Category Participation and Representation

Who gets a voice and how are they chosen?

Participation and Representation

Participation defines who has a voice in your system and how that voice is raised.

Representation determines whether decisions are made by all students, elected representatives or selected individuals.

Designing a model means balancing inclusiveness, legitimacy and efficiency.

“Who gets to speak and on whose behalf?”

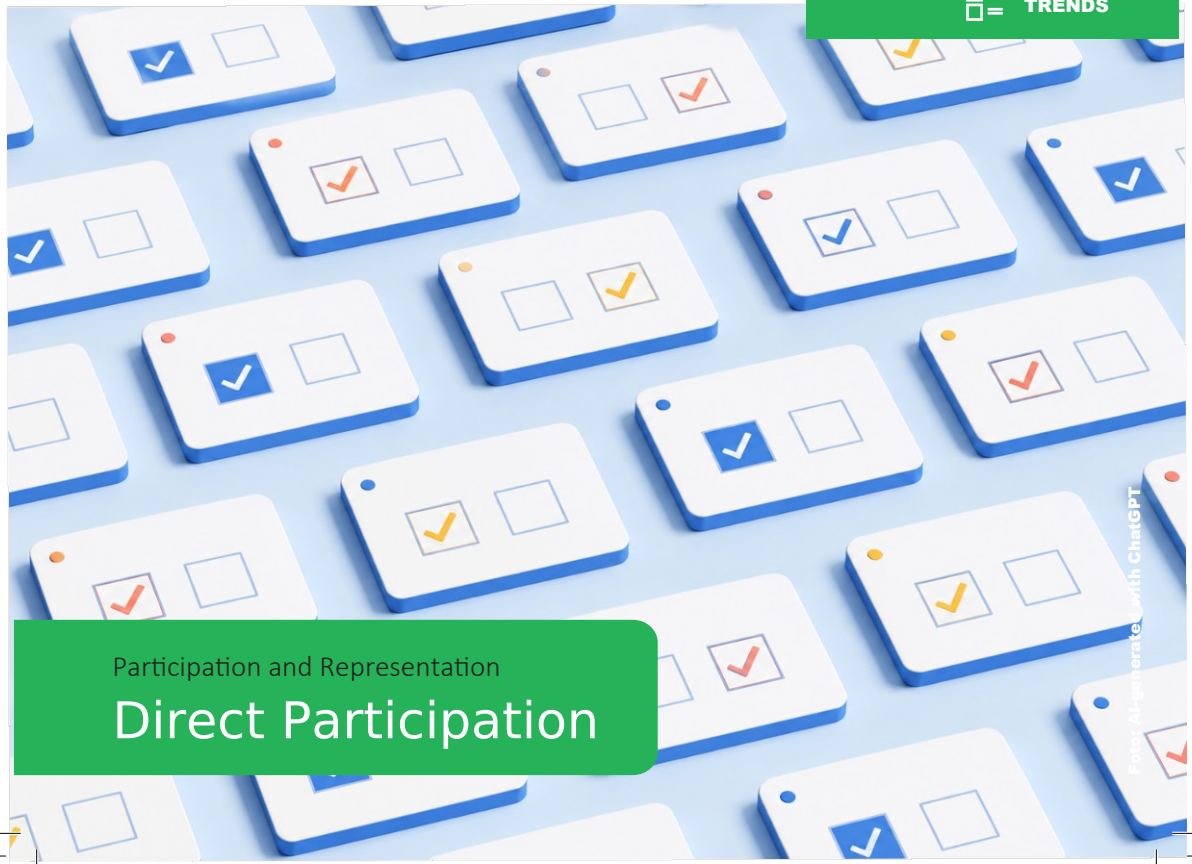


