SCALEDEM

Knowledge Map of Democratic Innovations

Version 2 – 30 April 2026
WP 1, T 1.1

Author: Max Povse (EUI)

Funded by
the European Union

Technical references

Project Acronym	ScaleDem
Project Title	Scaling Democratic Innovations
Project Coordinator	Camille Dobler Missions Publiques camille.dobler@missionspubliques.com
Project Duration	December 2024 – May 2028 (42 months)

Milestone No.	2
Dissemination level*	Public
Work Package	WP 1 – Theory of Scaling
Task	T1.1 – Knowledge Map
Lead beneficiary	2 - EUI
Contributing beneficiary/ies	1 - MP
Due date of deliverable	30 April 2026
Actual submission date	30 April 2026

- Public = fully open (automatically posted online)
- Sensitive = limited under the conditions of the Grant Agreement
- EU classified = RESTREINT-UE/EU-RESTRICTED, CONFIDENTIEL-UE/EU-CONFIDENTIAL, SECRET-UE/EU-SECRET under Decision 2015/444

v	Date	Beneficiary	Author
0.1	29.05.2025	EUI	Max Povse
1.0	30.05.2025	MP – Review and formatting	Camille Dobler

Funded by
the European Union

Table of contents

Table of contents 3

Introduction 4

2. Methodology 5

2.1 What is a Case? **5**
2.2 Mapping the Scaling Potentials **5**
2.3 Clustering Cases by Families of Democratic Innovation **6**
2.4 Geographical Distribution of Democratic Innovations **9**

3. Knowledge Map of Democratic Innovations by Family and Dimension of Scaling Potential 10

Funded by
the European Union

Introduction

The Knowledge Map of Democratic Innovations is an evidence-based, conceptual, and analytical tool developed to support the systematic exploration of how democratic practices can be enhanced and transformed. Its primary goal is to bring clarity to a growing field by organising and comparing real-world cases that illustrate new forms of democratic participation, representation, and responsiveness. These cases are drawn from research projects and initiatives across Europe and beyond, and are analysed to identify patterns, potentials, and pathways for broader application.

At the heart of the Knowledge Map is the recognition that democratic innovation is not a singular phenomenon but a diverse and evolving field. A democratic innovation can be defined as a process, institution, or tool that enhances how people engage in and influence democratic decision-making. This may involve increasing inclusion, deepening deliberation, strengthening accountability, or empowering citizens with new decision-making capacities. The Map distinguishes between individual cases, which are specific real-world applications; projects, which are time-bound initiatives that generate or test such cases; and solutions, which are broader strategic responses to democratic challenges, often grounded in multiple cases and adaptable across contexts.

To make sense of this diversity, the Knowledge Map organises cases into six main families: administrative, deliberative, digital and AI-based, direct, electoral, and participatory innovations. Each family captures a different approach to enhancing democracy, from institutional reforms and civic dialogue to technological tools and direct citizen power. This classification allows users to compare innovations across sectors and purposes, and to better understand the mechanisms behind their design and function.

A central concern of the Knowledge Map is how democratic innovations scale. Scalability is understood not just as the ability to grow in size, but also as the ability to embed more deeply, improve internally, and integrate institutionally. The Map explores four dimensions of scaling: ‘scaling out’ refers to expanding participation across places and populations; ‘scaling high’ examines how innovations can be institutionalised into legal or policy frameworks; ‘scaling deep’ involves rooting innovations in shared values and cultural practices; and ‘scaling in’ focuses on improving the internal quality of processes.

This Knowledge Map is premised on the idea that citizen participation can be assessed through a pyramid model that ranges from passive information provision to full empowerment. This framework helps evaluate the depth and quality of engagement in each case. It also provides a common reference point for comparing how different innovations relate to citizen roles in democratic systems. Grounded in empirical research and informed by grounded theory methodology, the Knowledge Map serves as a dynamic platform for understanding, advancing, and scaling democratic innovation. By combining conceptual clarity with practical insight, it aims to guide those seeking to build more inclusive, responsive, and resilient democratic futures.

