

2026 General Assembly of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (OIDP)

❖ Renewal of the OIDP Leadership

The 2026 General Assembly of the OIDP represents a key opportunity to renew the leadership of our network and to prepare ourselves collectively to face, with greater strength and resources, the challenges and opportunities ahead. This document presents the different ways in which local and regional governments, their associations, as well as organizations and individuals committed to participatory democracy, can take a more active role in leading and strengthening the OIDP.

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1. Introduction and Context

❖ **Renewing the Political Leadership of the OIDP in the Face of Current Challenges to Local Democracy**

Local democracy faces multiple challenges today: the increasing citizen distrust towards institutions, the weakening of spaces for public deliberation, growing territorial and social inequalities, the climate crisis, unequal digitalization, and the urgent need to include youth and historically excluded groups in decision-making processes.

In this context, **participatory democracy reaffirms itself as a fundamental tool to rebuild connections, strengthen social cohesion, and transform governance models.** The OIDP, as a global network of local, regional governments and allied actors, is committed to adapting and strengthening its actions.

For this reason, we are initiating a process of **renewing the political leadership of the OIDP**, to consolidate its governance, expand its impact, and ensure its territorial and generational diversity. The leadership of the OIDP must also be closely linked to that of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), as it is our political reference organization within the municipalist movement.

Since its creation in 2001, the OIDP has been supported by cities, regions, and local government associations that have led key initiatives. Many of these entities have played a crucial role in the growth of the network, but we find ourselves at a key moment: **some political mandates are coming to an end**, and we need to renew and incorporate new leadership to continue advancing.

❖ **We call on new local and regional governments to take on a leading role**

We call on cities and territories committed to citizen participation to join the leadership of the OIDP. We seek local and regional governments with vision, the ability to propose, and the willingness to contribute resources –human, technical, or financial– to strengthen the collective work of our network and enhance its global impact.

We also **invite associations of local and regional governments** to join as key actors in this process, linking global dynamics with local realities, and expanding the reach of the OIDP in their respective territories.

❖ **Available Spaces to Exercise Leadership in the OIDP**

To channel this new leadership, we propose various engagement spaces:

- **Presidency and Host of the 2028 OIDP Conference:** the main leadership of the network and the organization of the OIDP's most important annual event.
- **Co-presidencies:** this role is taken on by the outgoing Presidency at the end of its term. In addition, there may be one or more thematic co-presidencies, focused on representative political positions that lead strategic areas and contribute to raising the visibility of the network's work. An example is the OIDP Co-presidency for Gender Equality, which promotes the integration of this perspective into local democracy.
- **Promoter Members:** governments that co-lead the OIDP through active participation in the Steering Committee, institutional representation, driving activities, and contributing resources.
- **Regional Offices:** offices or territorial nodes responsible for driving the work of the OIDP in specific regions, connecting the global agenda with local realities.
- **Advisory Committee:** a group of experts in participatory democracy that provides strategic guidance and technical support to the network.
- **Youth Council:** a new space for participation and influence to integrate the voice, proposals, and leadership of youth in local democracy.

❖ **Why is it important to renew the leadership?**

- To strengthen the **shared and distributed governance** of the network.
- To ensure greater **regional, linguistic, and thematic diversity**.
- To promote **intergenerational dialogue** and innovation in participation.
- To sustain and expand the impact of the OIDP with **new resources and partnerships**.
- To build a more **dynamic, representative, and committed network**.

If your local government or organization would like to be part of the OIDP leadership, please contact us through our Technical Secretariat.

We count on your participation to renew the future of local democracy together!

2. Presidency and Host of the OIDP Conference in 2028

The OIDP is seeking a local or regional government to host the 27th OIDP Conference in 2028. **The selected government will also assume the OIDP Presidency for 2028 and serve as Co-president in 2029.**

Each year, the OIDP organizes this major international event, which brings together local, regional, and national leaders, elected officials, facilitators, academics, and activists. **The Conference is a unique space for exchange, debate, and innovation on participatory democracy.**

In 2026, the city of Kraków (Poland) will host the 25th OIDP Conference, followed by Niterói (Brazil) in 2027. For this reason, **applications from outside South America will be prioritized for the 2028 edition.**

[Click here to learn more about how to apply](#)

Apply to host our Conference and place your government on the global map of municipalism!

