

# Solonian Democracy Institute



2021

## Digital Democracy Report



Rahvaalgatus.ee



democracy.space



Civocracy

Polys

SIV

ETHELO



novoville



slido



PlaceSpeak



RQJ SSEAU



## Disclaimer:

The information contained in this report is for general information purposes only. While every effort has been made to accurately reflect the functionality, strengths and weaknesses of participating vendor solutions, this report does not constitute investment advice nor should it be relied on as a conclusive analysis of the participating vendors' capabilities. Some of the information in this report relies on self-reported information from vendors that has not been independently verified. **The Solonian Democracy Institute clg makes no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability or availability of any elements of this report.**

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).



## How to Cite this Report:

R.H. Fuller, *SDI Digital Democracy Report* (Solonian Democracy Institute, 2021).

## Table of Contents

	Page
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>New in this Edition</b> .....	2
<b>Digital Democracy</b> .....	3
<b>Methodology</b> .....	4
Functionality .....	4
Mission / Vision .....	5
Ability to Execute .....	6
Security .....	8
Combined Assessment .....	9
<b>Vendor Overview</b> .....	10
CitizenLab .....	11
Civil Space .....	13
Civocracy .....	16
Delib .....	19
Discuto .....	21
Ethelo .....	23
Novoville .....	26
PlaceSpeak .....	28
Polco .....	31
Rousseau .....	33
democracy.space .....	36
ManaBalss (MyVoice) .....	38
politik-digital e.V. ....	41
Polys .....	43
Rahvaalgatus .....	46
Slido .....	48
VoxVote .....	50
<b>Upcoming Technologies</b> .....	52
<b>Solutions in Progress</b> .....	55

## Introduction

Since the publication of the first edition of this report in early 2020, the Covid-19 crisis has forced citizens, businesses and governments alike to re-examine how we work, live and travel.

The crisis has had a profound impact on how people use technology as well, with video-conferencing replacing virtually all meetings in both the white collar space as well as the public sector. And yet, the digitalisation of politics itself has not progressed nearly as rapidly. Many parliaments and political bodies around the world are now meeting via Zoom or MS Teams, but these tools primarily facilitate discussion among small numbers of people, rather than create the framework for more effective – and more participatory – decisions.

This lag of the political process – compared to any other area of our daily lives – has many reasons: It takes time to change the legal frameworks underpinning our societies; not everyone is in favour of expanding digital participation to more citizens; and concerns around security have delayed the adoption of eDemocracy.

Extreme partisanship in some social strata has led to an intense focus on the outcomes (e.g. climate change, social justice, etc.), rather than the process of democracy. This can result in counter-productive constraints and preconditions being set on participation, which can, in turn, have a chilling effect on enthusiasm and lead to a lack of legitimacy for results.

However, despite these challenges, the digital democracy space continues to grow both in terms of the number of people using digital democracy in their daily lives and in terms of digital participation becoming anchored in long-term official processes. The impact that digital democracy tools can offer citizens is becoming ever more apparent and developers continue to make great strides in improving both security and the versatility of their solutions.

This report, now in its second year, tracks the development of digital democracy technologies and seeks to provide an overview of the various fields of application (e.g. voting, participatory budgeting, public consultation, etc.) to anyone interested in advancing this field. The goal is to provide a repository for policy makers, NGOs and academics, as well as for the democracy software industry itself.

This year, we have evaluated 22 eDemocracy tools from 14 countries. In selecting vendors for this report, we focus exclusively on solutions with solid development and a proven track record of implementation success, rather than listing every gadget and tool on the market. While we have provided an overall score for each vendor, each use case is different, so by outlining the strengths of every solution across multiple categories, we are hopeful that you will find the right one for you, whether you are organising a participatory budgeting project for a small community or planning a major voting exercise for a large city or even country.

The Solonian Democracy Institute is a voluntary organisation dedicated to creating the conditions for direct, digital democracy based on Athenian democratic principles of citizen participation. All of the technologies outlined in this report will help us pave the way towards this exciting future.

Dr. Roslyn Fuller  
Managing Director  
Solonian Democracy Institute

## New in this Edition

Since the publication of the last edition of this report we have added a number of additional criteria including Customer References, an Accessibility Assessment as well as a section on security.

While the reference calls we conducted were extremely positive, many clients did not come close to using all the functionality their vendors provided, often limiting their engagement to the survey function of the various products. This highlights to us the need for vendors to expand on their training and service offerings in order to help clients fully embrace the often innovative functionality of these platforms.

For the security section, we are very grateful to well-known ISO Auditor Anish Rao and Cyber Security Consultant Mohammed Adel who kindly donated their time to develop a Security Preparedness Questionnaire of 36 questions to help us assess a vendor's level of security across eight different areas. While this already has given us some insights, we plan to expand on this section in future reports, particularly where a platform is used to vote on policy.

In addition to these changes in scope, this edition features 10 new vendors, profiled for the first time in this edition, as well as a new assessment area – Government Task Automation – which is further discussed in the Methodology section below.

## Digital Democracy

When most people hear the term ‘democracy’, they think about elections and referenda. However, it can describe other processes as well. For the purposes of this report we have defined democratic processes as:

*“any process which allows citizens or residents of a country or community to interact with their public political institutions”*

Democratic processes can therefore include:

- Elections (local, regional, national and supranational)
- Referenda & Petitions
- Public Consultations & Surveys
- Participatory Budgeting (where part or all of a community’s budget is distributed in accordance with how members of that community have voted)
- Administrative processes such as requesting permits, parking tickets, etc.

Digital Democracy describes the act of digitalising democratic processes so that they can be carried out online, as opposed to in person, by post or via telephone. The tools available in this area can perform a variety of functions. For the purposes of this report we have defined digital democracy tools as:

*“Software applications and/or processes which either transfer an existing democratic process online or create a new online democratic process for the purpose of either empowering the participants or seeking their input to make or validate a decision or assumption”*

While most vendors analysed in this report are digitalising existing or new democratic processes, we have also included a few vendors that currently operate in the private sector. We have included these vendors as some aspects of their technology could be adapted to operate in public democratic processes.

## Methodology







Our analysis is based on a combination of self-reported and independently researched data points across a variety of criteria. Where possible we have taken advantage of the vendors' offer to analyse a test environment of their software. At a high level we have scored vendors on the following:

- A. Functionality
- B. Mission / Vision
- C. Ability to Execute
- D. Security

These categories are explained in detail below:

### A. Functionality

We have assessed all vendor solutions against all functionality areas they have self-reported as being active in:

<b>PB</b>	<b>DM</b>	<b>D/C</b>	<b>Id</b>	<b>PC</b>	<b>TA</b>
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
					

In the above example, the vendor does not claim to provide ideation or public consultation functionality, nor are they active in the area of government task automation, meaning that their Remit Score (see below for definition) is not affected by lack of functionality in these areas.