Photo: AI-generated with ChatGPT

Participation and Representation

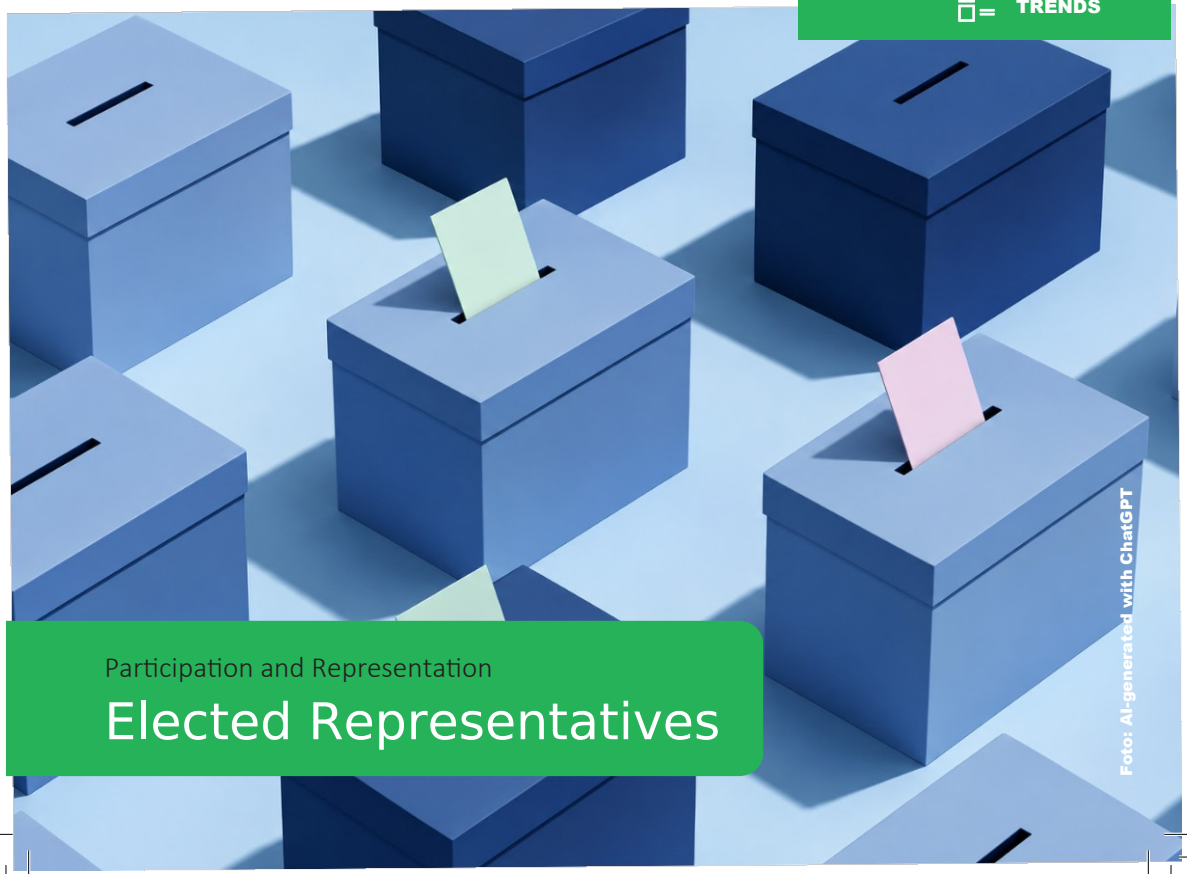
Direct Participation

Direct Participation

Every student takes part in the decision-making directly.

All students participate directly in decisions through assemblies, referenda, online voting or other means of direct democracy.

This model maximises inclusiveness and transparency but can be challenging when participation is low or issues are complex.