3. Promoter Members of the OIDP

❖ Functions and Responsibilities

The Promoter Members of the OIDP are key actors in the life of our network: **local governments, regional governments, and municipal associations that share a strong commitment to local democracy and citizen participation.** They take an active role in the political direction, driving activities, and institutional representation of the Observatory. **Thanks to their leadership, the OIDP grows, strengthens, and amplifies its impact worldwide.**

❖ A strategic figure for shared and diverse leadership

Since its creation in 2001, the OIDP has been supported by local, regional governments, and municipal associations that have exercised political leadership in the development of the network. To formalize and expand this shared responsibility, **the OIDP General Assembly, held in Barcelona in 2018, approved the creation of the “Promoter members” figure.**

These actors have the mission of co-leading the OIDP: they participate in strategic decision-making, drive thematic areas or projects, mobilize resources, and represent the network at international events. **Their participation helps strengthen shared governance,**

increase the territorial presence of the network, and maintain an active and decentralized work agenda.

❖ **Who can be a promoter member?**

- Local or regional governments that are already part of the OIDP.
- National or regional municipal associations committed to the values of the OIDP.

❖ **What is expected from Promoter members?**

- Political will to actively participate in the network.
- Ability to mobilize technical, human, or financial resources.
- Interest in leading thematic areas, methodologies, or relevant experiences.

❖ **Territorial representativity**

To reflect the diversity of the network and foster a truly global perspective, the OIDP seeks to ensure balanced territorial representation among its Promoter members, striving to include the main regions of the world (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East).

❖ **Functions and Commitments**

Promoter members are part of the OIDP Steering Committee and, within this framework, assume the following commitments:

- Participate in at least two annual meetings of the Committee.
- Propose and lead working groups, publications, methodologies, or training activities.
- Represent the OIDP at international events and processes.
- Support the implementation and evaluation of the annual work plan.
- Make financial or in-kind contributions (translations, reports, event organization, technical or communication support).

❖ **How to become a promoter member?**

The process of joining requires:

1. Submission of a **formal application letter**, signed by the highest political authority of the government or association.
2. This letter should include:
 - The commitment to actively participate in the OIDP Steering Committee.

- The thematic areas of greatest interest.
- The activities, resources, or projects the applicant proposes to contribute to the network.

The OIDP Technical Secretariat will review the application and submit it for approval to the Steering Committee. If necessary, a collaboration agreement with UCLG, the organization that administratively hosts the OIDP, may be formalized.

❖ **A global leadership community**

Since the creation of this figure, the following entities have been Promoter Members of the OIDP at different times:

- **Barcelona** (Spain)
- **Bogotá** (Colombia)
- **Grenoble** (France)
- **Lyon** (France)
- **Montréal** through the Public Participation Office of Montréal (Canada)
- **Quito** (Ecuador)
- **São Paulo** (Brazil)
- **Sfax** (Tunisia)
- **SALAR** – Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sweden)
- **Valongo** (Portugal)

These experiences demonstrate that shared leadership in international networks is possible, necessary, and highly enriching. Becoming a promoter member is an opportunity to project global values locally, while also bringing international learnings and alliances to the territory.

Join this promoter group to place participation at the heart of democratic transformation!

4. Regional Offices of the OIDP

- ❖ **Territorial structures for a closer, more active, and representative network**

The Regional Offices of the OIDP are territorial coordination structures that **represent the network in a specific geographic region** (country, region, or group of countries). Their goal is to energize the work of the OIDP at the regional level, strengthen local membership, create synergies with local actors, and contribute to the development of the global network from a decentralized perspective.

❖ Main Functions

- **Represent the OIDP** in the assigned territory.
- **Energize local and regional members**, promoting the exchange of experiences and joint work.
- **Attract new members** and strengthen the OIDP community in the region.
- **Organize independent activities**, such as workshops, training sessions, publications, or campaigns.
- **Establish partnerships** with regional networks, institutions, and organizations.
- **Actively participate** in the OIDP's global activities (assemblies, conferences, campaigns, etc.).

❖ Who can form a Regional Office?

Any group of OIDP members from the same geographical region can propose the creation of a regional office, with the following conditions:

- The **political leadership** must be held by one or more **local or regional governments**.
- It may have technical or logistical support from an academic or social entity.
- It is recommended that **at least half of the OIDP members in the region** support the proposal.

❖ Constitution Process

To apply for recognition as a regional office, the following must be submitted:

1. A **formal letter of support** signed by at least half of the OIDP members in the region, expressing their endorsement of the proposal.
2. A **regional office project document**, which must include:
 - The name and territorial scope of the office.
 - The entity or entities assuming political leadership.
 - The internal organization (technical team, roles, etc.).

- An initial work plan and mechanisms for resource mobilization.

The OIDP Technical Secretariat will evaluate the proposal and, if favorable, will submit it for approval to the OIDP Steering Committee.

❖ **Organizational Structure of a Regional Office**

- **Presidency and Council of Cities:** Political leadership that represents the office before the global network.
- **Technical Secretariat of the Regional Office:** Responsible for daily management, communication, member engagement, and execution of the activity plan.