In scoring each functionality area we assessed the following aspects and assigned points for each aspect:

Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus-Building	Ideation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
Does the software allow users to see what the projected cost of a decision item is?	Are users voting on a scale?	Does the software show distribution of votes?	Does the software allow users to contribute ideas?	Are the results of the consultation process public?	Ease of use for end users to navigate and use the software
Does the software allow users to see how much of the budget remains to be distributed after every decision?	Are users able to weight their vote on a decision item compared to other decision items in the same exercise?	Does the software allow for ranking of alternative voting options (e.g. different items in a PB decision)?	Who decides which ideas go forward to a vote?	Ease of use for end users to navigate and make a submission	How efficiently does the software manage task assignment?
Does the software allow for logical constraints, i.e. prevent users from selecting two or more contradictory options?	Are users able to see the average vote and is voting transparent to the user?	Can users comment on decisions?	How does the software handle a large amount of ideas?	Is additional information easily accessible?	Can the privacy of information (financial, movements, etc.) be guaranteed?
Ease of configuring and setting up a participatory budgeting process in the software	Ease of configuring and setting up a vote / decision item in the software	Can users add images, videos or other forms of media?	Ease of setting up ideation process	Does the solution allow the client to easily organize submissions (e.g. thematically)?	How simple is it for the client to use the solution?
Ease of use for end users navigating the software and selecting PB options	Ease of use for end users navigating the software and voting / commenting on decision items	Can users paste links to external resources / websites?	Ease of use for end users to submit ideas into the process		How easy is it to update the system as circumstances change and customize to the client's needs
	Does the software allow comparison against (and filtering by) existing voter lists or geographic location of voters?	Can discussions be moderated?			

## B. Mission / Vision

We assessed a number of factors to determine the level of change a vendor would bring to the market or wider society if their products were widely implemented:

- **Political Impact:** We assess the impact of the vendor solution on public decision-making. We give stronger weighting to vendors whose solutions increase the impact participants ('ordinary voters') are able to have on decisions than to vendors who merely help to digitalise the existing process.



- **Future-Proofing:** We assess whether the vendor seeks to optimise or replace a single, currently existing challenge of the political system or whether they have thought through a staggered approach to react to the wider availability of democracy-enhancing technology - and how this might impact their development roadmap.
- **Breadth of Vision:** While the bulk of the Remit Score for each vendor is calculated from the solution areas vendors have self-identified as being active in, vendors who were active in more areas received a higher score on Breadth of Vision.

## C. Ability to Execute

This category assesses how well the vendor is able to translate their vision into reality. Factors that we examined here were:

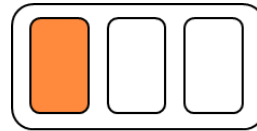
- **Number of active customers:** A greater number of active customers generates more revenue as well as increased feedback from users, which in turn can be used to improve the product.
- **Concurrent Users:** Assesses the number of users that can use the platform simultaneously and thus the ability of the vendor to scale.
- **Testimonials / Case Studies:** In conjunction with the number of active customers, case studies are a good indicator of successful customer projects. We give stronger weighting to case studies where customers confirm the success of the project.
- **Workforce:** The number of full-time employees working for the vendor. We use this as a proxy to determine how established the vendor is, which will affect their ability to execute.
- **Experience:** The number of years this vendor has been active. Generally, how long an organisation has been active is an indicator of their ability to maintain a positive cash flow and the level of professionalisation (i.e. business vs. hobby).
- **Social Media Presence:** How active a vendor is on social media can directly impact how likely end users as well as customers are to engage with the product and is therefore a strong indicator of any vendor's ability to scale quickly. In assessing this criterion, we looked at social media presence (Shares, Follows, etc.) of the vendor's official account(s) on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn.
- **Sales Channels:** Assesses the vendor's go-to-market strategy. Generally a multi-channel sales approach is a stronger indicator of the ability to execute than e.g. only a self-serve option.
- **Unique Selling Points (USPs)** - USPs are a strong indicator of competitiveness as they increase the likelihood of winning market share if the USP is seen as desirable by the market.

In 2021, we are expanding the Ability to Execute section to include two additional components, Accessibility and Customer References.

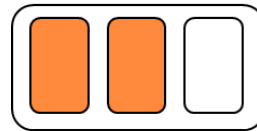
### Accessibility:

For any technology solution to have a truly inclusive impact, everyone needs to be able to access it, including people living with disability. We asked all vendors to provide evidence (and sought out publically available information where we did not receive it) on how vendors have implemented accessibility into their platforms.

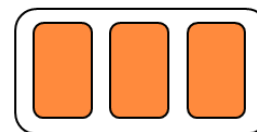
The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are the most common measurement of accessibility, but we have also considered similar certifications in a number of countries to fairly assess vendors.



Not implemented or no information available



Considered in implementation but no active certifications



WCAG or similar certification

#### Accessibility Scoring Outcomes

Where a certification was not in place we reviewed whether the vendor took other measures to improve accessibility and assessed vendors accordingly.

### Customer References:

We asked vendors to nominate up to two reference clients we could speak to about the functionality and usage of their platform. Reference clients were asked to score vendors on certain criteria as well as provide general feedback. The following rating criteria were used:

**Expectation Setting** ★★★★★

**Advice & Guidance** ★★★★☆

**Project Success** ★★★★☆

**Customer Service** ★★★★★

**Feedback Loop** ★★★★★

**Recommendation** ★★★★★

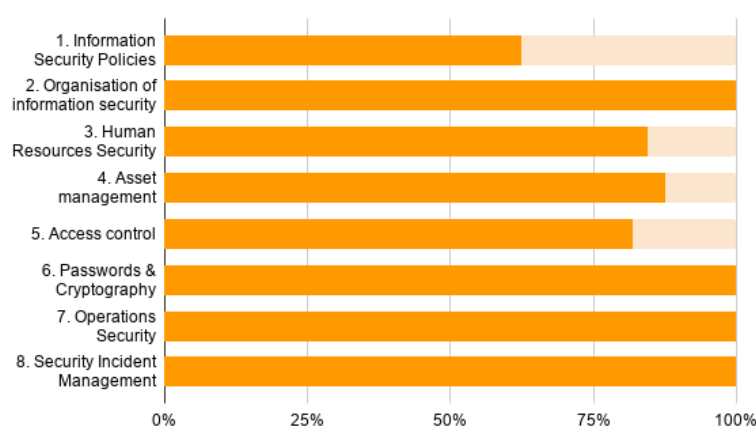
Assessment Area	Question	Answer Options
Expectation Setting	Did you feel that the vendor understood what you wanted to achieve?	Not at all / Somewhat / Mostly / Fully
	Did the vendor discuss any measurable KPIs or metrics with you (i.e. what good looks like)?	No / Somewhat / Yes
Advice & Guidance	Did the vendor convince you to change your original goal in any way, e.g. make you consider aspects you hadn't originally envisioned?	Original Goal / Suggested Changes (but not agreed) / Suggested Changes (agreed)
Project Success	Were you able to meet your goal?	No / Partially / Yes
Customer Service	How satisfied were you with the customer service - prior to sign-off	Dissatisfied / Somewhat Satisfied / Fully Satisfied
	How satisfied were you with the customer service - during the project	Dissatisfied / Somewhat Satisfied / Fully Satisfied
Feedback Loop	Did the vendor ask for feedback following the project?	No / Yes / Yes, and they responded to feedback
Recommendation	Would you recommend this vendor to other clients?	No / Depends on the circumstances / Yes