Funded by
the European Union

2. Methodology

2.1 What is a Case?

A **CASE** of democratic innovation is a specific, real-world instance where new practices, tools, or institutional arrangements are applied to enhance democratic participation, deliberation, or accountability. It differs from:

- A **PROJECT**, which is typically a time-bound initiative (often funded or experimental) that may generate, test, or document such cases.
- A **SOLUTION** to democratic weaknesses, which refers more broadly to theoretical proposals or strategic goals, while a case shows how such a solution has been practically implemented in a concrete setting

In short: **A CASE is the empirical realisation of a democratic innovation, more grounded than a theory, more durable than a project.**

For the second edition of this Knowledge Map, 230 EU-funded projects in the field of democratic innovation were selected from the CORDIS database. These include a batch of projects that ended before 2020 (and included in the Nets4Dem Database) as well as more recent and still ongoing projects under the HORIZON Europe and HORIZON 2020 programmes that did or will end after 2023.

Moreover, to complement the research and development realm, 70 cases that have not been funded directly by the EU have been included. These cases were collected from the Participedia database and from members of this project's consortium and Advisory Board. To help identify relevant cases from projects, the research team has used AI-assisted SUMMARIES for the projects, checked and revised the outputs in light of case-specific findings for inclusion in the present Knowledge Map. These summaries can be explored online in a dedicated webpage: https://scaledem.eu/insights/knowledge-map/.

2.2 Mapping the Scaling Potentials

Mapping the scalability potentials of a set of democratic innovation cases involves systematically analysing how each case performs along four key dimensions—Out, High, Deep, and In—to assess their potential to grow in reach, quality, cultural resonance, and institutional integration. For this Knowledge Map, we have taken a three-step approach:

Step 1: Define the Four Dimensions of Scalability

Funded by
the European Union

1. Scaling Out: Can the innovation be replicated or transferred across contexts, geographies, or populations?
2. Scaling High: Can the innovation be institutionalised into policy, law, or administrative structures?
3. Scaling Deep: Can the innovation embed itself in cultural norms, emotional attachments, or civic identities?
4. Scaling In: Can the internal quality, design, and deliberative integrity of the innovation be improved?

Step 2: Develop criteria for each dimension inductively from project documents. For example:

- Out: Has the case (or solution) been adopted elsewhere? Can it be easily adapted?
- High: Is there evidence of policy uptake or legal recognition?
- Deep: Does it resonate emotionally? Build trust and identity?
- In: Are procedures robust, inclusive, and transparent?

Step 3: Collect and code data for each case systematically:

- Develop a shared TEMPLATE with 18 items.
- Research the CORDIS database of EU-funded Horizon2020, Horizon Europe, and previous programmes projects for data on cases to apply the template.
- Coding frameworks (e.g., zero-low, low-medium, medium-high, and high potential per dimension).

2.3 Clustering Cases by Families of Democratic Innovation

Democratic innovations can be grouped into six distinct families based on their design, function, and approach to citizen engagement.[1] Each family reflects different logics of enhancing democracy beyond traditional representative forms[2]

Administrative democratic innovations embed citizen participation into the workings of public administration, often through permanent structures like co-management committees or

[1] Nets4Dem. D3.1 Democratic Knowledge Database: Accompanying Report. Horizon Europe Project, April 2024. https://nets4dem.eu

[2] Graham Smith, Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Funded by the European Union

participatory oversight boards.[3] These arrangements allow citizens and stakeholders to collaborate with officials in policy implementation and oversight, fostering transparency and accountability within bureaucratic systems.

Deliberative democratic innovations convene diverse or randomly selected citizens to engage in structured, informed dialogue about public issues. Known as mini-publics, formats such as citizens' assemblies or deliberative polls emphasize reasoned discussion and collective judgment, often producing recommendations to guide policy.[4] They are marked by small-group interactions and careful deliberation rather than broad consultation or direct voting.

Digital & AI democratic innovations use digital platforms and artificial intelligence to facilitate participation, gather public input, and support decision-making. From e-petitions to AI-assisted moderation, these tools aim to expand access and efficiency, though they also raise concerns about digital divides and algorithmic bias. Their defining feature is the technological interface mediating civic engagement.[5]

Direct democratic innovations give citizens binding decision-making power through tools like referenda, citizen initiatives, and recall elections.[6] Bypassing or complementing legislatures, these mechanisms reinforce sovereignty and allow people to directly influence laws or leaders, though their inclusiveness depends on how they are designed.

Electoral democratic innovations reform how representatives are elected or how elections operate, to enhance inclusivity, fairness, and participation.[7] Innovations include voting system reforms, gender quotas, and open primaries. These changes aim to strengthen the representative link between citizens and elected officials within the formal electoral system.

