities Plan, Ciutat Vella Use Plan

Municipal byelaws and regulations of particular relevance to citizens

- E.g. Regulation for Gender Equality

The impact of processes

Once events and debates have concluded, the Municipal Government must provide information on how the results will be applied within 60 days of the release of the results report.

This communication must be posted on the municipal website and sent individually to people who have taken part in the process.

It is important that the limitations of the process are made clear from the start, i.e. that which is outside the scope of the decision-making process. How the results will be applied in the final decision must also be explicitly stated at the start.



The system of guarantees

There are two specific committees that aim to ensure transparency, impartiality and quality in participatory processes: the Monitoring Committee, created for each process; and the Advisory Committee, which ensures the all participatory processes function correctly.

Monitoring Committee	Advisory Committee
For each process	For all processes

Additionally, there is the Safeguards Committee, the body responsible for overseeing that rights and responsibilities deriving from all citizen participation are exercised effectively.

The Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee is the main body responsible for process guarantees, and is made up of people involved in it.

This Committee is created specifically for each participatory process and is made up of citizens and municipal technical staff. It aspires to include as many different voices as possible when ensuring the process runs and is implemented correctly.

Its functions include:

- Providing an opinion on the instruments and specific methodology used in the debate
- Monitoring progress and efficiency
- Proposing suggestions or improvements to guarantee the success of the participatory process

If the participatory process is instigated by a citizens' initiative, a maximum of three people named by the initiative's Promoting Committee will make up the Monitoring Committee.



The number of people on the Monitoring Committee is determined by the scope, area and interest of the subject submitted to the participatory process. In any event, it must be formed by:



minimum 5 members
maximum
25 members

Maximum
plurality
and
diversity

Members of the City
Council and other
public authorities must
comprise less than 50%
of the total

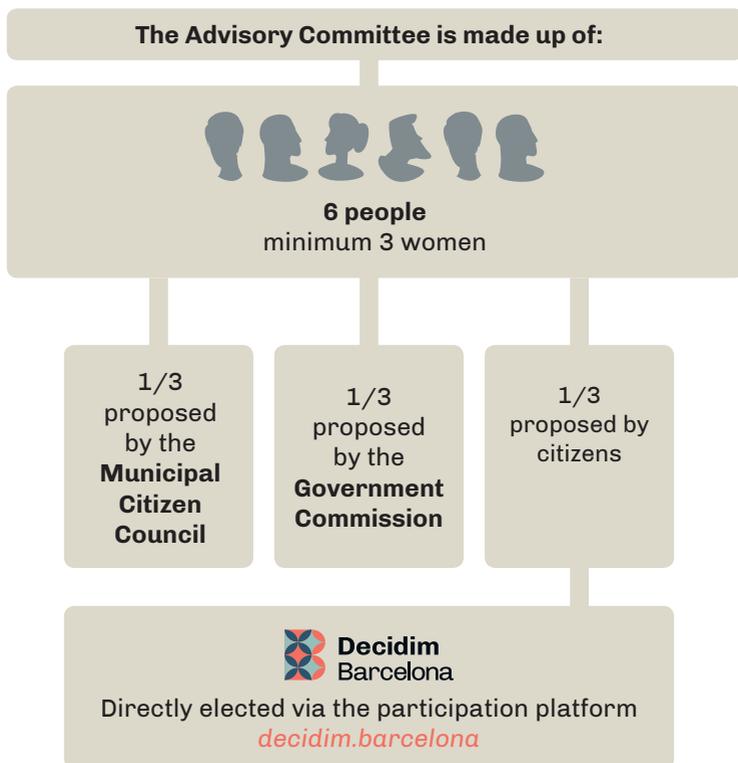
The participatory processes Advisory Committee

The participatory processes Advisory Committee is a consultative body created by the Regulation on Citizen Participation with the aim of improving all processes.

Its main functions are to:

- Issue reports and make recommendations and suggestions on the most suitable methodologies, tools and means for each participatory process in order to achieve diversity and plurality of opinion.
- Ensure participatory processes are carried out with the highest degree of quality and rigour possible.

The Advisory Committee must have gender parity and six members of recognised prestige who are experts in these processes, in addition to being familiar with inclusion, diversity and gender issues.



They must be	They cannot be
Independent of the Municipal Government	Elected positions
Experts in participatory processes	Municipal staff
Familiar with inclusion, diversity and gender issues	
Maximum plurality and diversity	

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**](http://decidim.barcelona)
[**barcelona.cat/participaciociutadana**](http://barcelona.cat/participaciociutadana)

Or call
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