## D. Security

We have assessed a number of different aspects to determine how secure a vendor solution is, such as encryption, data storage and - particularly for vendors involved in political voting - how securely a vote is protected against subsequent changes from the administrators or external parties. Please note that for the purposes of this review we are relying on information provided by the vendor and publicly available information about the solution. We have not performed our own penetration tests.

- SSL (HTTPS) Encryption - Does the website use standard SSL encryption to prevent the data being intercepted or changed between the user device and the server?
- Does the vendor take measures to protect login data (including passwords) against leaks or hackers (e.g. salting passwords, multi-factor authentication, etc.)?
- Where is user data stored (e.g. own server, hosted with mass providers such as Microsoft Azure, Amazon AWS, etc., smaller providers, on Blockchain, etc.)?
- If the solution uses Blockchain to store voting data and prevent modification, how does the solution ensure that voters cannot be linked to their vote?

For the 2021 edition of this report, we have collaborated with ISO Auditor Anish Rao and Cyber Security Consultant Mohammed Adel to develop a Security Preparedness Questionnaire of 36 questions to assess a vendor's level of security across eight different areas. As the questionnaire was a late addition to our overall assessment, only three vendors were able to respond in time. However, given the importance of security management for the sustainability of digital democracy, we will continue to develop this assessment, as well as independent security testing, in future editions of this report.



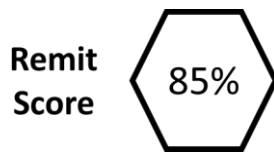
Sample Security Assessment Score Graph

Overall Security  
Assessment Score

**91%**

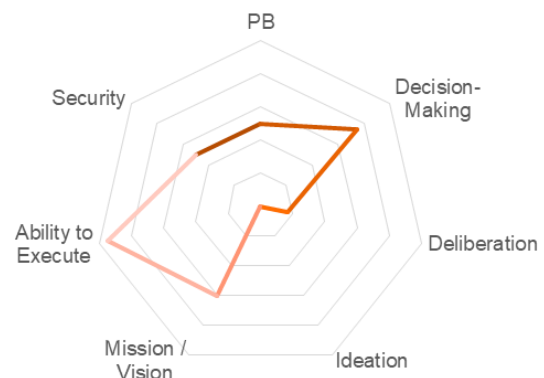
### E. Combined Assessment

After scoring vendors on Functionality, Mission / Vision, Ability to Execute and Security, we then assign an overall Remit Score.



The Remit Score is calculated by dividing the overall score of the vendor by the maximum available points for the functionality areas the vendor is active in, as well as their score for Mission / Vision, Ability to Execute and Security.

The assessment for each category is also displayed as a visual radar chart.



It should be noted that owing to our rigorous assessment of the various functionality areas and our decision to measure vendors against an ideal state, no vendor has achieved a perfect score. Receiving a low to medium score even across multiple areas should therefore not detract from the already robust functionality and abilities of these vendors, many of which are implemented in major projects across the world. Where we felt that a vendor did not have the necessary functionality or maturity to be used in a professional context, we have instead not included them in the report.

## Vendor Overview

Vendor	Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus-Building	Ideation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
CitizenLab	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Civil Space	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Civocracy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Delib	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
democracy.space	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Discuto	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Ethelo	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
MyVoice (ManaBalss)	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Novoville	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
PlaceSpeak	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Polco	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
politik-digital e.V.	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Polys	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Rahvaalgatus	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Rousseau	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Slido	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
VoxVote	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

The above table lists all fully analysed vendors alphabetically, regardless of the number of functionality areas they support.

In contrast, the vendor reports (pages 11 to 50) are sorted from generalist (supporting more functionality areas) to specialist (supporting fewer functionality areas), whereby vendors with the same number of supported functionality areas are listed alphabetically.

## CitizenLab

<http://www.citizenlab.co>

Remit  
Score

83%



### Who should use this?

- Clients who want to take advantage of a modular approach and roll out digital participation in phases
- Projects where a simple, highly visual interface for users is a high priority



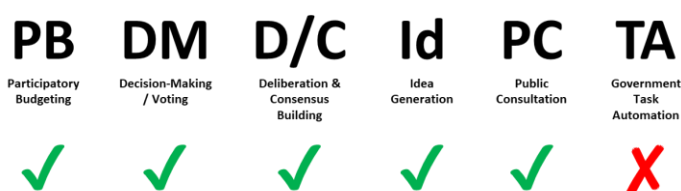
### Overview

Founded	2015
CEO	Wietse Van Ransbeeck
Clients	180

CitizenLab was founded in 2015 with a focus on digitalising public participation at local government level.

Since its inception, CitizenLab has worked with 180 clients across Europe and the Americas, with products and services ranging from Public Consultation to Participatory Budgeting and Ideation.

### Scope of Offering



CitizenLab provides a comprehensive Citizen Participation Platform that lets local authorities set the level of engagement, from passive (e.g. surveys and polls), to passive-active (ideation) to active (co-creation of policy and participatory budgeting).

CitizenLab's unique timeline feature allows residents to understand where they are in the participation process while organisers receive a detailed breakdown of decision data, including a geographical breakdown of voter preferences. Of particular note is CitizenLab's use of natural language processing which automatically groups ideas around key words and physical locations.

CitizenLab really shines when several modules are combined to create a 'tool box' for local decision-makers, allowing public officials to get a sense of fluctuations in public opinion as well as geographic differences in voter preferences. By sending frequent nudge emails, the software encourages officials to communicate the outcome of decisions to voters, creating a virtuous cycle of participation.

## Mission / Vision

CitizenLab's mission is to strengthen local democracies by improving the efficiency and legitimacy of local governments through citizen participation.