Participation and Representation

Elected Representatives

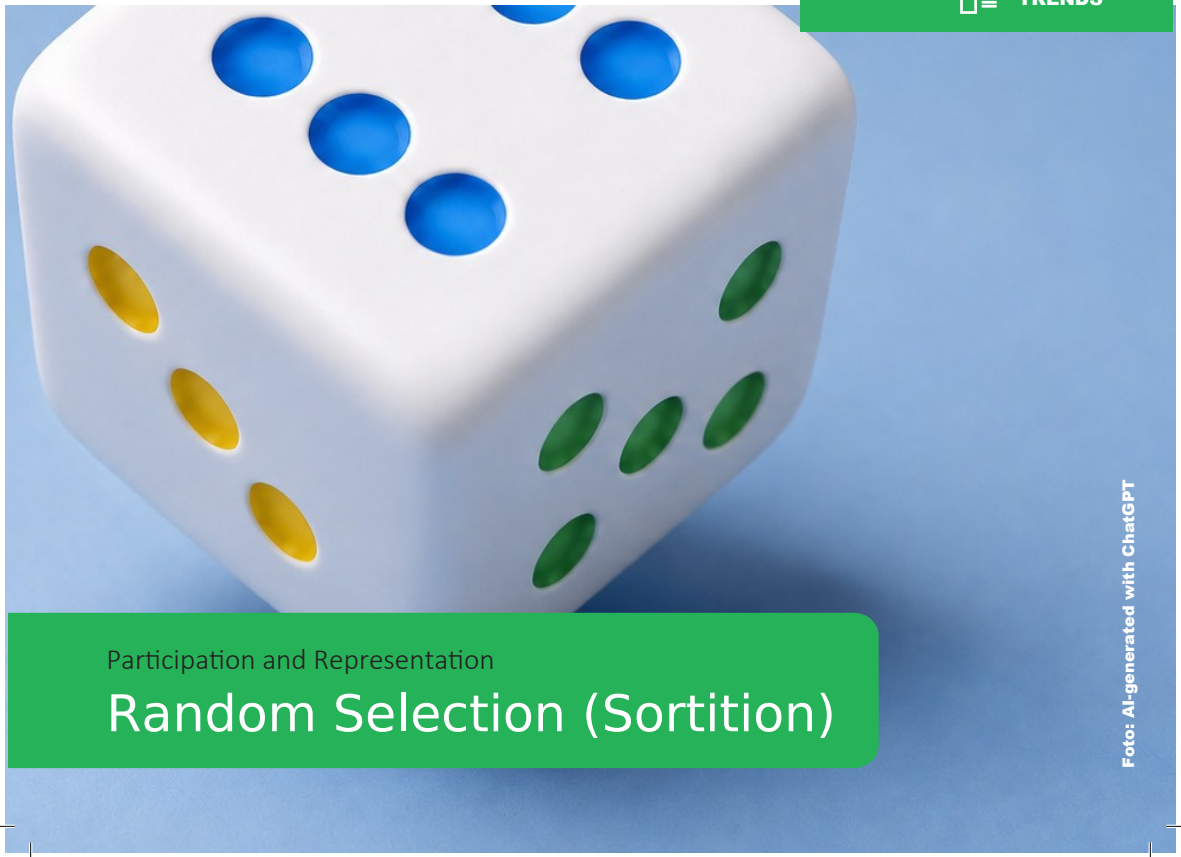
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Elected Representatives

Students elect individuals through parties to decide on their behalf.

Representation is organised through regular free and fair elections (e.g., on the faculty level), whereby students elect party representatives to speak on their behalf.

This approach ensures manageability and efficiency but may disengage the elected representatives from the wider student body and raise legitimacy concerns.



Participation and Representation

Random Selection (Sortition)

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Random Selection (Sortition)

Students are chosen by lot to serve for a fixed term.

Participants are selected randomly from the student population through the means of sortition.

This method ensures equality of opportunity and reduces social bias but may challenge efficiency and expertise in decision-making.

TRENDS



Participation and Representation

Delegated Representation

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Delegated Representation

Students' interest groups send delegates.

Student interest groups (e.g. feminist, environmental) appoint delegates to represent their interests in decision-making bodies.

This approach ensures active participation by engaged groups but may underrepresent students who are not part of these clubs.



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Participation and Representation

Quoted Representation

Quoted Representation

Representation accounting for social or identity dimensions.

Seats or voting power are distributed with explicit consideration for gender, age, disability, sexual identity, ethnic background, religion or worldview.

This method promotes inclusion and visibility for underrepresented groups but can raise debates about proportionality and defining fair categories.

Category Decision-Making Rules

How are collective decisions made once representation is decided upon?

Decision-Making Rules

How are collective decisions made once representation is decided upon?

Decision-making defines the processes through which your system turns discussion into action.

Different rules emphasise different values: efficiency, fairness, consensus.

Choosing a rule means deciding how much agreement is enough for a decision to be made and what happens to dissenting voices.