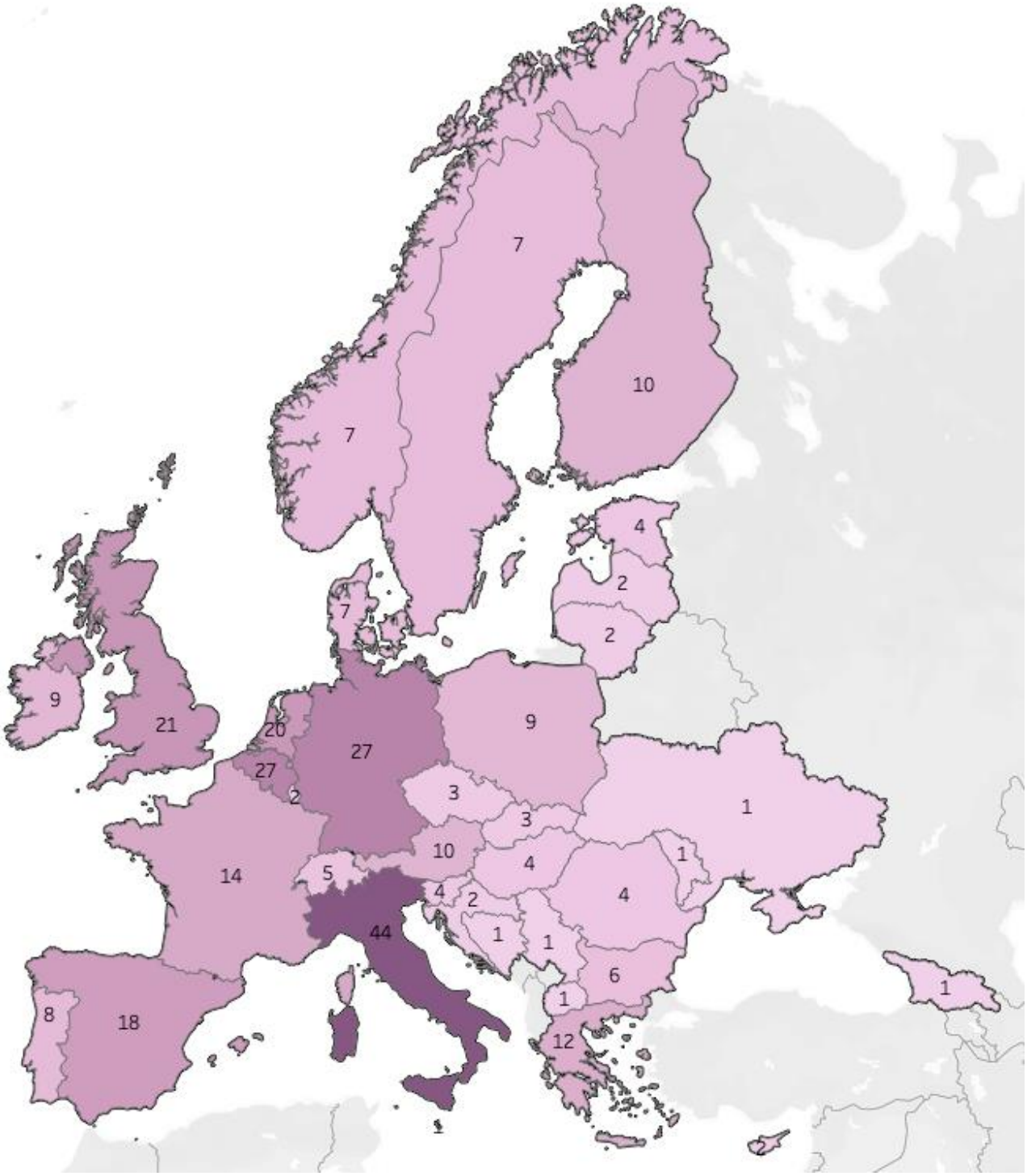
Participatory democratic innovations involve broad citizen engagement in public decisions, particularly at the local level.[8] Mechanisms like participatory budgeting and community planning forums encourage collaboration between citizens and authorities, aiming to make governance more inclusive, empowering, and responsive to community needs.

---

[3] Brigitte Geissel, "Introduction: On the Evaluation of Participatory Innovations – A Preliminary Framework," in Participatory Democratic Innovations in Europe: Improving the Quality of Democracy?, ed. Brigitte Geissel and Marko Joas (Opladen: Barbara Budrich, 2013), 1–22.
[4] Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar, "Defining and Typologising Democratic Innovations," in Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance, ed. Stephen Elstub and Oliver Escobar (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2019), 11–31.
[5] Hélène Landemore, Open Democracy: Reinventing Popular Rule for the Twenty-First Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).
[6] Graham Smith, Beyond the Ballot: 57 Democratic Innovations from Around the World (London: The Power Inquiry, 2005).
[7] Smith, Beyond the Ballot (2005).
[8] Elstub and Escobar, "Defining and Typologising Democratic Innovations," 11–31.