❖ **Each regional office must submit:**

- An **annual management report** to the OIDP General Assembly.
- An **annual work plan**, aligned with the global objectives of the Observatory.

❖ **What does coordinating a regional office involve?**

Coordinating a regional office is a political and technical commitment that involves:

- **Organizing territorial activities**, including exchanges, publications, or events.
- **Mobilizing regional members** in global calls and campaigns.
- **Promoting the work of the OIDP** in networks, media, and institutional spaces of the territory.
- **Seeking and managing resources** to finance the activities of the regional office.

This is an opportunity to give international visibility to the region, strengthen local coordination, and actively contribute to the advancement of participatory democracy around the world.

❖ **Existing experiences**

Currently, the only operational regional office is **OIDP Africa**, led by Secretary General Bachir Kanouté and chaired by the President of the Union of Local Elected Officials of Senegal until October 2025.

[Click here to access the OIDP Africa website](#)

In the past, there was also **OIDP Latin America**, driven and led by the city of **Porto Alegre** (Brazil).

Become a Regional Office of the OIDP and help decentralize our network, amplify local voices, and strengthen democracy from every territory!

5. OIDP Advisory Committee

❖ A group of experts at the service of local participatory democracy

The OIDP Advisory Committee is a consultative body made up of an **international group of experts in participatory and deliberative democracy, as well as related fields such as urbanism, municipalism, local governance, and human rights**. Its role is to support, advise, and enrich the work of our network with a critical, technical, and diverse perspective.

❖ Main functions of the Advisory Committee

- Support the Technical Secretariat and the Steering Committee in defining the strategic and methodological priorities of the network.
- Advise on the projects and lines of work promoted by the OIDP.
- Participate in the selection of good practices and experiences for the **OIDP Award “Best Practice in Citizen Participation”**.
- Join the **ad hoc scientific committee** in charge of preparing each annual OIDP conference.
- Ensure geographical, disciplinary, and thematic diversity in OIDP activities.
- Contribute to the technical and scientific quality of the network’s publications and events.

Members of the Advisory Committee are not remunerated for this role and commit to contributing their time and knowledge to support the network’s work.

❖ Current Members of the Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee is currently composed of internationally recognized figures:

- **Giovanni Allegretti** (Italy) – Senior researcher in citizen participation and participatory urban planning at the Centre for Social Studies in Coimbra.
- **Silvia Cervellini** (Brazil) – Co-founder and director of Delibera Brasil, expert in deliberative processes and citizen participation.

- **Diana Dajer** (Colombia) – Director of Citizen Participation at the Corona Foundation and board member of People Powered.
- **Nelson Dias** (Portugal) – International consultant in participatory budgeting and citizen participation in local governments. Coordinator of the network of participatory municipalities in Portugal.
- **Bachir Kanouté** (Senegal)

This team advises the OIDP with a **plural, independent, and committed perspective**, representing different regions of the world and with extensive experience at both local and international levels.

❖ **What does the Advisory Committee bring to the OIDP?**

- Methodological and scientific rigor.
- Analytical, critical, and constructive perspectives on current challenges in local democracy.
- Academic and professional representation with a diverse regional focus.
- Support in organizing conferences and selecting good practices.
- A bridge between research, institutional practice, and citizenship.

This council allows the OIDP to remain an innovative network with a solid foundation of knowledge and reflection, always attentive to changes and needs in global participatory municipalism.

**Your expertise can help guide the future of local democracy.
Join the OIDP Advisory Committee!**

6) **OIDP Youth Council**

❖ **Promoting Youth Participation in Local Democracy**

The OIDP Youth Council is a **youth participation space that seeks to structurally incorporate the voices, ideas, and perspectives of young people into the work of our network**. It is composed of young leaders committed to local democracy and citizen participation, whether elected representatives, social activists, or members of youth organizations.

Its creation responds to the need to open spaces for youth engagement within the OIDP and to foster a more intergenerational, inclusive, and innovative local democracy.

Who can be part of the Youth Council?

The Youth Council must be composed of **50% young people between the ages of 18 and 35** who meet one of the following profiles:

- Young people elected in local or regional governments (councilors, advisors, youth mayors).
- Activists, students, or young professionals linked to citizen participation, local development, or social justice.
- Young people nominated by OIDP members or allied organizations.

The other 50% will be composed of:

- 50% local or regional elected officials who actively promote youth inclusion and are recognized internationally for their leadership in this area.

❖ Youth Council Functions

- Contribute the **youth perspective** to OIDP initiatives.
- Advise the network on **youth participation and inclusion**.
- Propose projects, campaigns, or content that place youth at the center.
- Contribute to the organization of activities with youth participation (forums, special sessions, social media, etc.).
- Represent the OIDP in youth spaces and international meetings.