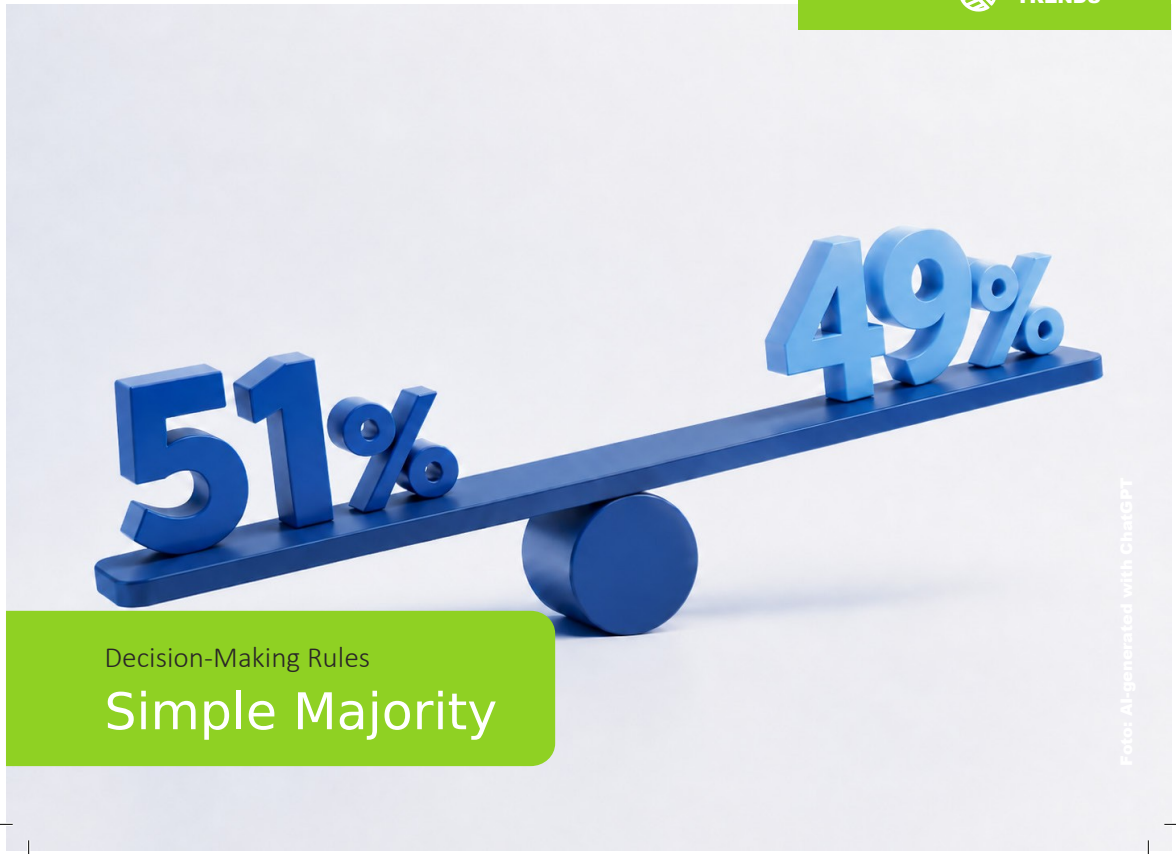


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Decision-Making Rules

Simple Majority

Simple Majority

The decision with more than half of the votes is passed.

Decisions pass when more than half of the voters agree.

Example: if 100 people vote and 51 are in favour, the motion is adopted.

This method is clear, fast, familiar and widely practiced, but it can marginalise minority opinions

TRENDS



Decision-Making Rules

Relative Majority (Plurality)

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Relative Majority (Plurality)

The option with the most votes wins.

The decision that secures the most support is taken (no 50+1 needed).

Example: if 100 people vote and 40 are in favour while 30 are against and 30 abstain, the motion is adopted.

This approach allows for flexibility against gridlocks but can raise legitimacy concerns when only a plurality of votes is backing the decision/person.



Decision-Making Rules

Qualified Majority (2/3 Rule)

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Qualified Majority (2/3 Rule)

Major decisions require broad support.

A decision is valid only if a larger proportion of decision-makers —typically two-thirds — votes in favour.

Example: if 100 people vote and 75 are in favour, the motion is adopted.

This approach strengthens legitimacy for important issues but can slow down the decision-making and favour the status quo.

TRENDS



Decision-Making Rules

Consensus Decision-Making

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Consensus Decision-Making

Decisions are made when no one strongly objects.

Participants discuss proposals until each is either supportive of or neutral on the issue in discussion.

Example: if 100 people vote and 83 are in favour while 17 abstain, the motion is adopted.