Funded by the European Union

Figure 1.
Number of Cases of Democratic Innovations per Country



Source: author.

Funded by
the European Union

2.4 Geographical Distribution of Democratic Innovations

Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the cases included in the Knowledge Map were geographically representative across Europe. Based on the countries coordinating the EU-funded projects, we found that 47% were in Western Europe, 25% in Southern Europe, 17% in Northern Europe, and 11% in Eastern Europe, according to the EuroVoc classification.[9] To more closely represent the distribution of population, we included non-EU-funded projects, resulting in a final distribution of the sample as:

- 45% of cases in Western Europe
- 28% of cases in Southern Europe
- 14% of cases in Eastern Europe
- 13% of cases in Northern Europe

While this sampling strategy alleviated the problem of geographical distribution encountered in cases from EU-funded projects, it still shows a strong skew towards Western, Southern, and Northern Europe (cases per population), with Eastern Europe severely underrepresented, especially in EU-funded projects. Nonetheless, at least one case of democratic innovation was included for each EU member state, as shown in Figure 1.

In the next section, the second edition of Scaledem's Knowledge Map, including 300 cases of democratic innovation from EU- and non-EU-funded projects in Europe. They are presented in a matrix in which the columns represent the main potential for scaling in four dimensions (out, high, deep, and in), and the rows represent the main family of democratic innovations they ascribed to. This matrix is also online, and its data is stored in Zenodo.

[9] European countries are classified as:

- Northern Europe: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden.
- Western Europe: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.
- Southern Europe: Cyprus, Greece, the Holy See, Italy, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, and Turkey.
- Eastern Europe (and Central Europe): Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo*, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine.

Funded by
the European Union

3. Knowledge Map of Democratic Innovations by Family and Dimension of Scaling Potential

DI Family	Scaling Dimension: Out	High	Deep	In
Administrative	GreenDemo Klima-Aufbruch in Erlangen (Germany) mPOWER OpenAire 2020 REPLICATE SPARCs TOMORROW	ACCTing COHSMO CONSULTATIONEFFECTS DeCrises EMBRACE EU3D LEGITIMULT LODGE LoGov PROTEGO REGROUP	CapaCITIES 2.0 CITADEL GEM-DIAMOND Legal Graffiti in Prague PERITIA QUALIDEM RADAR RED-SPINEL REDEMOS TiGRE	Co-VAL DEMOLAW DemoTrans DEMSTAT ETAPAS MIDPO Shapedem-EU
Deliberative	Camden Children in Care Council's Deliberative Forums (UK) EFORTT EU Citizens' Dialogue in The Hague EUARENAS KNOCA Ostbelgien Modell Permanent Deliberative Committees, Brussels Regional Parliament PHOENIX The Agora of Messina	"Tutti nella stessa Barga": Civic Discussion on KME Italy's Gasification Plant Project Camerino Reconstruction Workshop Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Democratic Participation in Wales Debate in Ponte - Tuscany Deliberative Polling on the uses of a stadium in Poznań, Poland El Observatorio de la Ciudad EuroPolis MEDIATIZED EU Mini-Public on National Pensions Debate and National Pensions Day in the UK Mini-Public on the Future of Rural Areas (Rhônes-Alpes, France) ORBIS Public Debate on Quarry Restoration in the Municipality of Gavorrano Public Debate on the New Port of Livorno Public Participation on Migration Policy in the Puglia (Apulia) Region SCALABLE DEMOCRACY The Constitutional Forum in Romania	ARENAS CCINDLE CIDAPE CIVISTI Cyprus Friendship Programme DDME DELIAH Deliberative Polling on Policies toward the Roma in Bulgaria Deliberative Polling on Unemployment and Job Creation in Kaposvár Hungary DemOdyssey EUROPOLIS HUMLIT Larpocracy Macedonia Deliberative Poll MORES MultiPoD NEW_DEMOCRACY OppAttune REAL DEAL Sense AGENDa	BioplatformaLab - Sesto San Giovanni CIVILUX DEMETRA iDEM IMPACT INCITE-DEM LEARNINGDEMOI POPREBEL Tomorrow's Europe
Digital	AI4D EMPATIA IDEAL Initiative for Digital Democratic Action STEP WeGovNow	Budget Monitor Portal for Public Engagement in Georgia FERMI IntelComp MEDIA4SEC MEDIADELCOM OSPREY REDIRECT REMIT SMIDGE TITAN WHAT-IF	Co-Inform DATACTIVE DEMED IDEal reSCUE INCA INCELNOR-MA KT4D PROVIDENCE RESPOND SOLARIS SoMe4Dem TrustChain	ACCESS-EGOV ADDI AI4Gov CO3 CROWD_USG DisAI e-Dialogos ECePS ENCODE FAIRWork INNOVADE netCommons NEWSUSE P2PMODELS PersoNews PODAPP PRODIGIA RegulAite ROUTE-TO-PA TROPICO TWIN4DEM WeVerify