Though the main focus of CitizenLab's strategy is local government, its tools have been used by larger movements, e.g. a large national citizens' consultation in Chile in 2019, demonstrating that CitizenLab's technology has applications beyond just digitalising local representative democracy.

## Ability to Execute

With a sizeable headcount (it currently employs 38 people, most of which are based in its Brussels HQ), CitizenLab is well-established with a significant marketing presence: dozens of articles in high-profile publications, professional case studies and a state-of-the-art website that includes detailed information about its products as well as the processes of digital governance.

Having been named a "cool vendor in Smart City Applications" by Gartner in 2017 (among other awards), CitizenLab maintains an extensive network and social media presence with over 20,000 followers across major social networks.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★★★★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★★★★
<b>Experience</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>Workforce</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>Social Media</b>	★★★★★
<b>USPs</b>	★★★☆☆

## Security

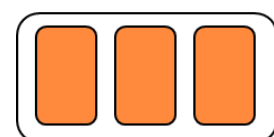
CitizenLab's platform uses standard https encryption and users can either create an account on the platform or authenticate via Twitter, Facebook or Google. Passwords are hashed and user data is stored on AWS servers.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Timeline feature allows administrators and voters alike to stay up-to-date on the progress of the participation process
- Toolbox approach is flexible to local authorities' needs
- User interface is simple and intuitive – designed with the end-user in mind

## Accessibility



WCAG or similar certification

## Civil Space

<https://civilspace.io/>

Remit  
Score

75%



### Who should use this?

- Local councils who want a flexible portfolio of citizen engagement tools
- Clients who want a service-provider who can co-create and advise on consultation processes



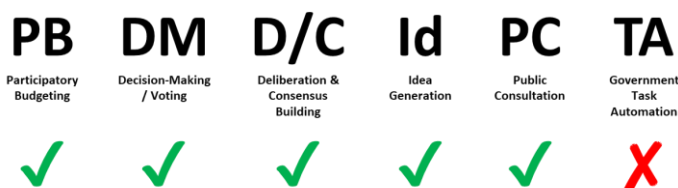
### Overview

Founded	2018 (part of Domain7)
CEO	Tim Booker
Clients	40

While Civil Space officially started in 2018, its parent company Domain7 goes back to the late 90s, when the company (then called Epic Solutions) launched a Content Management System that became particularly prevalent in the Higher Education sector. Since then Domain7 has added companies across Canada, the US and the

UK. Early adopters of open source technologies, Domain7 combined its UX expertise with its passion for cooperative business models to develop Civil Space in 2018.

### Scope of Offering



Civil Space describes itself as a 'reimagined town hall' and the structure of the platform reflects this. Consultations are represented as multiple engagements including surveys, discussions, geo-spatial commenting (where users can drop

a pin on a map to comment on an issue or aspect linked to a specific location), a ranking tool (allowing users to drag and drop different decision options into a preferred order) as well as 'Idea Boards' where participants can create initiatives and ideas. Once a user has completed a series of engagements linked to a project phase, Civil Space automatically recommends other engagements (from the same client, e.g. a city) – helping to drive user stickiness and deeper citizen engagement.

The most interactive component of the Civil Space platform are discussions, where users can comment and upvote other comments (known in Civil Space as expressing 'respect'). Civil Space automatically detects abusive language, but rather than simply deleting or moderating such comments, the system gives the user a choice: to change their wording or to refer it to a human moderator.



Of particular note is Civil Space's Budgeting module, where users are asked to make trade-offs between different options (this can be used for Participatory Budgeting, Carbon Budgeting or Tax Distribution simulations). Administrators can decide whether users can exceed the budget, and if so by how much.

## Mission / Vision

Civil Space wants to improve governance structures, specifically the relationship between citizens and their government, through the use of digital citizen participation. Inspired by the work of Dr. Martín Carcasson at Colorado State University and his idea that community consultation should ultimately result in the improved ability of the community itself to solve problems, Civil Space has focussed its efforts on not just providing a one-off consultation solution, but an entire framework that allows cities to build a sustainable consultation community.

## Ability to Execute

Despite a small social media presence of less than 100 followers on Facebook and Twitter, Civil Space has been able to attract more than 30 clients since starting out two years ago.

While Civil Space itself has less than 10 employees, it operates as part of Domain7 (ca. 50 employees) which allows it to leverage existing relationships in the US, UK and Canada.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ☆
<b>Social Media</b>	☆ ☆ ☆
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

## Security

Clients can select their own data centre in either the UK, Canada or the US and choose between a multi-tenancy or single-tenancy setup. Civil Space allows end users to download or delete any data that they provide to the platform's collaborative spaces and incorporates the GDPR principles into its design.

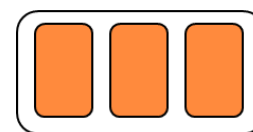
As of now, Civil Space does not leverage Blockchain.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒 🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Creates stickiness by recommending follow-on consultations
- Detects abusive language and nudges users to rephrase contributions

## Accessibility



WCAG or similar  
certification

## Client Feedback

Civil Space has received strong and positive feedback with particular credit given to its user-friendly interface as well as the variety of question types available in the survey feature. Of particular note is the customer service, serving as a sounding board for its clients and co-creating success criteria. One client mentioned that Civil Space can be pricey (with separate costs for products and services), but that it provides excellent value for money.

<b>Expectation Setting</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Advice &amp; Guidance</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Project Success</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Customer Service</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Feedback Loop</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Recommendation</b>	★ ★ ★

## Civocracy

<http://www.civocracy.org>

Remit  
Score

74%



### Who should use this?

- Clients who want to streamline public consultation processes and improve responsiveness
- Clients who could benefit from a wraparound consultation and implementation service

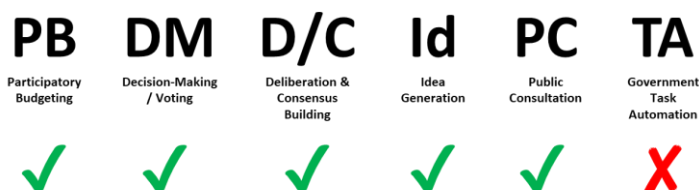


### Overview

Founded	2015
CEO	Chloé Pahud
Clients	14

Civocracy, headquartered in Germany but also active in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, provides digitalisation tools for the public sector. It is primarily used by local governments to consult residents about planned projects and invite suggestions for local policy improvement.

### Scope of Offering



Civocracy's platform consists of four distinct modules: Consultations (where participants are asked to comment on proposed projects), Propositions (where participants can suggest their own ideas), Surveys, and a new module

for Participatory Budgeting (currently in beta stage). In addition, clients can keep participants engaged, even if there is no live process underway, by maintaining an events calendar or posting updates about community development. Overall, Civocracy is structured like a social network: Organisers can upload information (text, images and video) and add surveys and discussions. Users can follow discussions, comment and like contributions from others. Comments that garner the most likes are then highlighted to organisers.