This approach nurtures cooperation and dialogue but may be time-consuming in large groups.



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Decision-Making Rules

Unanimity Rule

Unanimity Rule

Every single participant must agree.

A proposal only passes when all members explicitly consent to it.

Example: if 100 people vote and all 100 are in favour, the motion is adopted.

This rule represents the highest level of collective agreement and ensures full unity, but even one dissenting voice can block progress.

Category
Economic Guiding Principles

How should resources and funds be managed?

Economic Guiding Principles

How should resources and funds be managed?

Any governance structure inevitably decides how to distribute resources among the community.

Your economic model reflects what is prioritised in the system —equality, need, performance or else.

Choosing a principle means more than distribution —you get to decide who's being materially empowered to speak and act.



Economic Guiding Principles

Equal Share Model

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Equal Share Model

Every group receives the same base amount of funding.

Resources are distributed evenly across all recognised student groups and organisations.

This approach is simple and fair in appearance (“equality is good”), but it may ignore differences in size, activity level or financial need.



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Economic Guiding Principles

Needs-Based Allocation

Needs-Based Allocation

Funds go where support is most needed.

Budgets are directed toward areas with fewer resources or higher social importance and demands, such as welfare and social services, accessibility, integration.

This approach promotes equity and inclusion but requires careful judgement about what counts as “need”.



Economic Guiding Principles

Performance-Based Allocation

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Performance-Based Allocation

Funding follows activity and results.

Student groups or associations receive funding based on their performance: successful projects, measurable outcomes, quantifiable results.

This encourages initiative and accountability but risks disadvantaging unquantifiable goals and small or less visible groups.

TRENDS



Economic Guiding Principles

Participatory Budgeting

Foto: AI-generated with ChatGPT

Participatory Budgeting

Students propose and vote on how part of the budget is spent.

A share of the student budget is reserved for collective decision-making by all students. Everyone can submit proposals and vote on which of these proposals to fund.

It fosters engagement and transparency, but the process can be demanding to organise.



Economic Guiding Principles

Centralised Allocation

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Centralised Allocation

Budget priorities are set by the university administration.

Financial decisions are made at the higher level by the university administration or presidency.

This model allows for clear strategic planning and expertise, but it can limit students' influence over how resources are used.

Category Transparency and accountability safeguards

How can you ensure your system is transparent and accountable to the people in it?

Transparency and Accountability

How can you ensure your system is transparent and accountable to the people in it?

Corruption, mismanagement, opaque processes and the practice of “revolving doors” —all these can undermine the trust into democracy and its service to the collective welfare.

Next, you get to introduce measures that can minimise the risks and protect the common good from special interests.



