

# Association

## Purpose

Give the participants an opportunity to:

- apply democracy's preconditions and basic principles to themselves
- reflect on what it means to form a democratic association
- experience the tension between the principles of Equal consideration and Personal autonomy in a *Hot seat* session (see Method Bank)

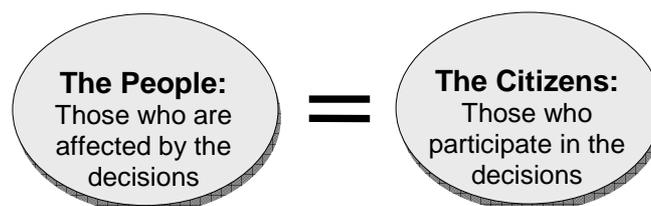
## 1. The constituent phases of a democratic process

Invite the participants to sit in a circle and ask them to reflect on when they last did so and what the advantages may be. Continue along these lines:

“This is an image of a democratic association – you are all sitting on the same level, your attention is directed inwards to your own concerns and therefore you have your backs to the outside world; to make room for a new member, everyone has to move a bit. But is this assembly really as democratic as it looks?” Let the participants present their personal reflections. Continue to discuss whether preconditions for democracy exist in this particular gathering. For that to be the case there must be answers to the following two sets of questions:

- Who are we? Do we have anything in common? Why is it just we and no one else who are sitting here? Could just anyone become a member? Unconditionally?
- What authority do we have? Are there things which just we want and can do, things we could list on an agenda?

Introduce the basic democratic identity:



## 2. The other phases in a democratic process

Summarise the outcome of step 1 by presenting the Lifebuoy and writing the words *membership* and *agenda* in phase 1 and phase 2, respectively. Briefly present the *deliberation* and *decision* phases, adding the words *participation* and *decision*, respectively, in phases 3 and 4. Then add *understanding* in the Lifebuoy's centre as something that is required in every phase of the process.

## 3. An association's culture

Lead a *Hot seat* session (see Method Bank) to examine the democratic culture in the

association which the participants have just established. Encourage personal explanations for sitting instead of standing, rather than a discussion. Refer to the principles of *Equal consideration* and *Personal autonomy* whenever appropriate. Get the participants to express an opinion on 6–7 statements but be sure always to include the first and the last in the following list:

1. In any group there is a leader
2. Everyone's best interest must be considered when making a decision
3. It's I who decides about my own life
4. Quotas are a good way of promoting equality
5. Young people should listen to those who are older
6. I want power
7. In any organisation the decision-makers form an elite
8. If a woman wants to wear a veil, that's her business
9. People generally make sensible decisions
10. There is a gender hierarchy whereby men oppress women
11. A decision must be respected even if one thinks it is wrong

### **Comments**

- The statements can arouse strong feelings.
- The principles of Equal consideration and Personal autonomy often pull in opposite directions. Note whether the participants are torn between standing up and sitting down.
- A *Hot Seat* session is in itself a manifestation of democracy's fundamental values: independent standpoints are encouraged and all opinions are treated with equal respect.