Throughout the discussion, users can see whether the organiser has read or responded to their contribution, which helps to drive accountability. This is supported by automated emails which are sent to participants to update them on the status of the consultation.

Civocracy's new Participatory Budgeting module has been designed to allow clients to freely customize the steps of a PB process: ideation, analysis, voting and results publication. Participants can choose between Simple Voting (where each user gets a certain number of points to distribute to different projects) and Ranked Voting (which allows users to rank their top five projects).

In order to drive engagement, the PB module automatically emails all participants at every stage of the process. Unlike many other PB tools, users do not actually distribute budget in monetary terms, nor are they prevented from combining projects which together would exceed the total available budget. Instead, the client admins (e.g. public administrators or politicians overseeing the process) can choose which projects make the final cut based on how many of the winning projects fit into the budget. Unfortunately, this somewhat limits the educational and participatory benefits of the module and could impact on long-term participation if citizens do not see the impact of their engagement or feel that their expressed wishes are being overridden.

For all modules, Civocracy's analytics dashboard allows organisers to understand the level of participation as well as sentiment, thanks to the vendor's natural language processing engine.

## Mission / Vision

Civocracy's mission is to "improve governance structures through the use of digital citizen participation". Pragmatism is at the core of Civocracy's strategy which focuses on actual, measurable implementation of ideas rather than just attracting a lot of engagement without action. To this end, Civocracy places a lot of emphasis on ensuring that contributions from users are followed up, for example, by generating email notifications to organisers when a new suggestion has been submitted and by including extensive consultancy as part of their services to help local decision-makers maximise citizen engagement and integrate their feedback into the process.

## Ability to Execute

Despite still being a small company of ca. 20 employees (which represents a growth of 100% since we reviewed them in 2019), Civocracy has built strong engagement in the projects they are currently involved in. This is in no small part due to how seriously their clients take citizen participation, with evidence of consistent two-way communication between citizens and local government over the participation channels Civocracy has built for its clients. Civocracy's case studies confirm this sentiment with plenty of glowing references from customers.

With a little over 3,000 followers across various social media sites, Civocracy is in a good position to expand its brand.

Civocracy's focus on sustainable engagement (and measurable action) is a strong indicator of customer stickiness – and a promising sign of future referral business.

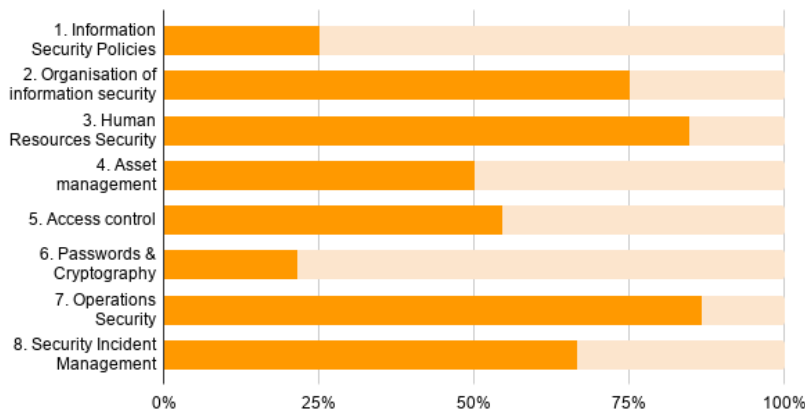
<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ★
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

## Security

Civocracy uses standard https encryption. The extensive privacy policy clearly states which data is public and how data is stored (on AWS servers in Europe) and protected (e.g. passwords are encrypted). If a user decides to delete their account, all of their activity on the platform becomes anonymous, preserving privacy while at the same time safe-guarding the context of previous decisions.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

Civocracy participated in this year's security assessment and scored particularly highly in the areas of Operations Security, IT Security Organisation and Incident Management, with lower performances across Security Policy Management and Cryptographic Controls.



Overall Security Assessment Score

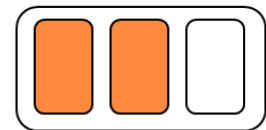
62%

Civocracy reinforces the importance of security management when onboarding new employees as well as at regular alignment meetings with their operations team.

## Standout Features

- Full life cycle implementation and consulting services – ensuring that organisers are thoroughly trained in how to get the most out of citizen engagement
- Generates notifications to organisers every time a user submits a contribution, helping to nudge them to engage actively in the process

## Accessibility



Considered in implementation but no active certifications

## Client Feedback

With positive to outstanding ratings across all categories, Civocracy's client feedback is strong evidence that its service delivery matches its product expertise.

Particular praise was given to Civocracy's ability to engage participants at every stage of the process, by sending email updates and prompts to continue their involvement. While some feedback referenced a lack of clear success KPIs, the client who gave this feedback acknowledged that Civocracy helped to overcome this issue by mutually defining goals with the client.

<b>Expectation Setting</b>	★ ★ ★ ☆
<b>Advice &amp; Guidance</b>	★ ★ ★ ★
<b>Project Success</b>	★ ★ ★ ☆
<b>Customer Service</b>	★ ★ ★ ★
<b>Feedback Loop</b>	★ ★ ★ ★
<b>Recommendation</b>	★ ★ ★ ☆

**Delib**<https://www.delib.net>**Remit  
Score****68%****Who should use this?**

- Organisations that frequently run public consultations
- Government organisations that want to increase the transparency of their budgeting process

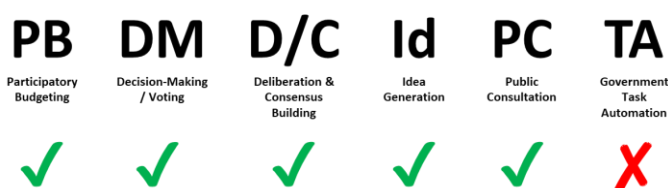
**Overview**

Founded	2004
CEO	Andy Parkhouse
Clients	200

Delib is one of the pioneers of digital democracy, working with BT and Accenture as early as 2002 to run online voting pilots for British local elections.

Formally incorporated since 2004, Delib has built a host of online decision-making and deliberation

apps, some of which were famously used by the Obama campaign in 2018 to crowdsource policy ideas. Since 2012, Delib has focussed on three core product offerings: Citizen Space, an online consultation platform; Simulator, a policy simulation tool which supports, inter alia, Participatory Budgeting; and Dialogue, a citizen engagement platform.

**Scope of Offering**

Delib's main offering, Citizen Space, is an end-to-end consultation portal, complete with landing page (to integrate into a client's existing web presence), surveys and a host of question options (including ranked choice, multiple choice and free text

answers). More lengthy consultations can be broken into chapters. The platform automatically updates the landing page when a consultation has ended, allowing participants to read about the outcome.