Transparency and Accountability

Live Broadcast of Sessions

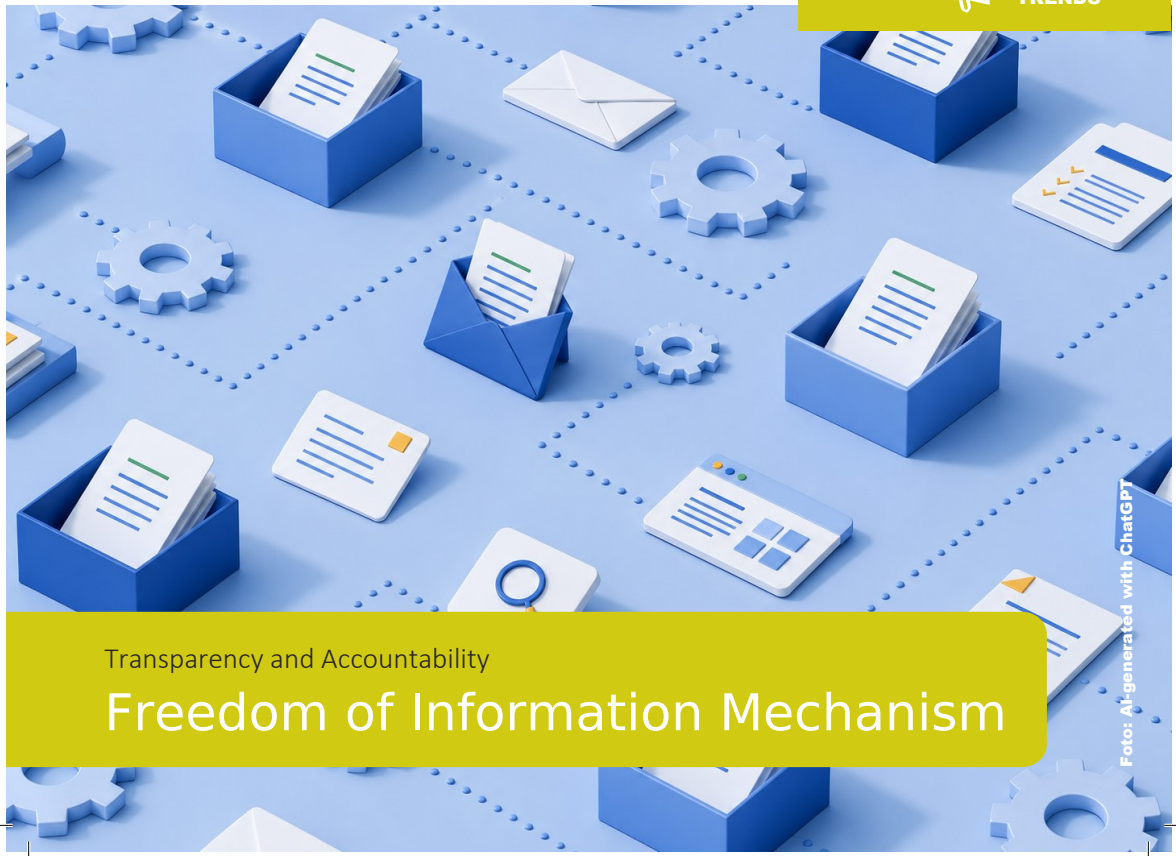
Foto: AI-generated with ChatGPT

Live Broadcast of Sessions

Decision-making process and deliberation can be followed in real time.

Livestreams of decision-making sessions can be regarded as a form of digital democracy that allows students to access the meetings without having to be present physically. Additionally, it may be a more cost-effective measure of ensuring transparency.

Downside: it may encourage a rather passive engagement with the decision-making process, with students being reduced to viewers, instead of those actively holding power to account.



Transparency and Accountability

Freedom of Information Mechanism

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Freedom of Information Mechanism

Obliging the representative bodies to make any information accessible at request.

The mechanism enables any student to send a request regarding any aspect of the work of the representative body, whereby the body is obliged to provide the information within a set period of time after receiving the notification.

Downside: might be strategically instrumentalisedto abuse the process and target the critical infrastructure.



Transparency and Accountability

Regular Public Hearings

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Regular Public Hearings

Allowing for regular visits and Q&A sessions after registration.

Public hearings enable other students to register and be present during the decision-making sessions as well as ask questions to the representatives. The measure can enhance openness and accountability, reminding decision-makers of their public service.

Downside: this safeguard requires a limited number of committed students who'll attend the hearings.



Foto: AI-generated with ChatGPT

Transparency and Accountability

Mandatory Register of Interests

Mandatory Register of Interest

Representativesare obliged to publish their memberships, affiliations and income sources.

Registers of interests are used to enforce transparency about the professional and commercial background of decision-makers. They expose conflicts of interests and make it easier to collect evidence about undue influence or lobbyism.

Downside: this measure requires watchful eyes and close case-by-case analysis of situations.



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Transparency and Accountability

One-Term Limit

One-Term Limit

Representatives aren't allowed to serve more than one term.

Term limits have established themselves as a popular measure in dealing with power abuse in democratic societies. They ensure no single individual gains enough influence to rule forever and enable constant circulation of power.

Downside: talented and motivated individuals with experience have to step down after serving for a term.

Optional Literature

The literature can be useful if you wish to explore in detail any concepts discussed

Optional Literature

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Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action.

Background of the Game

Origins, development and acknowledgements

Background of the Game

This game has been developed collaboratively by Prof. Dr. Eva Maria Hinterhuber and Melkon Nazaretyan as an educational tool for democratic participation and representation in higher education.

The concept was inspired by the Zukunftsboxen created by the Education Innovation Lab for the Futurium Berlin.

Grateful acknowledgment is given to Christine Buchwald, Elliot Vojacek, Jorina Sendel and Vanda Kleštincová for their contributions and inspiration.

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