Funded by the European Union

DI Family	Scaling Dimension: Out	High	Deep	In
Direct	D-CENT Latvian E-Portal for Collecting Signatures on Popular Initiatives LIDD	2015 Hamburg/Kiel Referendum for 2024 Summer Olympics Candidacy 2018 North Antrim By-election Recall Petition Irish Citizens' Assembly National Citizen's Initiative on Romania's Labour Code Rahvaalgatus.ee: Online Participation at the National Level in Estonia Referendum for the Carousel of the Bear, Pistoia Roma Decide WYDE		Repúblicas em Coimbra Valsamoggia Citizens' Initiative Review on Local Council Amalgamation
Electoral		GenderQuotas RECONNECT	DANGER DEPART DevEthAC ELECTRUST EUDEMOS EXPRESS2 INSTITUTIONS PoPPiE REDEM TRUEDEM UNREP	CIVICS CUREORCURSE NEGARE Participatory Process of Defining the Referendum without Quorum in Cattolica, Italy POLLOT PRO-DEMOCRATIC SEEVS WEBOCRACY
Participatory	AECED Agency for Citizen Participation Baden-Württemberg CIT-PART Cittadini per Fiesole CoSIE DEMOTEC DII eMobilita EUCOMMEET Fairville FoTRRIS G1000 German Citizen Conference on Climate Policy NEBourhoods NetZeroCities PACITA PENTAHELIX PERYCLES Public Participation in the Anthemountas River Basin Management Plan REBALANCE REDemocracIA Rio Braga Project SIC SOS4democracy STEP CHANGE TeRRIFICA The Moldovan Network of Rural Volunteering Centres for Water Vorarlberger Citizen Council YOUROPE	ActEU Citizens' Convention on Climate Co-Creating Our City COGOV Comitato Senteza CEDU CONSTDELIB CROWDKNOW DEMOCRAT DUST ENCLUDE ESIRA EU-CIEMBLY HubCities Independent Custody Visiting in Police Detention Facilities in Sofia ITHACA Lublin Climate assembly on Air control MEN4DEM Mondragón Co-operative Corporation Orçamento Participativo em Portugal Participatory Budgeting in Braga, Portugal Participatory Budgeting in Říčany Participatory Planning Germany's Nuclear Waste Disposal Strategy PEREDEP RETOOL SHERPA SINTACT SLOMODEMO UPLIFT Youth Participatory Budgeting in Cluj-Napoca, Romania	"Idee in Fuga" Participatory Budgeting in the Bollate Prison, Milan BROKERS CIVICO CO-SUSTAIN CRITICAL CHANGELAB DemandDemoc Democracy in Action DEMOSERIES DEMOTRADEOFF DIACOMET ENGAGED EPIC-WE EURYKA FIERCE HETEROPOLITICS I-CIVIC ImagiDem INFODEM INSPIRE INVOLVE ISEED LINKAGE Nets4Dem PARENT_CITIZENS PARTICIPATION PLEDGE POLPART PROMISE ProTest ReMeD Repower Democracy Sarajevo's True Stories Market SharedGreenDeal SMOOTH SOLACE TaCT-FoRSED Trans4Demo trans-making WICE YouthDecide 2040	Agora BRIDGE Bürgerforum zur Enquetekommission CASI CHESS CIMULACT CIVITAS ReVeAL CLIMAS CMCG CoCi CoDesign4Transitions DemocInChange DEMOS DEMOS-ACT EnergyPROSPECTUS INTERFACED K4U MeDeMAP MOSAIC PaCE PARTISPACE POPGOV PushBackLash RECOMS ScaleDem SINCRONY SOCRISIS TRANSFORM

Funded by the European Union