Dialogue, Delib's second solution, is set up as an ideation and crowdsourcing platform, allowing participants to share comments with one another, something not possible within Citizen Space where comments and answers are only visible to the administrator.

Though strictly a Deliberative rather than Participatory Budgeting solution (all budget options are set by the admin rather than permitting ideation from the participants), Delib's third product, Simulator, is highly sophisticated, calculating remaining budget in real-time as the participant selects options. Prior to a budgeting exercise, clients can configure the platform to display the real-life consequences of budget choices (e.g. if library funding is cut by 10%, 3 libraries will close).

## Mission / Vision

Delib's vision is "to encourage systemic shifts towards more open, efficient and accountable democratic processes by lowering barriers to entry for all parties." To achieve this, Delib strives to simplify the democratic decision-making process for citizens and public officials alike. Delib believes that depth of engagement – having a few core functions that people use extensively - is more important than breadth of functionality – having lots of bells and whistles that never achieve widespread usage. To encourage adoption by more and more departments over time, Delib charges by site (e.g. a whole county council) rather than by user.

## Ability to Execute

With close to 200 active client sites (in most cases a city or county council, but also including larger sites like the Scottish Government and Northern Ireland), Delib has a substantial customer base.

With nearly 5000 followers across Twitter and LinkedIn, Delib is well represented on social media. In addition, Delib runs regular events, more often than not showing off its humorous side, for example its #DelibRave event in the summer of 2020.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	☆ ☆
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

## Security

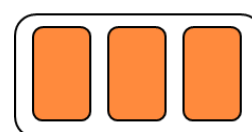
In addition to standard security measures such as https encryption, Delib holds an ISO 27001:2013 certification for information security. User data can be held on dedicated virtual machines in a country of the client's choice, and internal procedures prevent even Delib employees based in other countries from accessing client data.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒 🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Site-wide licences to encourage wide adoption
- Architecture of platform follows privacy-by-design principles
- Proven compliance with a wide range of public sector certifications

## Accessibility



WCAG or similar certification



## Discuto

<http://www.discuto.io>

**Remit  
Score**

69%



### Who should use this?

- Clients needing to create an end-to-end process, from ideation to decision
- Projects that involve a highly technical discussion where the devil is in the detail



### Overview

Founded	2013
CEO	Hannes Leo
Clients	20,000 users

Discuto allows its clients to utilise a policy-centric decision-making process that allows participants to create and co-design policy documents. This is particularly facilitated via a system of up/down voting on aspects or sections of a document. The Austrian company has an impressive list of

customers, including the European Union, the German Bundestag and the Ukrainian Government, alongside private clients such as Telekom Austria.

### Scope of Offering

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗

The Discuto Ideation & Discussion platform allows users to co-create and co-discuss ideas, whether on the basis of an existing document or from scratch. Uploaded documents such as MS word files are automatically split into paragraphs with each paragraph

becoming a discussion where users can suggest changes, add new content or comment and upvote/downvote others' content and comments.

Alternatively, users can start an ideation process from scratch and then allow other users to comment and vote on their ideas. In both cases, a gamification badge system encourages users to interact with the process and contribute their ideas. During and following the discussion process, organisers get a breakdown of popular comments, particularly divisive paragraphs or those attracting consensus, as well as engagement levels. Polls can be set up while a discussion is ongoing to resolve challenging areas by getting more users to chime in. Administrators can also use the system to send nudge emails to users to increase participation.



## Mission / Vision

Discuto's mission is to "facilitate crowd based deliberations that help to insource knowledge for better and more inclusive decisions."

Discuto aims to make collaboration more manageable by breaking down policy documents into small, individual discussions. In addition, by analysing votes and comments on all sections of a draft, Discuto wants to focus collaboration on divisive or complex aspects of a document while accelerating sign-off on sections with strong consensus levels.

## Ability to Execute

Discuto's small team (three developers and one 'marketeer' in addition to the two founders) belies a wealth of experience in both academia and business which doubtlessly helped in securing their already impressive customer list.

Discuto has had very little activity on both traditional and social media channels, but has been able to be quite successful without it. In doing so, it has been able to differentiate itself from widely available collaboration tools (such as GSuite) which lack some of Discuto's functionality.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ★
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>USPs</b>	★ ☆

## Security

All of Discuto's data is stored on German servers (hetzner.com) and Discuto maintains a detailed privacy policy outlining the security and backup arrangements with their hosting provider, as well as the rights of users to request deletion of their data.

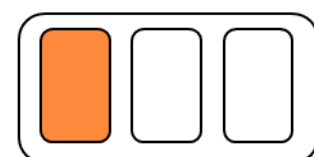
All stored data is encrypted and communication with the server uses https encryption.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒 🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Can adjust to provide the right tool for the right phase in the co-designing process: Ideation to start the process, Discussion to interactively co-create a document and Polling to resolve divisive points or impasses in the process
- Allows for very granular and detailed collaboration on policy documents by splitting documents into paragraphs for discussion and decision

## Accessibility



Not implemented or no information available

## Ethelo Decisions

<http://www.ethelo.com>

Remit  
Score

92%



### Who should use this?

- Anyone who is serious about giving communities a transparent stake in decision-making
- Participatory budgeting projects
- Those with a complex decision to resolve



### Overview

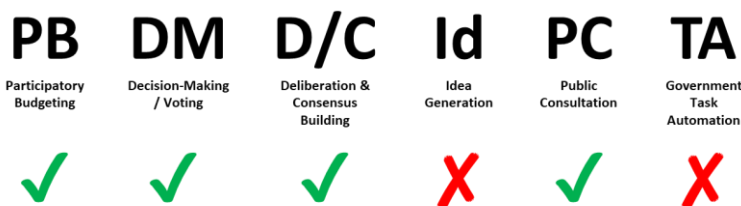
Founded	2011
CEO	John Richardson
Clients	Over 150

Ethelo was founded in 2011 by Canadian mathematician John Richardson to facilitate complex decision-making processes that contain multiple, potentially interdependent, questions. By quickly calculating the potential vote combinations, Ethelo can provide organisers with

recommendations on which outcomes attract the most support, are most or least divisive, or fulfil other criteria (e.g. remain within a certain budget for a participatory budgeting exercise).

The technology was originally used during a referendum in the Canadian province of British Columbia and has since evolved to provide a complex decision engine to both public and private organisations.

### Scope of Offering



Ethelo offers a decision platform that clients can utilise to allow participants to vote on options which the Ethelo algorithm will combine into all the possible scenarios based on rules and constraints. Users vote on several options at a

time and have the ability to weight their answers (e.g. a user may decide to give more weight to their answers on environmental aspects of a decision at the expense of economic aspects or vice versa).