❖ Organization and Functioning

The Youth Council will function as an **advisory and propositional group**, in coordination with the OIDP Technical Secretariat and governance bodies. Its members will be appointed for a period of 2 to 3 years, with the possibility of renewal.

The OIDP member network may propose candidates to join the Youth Council by sending a letter of support with a brief motivation and profile of the proposed young person.

❖ Why a Youth Council in the OIDP?

- To ensure **meaningful youth participation** in building more inclusive local democracies.
- To connect the OIDP with **new agendas and languages**.
- To form a **young generation of leaders** committed to participatory and deliberative democracy.
- To strengthen democracy and meet current challenges.

❖ **Current Members of the Youth Council**

The Youth Council is currently integrated by:

- **Maria Eduarda Guedes**
- **Maximilian Ochango Ambeba**
- **Melissa Santamaria Acosta**
- **Sitcheu Fani Alliant Chany**
- **Nathalia Harcar Muniz**
- **Abdul Wadood Afghan**

This team advises the OIDP with a **plural, independent, and committed perspective**, representing different regions of the world and with extensive experience at both local and international levels from a youth perspective.

Democracy needs renewed voices to face today's challenges. Be part of our Youth Council!

8) Gender and Diversity Advisory Committee

❖ **Strengthening Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity in Participatory Democracy**

The Gender and Diversity Advisory Committee is proposed as a new advisory and propositional space within the OIDP, aimed at **strengthening the gender perspective and the inclusion of diversity** in the work of the network. Its creation responds to the need to ensure that participatory democracy actively contributes to **reducing inequalities, amplifying the voices of women and historically excluded groups, and promoting more inclusive local governance**.

This Committee emerged from the reflections and proposals developed by women participating in the OIDP framework, who emphasized the importance of **an integral approach that brings together education, social inclusion, community support, and democratic participation**. Through this space, the OIDP seeks to reinforce its commitment to **gender equality, diversity, and inclusive participation** as essential dimensions of local democracy.

Who can be part of the Gender and Diversity Advisory Council?

The Council may be composed of **women leaders, elected officials, representatives of local and regional governments, experts, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and allied actors** committed to gender equality, diversity, and participatory democracy.

Candidates may be proposed by OIDP members, allied institutions, or through direct expressions of interest addressed to the OIDP Technical Secretariat.

❖ **Main Objectives of the Gender and Diversity Advisory Council**

The Gender and Diversity Advisory Council will aim to:

- Ensure the incorporation of a **gender and diversity perspective** in the policies, activities, and strategic priorities of the OIDP.
- Promote the **active participation and leadership of women and diverse communities** in participatory democracy processes.
- Create training and awareness-raising spaces on **gender equality, female leadership, diversity, and democratic participation**.
- Foster strategic alliances with universities, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to develop **innovative projects in the field of gender, diversity, and local democracy**.
- Promote collaborative participation mechanisms with a gender perspective, encouraging **reflection, active listening, and dialogue** to reduce the existing gap between citizens and the State.
- Contribute to the visibility of **local experiences, methodologies, and public policies** that advance equality, inclusion, and diversity in democratic governance.

❖ **Functions of the Council**

The Gender and Diversity Advisory Council will work in coordination with the OIDP Technical Secretariat and governance bodies. Its main functions will include:

- Advising the OIDP on **how to integrate gender equality and diversity** into its work plan, activities, publications, and events.
- Proposing **thematic initiatives, campaigns, training sessions, or publications** related to gender, diversity, and participatory democracy.
- Supporting the identification and dissemination of **good practices led by local and regional governments** in the field of gender-inclusive participation.
- Encouraging the participation of **women leaders, feminist organizations, diversity networks, and community actors** in OIDP spaces.

- Contributing to the creation of **alliances and collaborative projects** that strengthen inclusive local democracy.

❖ **Why a Gender and Diversity Advisory Council in the OIDP?**

- To ensure that **gender equality and diversity are structurally incorporated** into the work of the OIDP.
- To strengthen the **participation and leadership of women and historically excluded groups** in local democracy.
- To promote **more inclusive, representative, and equitable participatory processes**.
- To create **spaces for reflection, cooperation, and innovation** around gender, diversity, and democratic governance.
- To contribute to **closing the gap between citizens and institutions** through active listening, community support, and inclusive participation.

Participatory democracy can only be truly transformative if it is inclusive, diverse, and equitable.

Join the Gender and Diversity Advisory Council and help place equality at the heart of local democracy!

We encourage you to participate in our network! If you have any questions or comments, we are happy to assist you at oidp@uclg.org.