Ethelo then ranks these various scenarios by decision strength and consensus score.

As a consequence, Ethelo is particularly strong in informing organisations as to the most 'fair' outcome of a combined vote, i.e. those scenarios that attract a high level of consensus. Users can add comments and links to external resources, adding a deliberative aspect to the decision-making process.

Since our first review of Ethelo in 2019, the company has acquired Citizen Budget and integrated its Participatory Budgeting functionality into the Ethelo platform. This budgeting tool is particularly impressive: Not only is the unit of measurement freely customisable (which means that it can also be used for any type of budgeting where the unit of measurement isn't money – Carbon Budgeting, for instance), it can also be configured to calculate personalised expenditure budgets (e.g. the property taxes an individual is obligated to pay) and then have the individual virtually allocate their own taxes to items and projects within the budgeting tool. An optional auto-balance tool helps guide the participant towards a balanced budget based on how important different policy areas are to the participant. Finally, Ethelo has brought its expertise in scenario analysis to its PB module as well, allowing clients to choose from budget distribution scenarios based on the level of consensus each of those scenarios attains (i.e. rather than picking individual projects or elements of a budget, the scenario-builder identifies the overarching consolidated budget scenarios that enjoy the most consensus overall, building each element into a cohesive whole and avoiding 'design by committee' pitfalls).

## Mission / Vision

Ethelo wants “to empower people to solve society’s hardest problems using eDemocracy technology.” At the core of its philosophy is “the importance of fairness in the distribution of satisfaction as a precondition for strong social contracts.” While this may sound like a lofty goal, it does have a basis in the concept of “inequity aversion”, or as Ethelo defines it, the concept that “people will (a) reject unfair outcomes even when they would otherwise benefit, and (b) support personally unsatisfactory outcomes because they perceive the process to have been fair.”

Ethelo sees this as an antidote to divisive and partisan electoral politics and believes that its software can help both public and private clients uncover areas of consensus (or at least less division) and ultimately make ‘fairer’ decisions.

## Ability to Execute




With over 150 customer implementations Ethelo is well established in the nascent democracy marketplace. Detailed client testimonials and impact evaluations of past projects speak to the traction of this product. Ethelo sells both through partners and directly to clients. It also maintains a not-for-profit arm, providing its licenses free of charge to community groups. With more than 9 years of experience in the market, positive customer feedback, as well as the recent acquisition of Citizen Budget, a popular PB tool, Ethelo is well placed to expand.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★★★★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★★★★
<b>Experience</b>	★★★★
<b>Workforce</b>	★★☆☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★★★
<b>Social Media</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>USPs</b>	★★★

Its social media exposure is still limited however – while it has increased followers across Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube by about 30% year on year, overall follower numbers are still below 2,000. Ethelo boasts strong USPs, including its ability to transparently display possible outcome scenarios for very complex decisions with multiple factors, as well as the ability to re-weight scenarios using demographic criteria such as age, gender, etc. of participants.

## Security

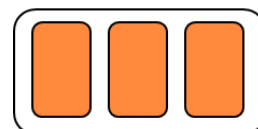
Ethelo offers multi-factor authentication options for sensitive accounts. Clients have a choice between using AWS Cloud Storage, Google Cloud Hosting or a dedicated server in either Canada or the US. Ethelo is also working towards an Ethereum implementation of its solution which will utilise Blockchain.

<b>Encryption</b>	
<b>User Data</b>	
<b>Storage</b>	
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Fully transparent outcome scenarios for even the most complex decisions
- Allows users to weight their votes, making each outcome scenario more meaningful and more accurate in terms of voter preference

## Accessibility



WCAG or similar certification

## Client Feedback

We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from Ethelo's clients with particular praise given to Ethelo's focus on driving diverse engagement and the ability of its new PB solution to represent the budget in terms of the user's personal taxes. While customer service was seen as excellent, areas of improvement include better reporting as well as helping clients develop effective KPIs to measure outcomes.

<b>Expectation Setting</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Advice &amp; Guidance</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Project Success</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Customer Service</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Feedback Loop</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Recommendation</b>	★ ★ ☆

**Novoville**<http://www.novoville.com>**Remit  
Score****77%****Who should use this?**

- Local Authorities that want to automate and streamline repetitive tasks – for citizens and civil servants
- Organisations looking to increase engagement and still get a measurable ROI

**Overview**

Founded	2016
CEO	Fotis Talantzis
Clients	65

Originally founded in Greece, Novoville has now set up its headquarters in London, where its team helps local authorities throughout Europe accelerate and simplify local community tasks, such as logging local issues (think potholes), managing parking tickets and organising online citizen consultations. With AI

chatbots and clever integration of existing technologies, Novoville has carved out a niche by focussing on the day-to-day of local government – while still harbouring grander ambitions.

**Scope of Offering**

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

The Novoville suite of products consists of four distinct solutions:

The e-Frontdesk which allows citizens to report local issues (e.g. broken street signs, fly-tipping, etc.) as well as manage local permits (e.g. marriage licenses);

the Consult & Communicate tool which allows communities to advertise consultations across several social media channels (powered by Novoville's AI Chatbot, which works off scripts to automatically poll users); the Payments App which lets cities collect fees and fines (and allows integration of payment platforms such as ApplePay and PayPal); and finally the Smart Mobility solution which helps citizens do a number of things such as finding (and paying for) parking spots while giving traffic wardens a mobile app to check for and fine parking violations.

All products come with an interactive dashboard (and can be integrated into the same dashboard) to provide a real-time tracking solution for anything happening in the local community. An automated workflow allows councils to define who gets assigned depending on the type of issue, while the overall modular design allows clients to pick and choose which features of Novoville they want to use.

## Mission / Vision

Novoville’s mission is to “rebuild trust between people and government while saving government precious resources.” Its products and services certainly do this (by automating and optimising the various touchpoints between citizens and city administrators), but are currently limited to the local level which Novoville sees as the “front-end” for politics, i.e. where most people feel the impact of politics on their lives.

## Ability to Execute

Despite only a dozen current employees, Novoville has been able to expand from its original Greek base to London and has also delivered projects for over 50 local authorities. Focussing on digitalising existing local authority processes has given Novoville a key advantage: Measureable comparative data points (e.g. 35 % reduction in call centre volume) that Novoville uses effectively in marketing its products.

With ca. 4000 followers on Facebook, >1000 on Twitter and some exposure on YouTube, Novoville has made significant inroads for the awareness of its brand. It is also increasing its stature within the start-up community, having won a number of awards over the past three years (e.g. National Democracy Week’s Collaboration of the Year Award for 2018).

<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ☆
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

## Security

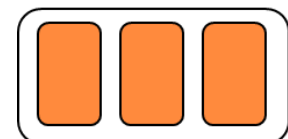
Novoville maintains a standard security and privacy policy and encrypts communication with their service using standard SSL (https). Novoville uses Microsoft Azure for Cloud Storage.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Modular system allows local authorities to only purchase the parts they need while allowing them to add functionality in the future without compatibility issues
- Measurable impact: Thanks to its analytics dashboard and pre-existing comparative data, Novoville can prove the impact of its products quickly
- Ability to integrate new payment platforms, such as ApplePay, GooglePay and Paypal allows payment methods to be continuously updated – saving public administration work and allowing better access for the unbanked/people using novel financial tools

## Accessibility



WCAG or similar certification

## PlaceSpeak

<https://www.placespeak.com>

Remit  
Score

84%



### Who should use this?

- Organisers that want to strongly tie participation to geographic location
- Anyone who wants to create and maintain a community of users that exists outside of specific projects



### Overview

Founded	2012
CEO	Colleen Hardwick
Clients	25

PlaceSpeak is a public consultation platform that uses geo-spatial authentication to identify location-specific user groups. This allows clients, primarily local authorities, to target consultations at specific neighbourhoods to more accurately understand local feedback on proposed projects.

The company started in Vancouver, Canada and now serves over 30 communities across Canada, the United States and Northern Ireland.

### Scope of Offering

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

The starting point for every PlaceSpeak consultation is the Overview page where the organisers can upload text, images and videos to explain the background and process of their consultation. A map of the consultation area can also be included.

Additional documents (e.g. maps, previous community reports, etc.) can be uploaded to the Resources Folder page. Organisers can then add: Discussions (where participants can answer questions, comment and upvote/downvote previous comments); Noticeboards (where participants can leave free text comments); Placelt (where users can report issues or ideas by placing tags on a map); Events (where organisers can advertise e.g. public meetings); and Polls (which collects survey data from participants). The organisers can decide who can take part in every aspect and can limit participation by location boundaries. PlaceSpeak uses the methodology of the Digital Identification and Authentication Council of Canada (DIACC) to confirm the exact geographic location of every participant.



This allows for validation of location using address data from telecommunication and utility providers, while giving the user full control over what data they want to share. Additional privacy controls ensure that organisers cannot identify individual contributors.

A key feature is that participants can choose to participate in several consultations happening in their physical area and are updated by the software about upcoming consultations. PlaceSpeak even auto-generates so-called ‘Seed’ consultations from public consultation data – once a pre-set threshold of users expresses an interest in participating, PlaceSpeak automatically notifies the local authority to consider a consultation.

## Mission / Vision

PlaceSpeak’s mission is to “promote authentic meaningful dialogue on local issues”. The company name derives from the idea of people claiming their physical space (their neighbourhood, community, etc.) and – resulting from the sense of community – finding their voice. As a commercial vendor, much of the marketing information today focusses on the value to customers, but the original vision of empowering citizens is still reflected in the architecture of the software itself: rather than starting with an organisation and then building an audience, PlaceSpeak encourages citizens to sign up first – and then be alerted to organisations running consultations in their area.

## Ability to Execute

PlaceSpeak was built with the collaboration of three Canadian universities, but now maintains less than five employees. For such a small number of staff, PlaceSpeak’s reach is significant with over 30 communities having at some stage run projects on the platform, all of which are minutely documented on the website’s extensive Case Studies section: From securing night filming permission for RoboCop (city regulations required a consultation before granting permission) to predicting a referendum result with greater accuracy than two major polling companies, to countless projects about parks, housing and public health, PlaceSpeak has much to be proud of.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ★
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

Recently its SentiMap technology, which connects participants to geographic locations, won the 2018 SAP Partner Award (SentiMap runs on SAP HANA) and its partnership with SurveyGizmo significantly expanded its ability to integrate surveys. PlaceSpeak also launched a Geo API and Wordpress plug-in which allows others to utilise its geo-data in anonymised form.

PlaceSpeak successfully utilises its projects to gain local newspaper coverage, and its social media reach is substantial with more than 6000 engagements (followers / subscribers) across Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

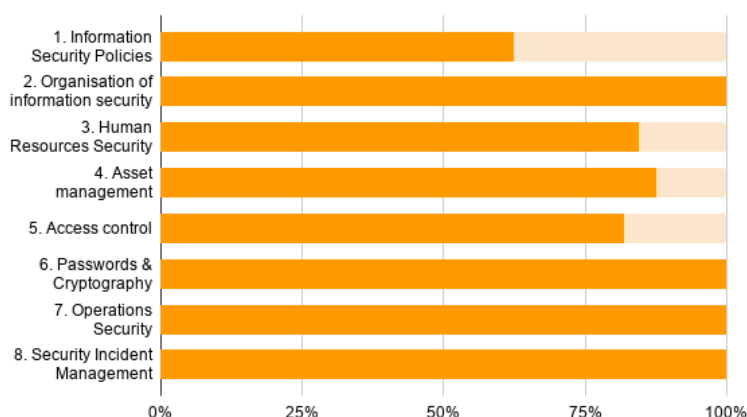


## Security

PlaceSpeak has implemented a 'Privacy by Design' architecture based on the work of Dr. Ann Cavoukian which enforces strict privacy controls throughout the product lifecycle.

PlaceSpeak's user data is hosted in Canada and enterprise users have the ability to choose a data centre in their province for sensitive data. Communication with the site is secured via https and passwords are encrypted.

PlaceSpeak participated in this year's Security Assessment and achieved consistently high scores throughout, with some room for improvement around the formalisation of IT Security policies.



**Encryption**

**User Data**

**Storage**

**Blockchain** n/a

Overall Security  
Assessment Score

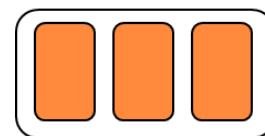
91%

Security is incorporated into PlaceSpeak's employee onboarding training as well as formalised as part of their Employee Handbook. In 2020, PlaceSpeak asked an academic institution to analyse its security setup, demonstrating that security enjoys a high level of priority at PlaceSpeak.

## Standout Features

- Links users to physical places without revealing that location to clients
- Concept of 'Seed' consultations builds groundswell among users to nudge local authorities to engage digitally

## Accessibility



WCAG or similar  
certification

## Client Feedback

Overall, client feedback for PlaceSpeak has been very positive, with clients particularly lauding PlaceSpeak's ability to map users geographically.

Some feedback asked for more sophisticated reporting of outcomes, with others noting that while customer service is very responsive, a more defined service level agreement could be helpful to understand when (and when not) clients could call on PlaceSpeak to engage directly with users.

**Expectation Setting** ★★☆☆

**Advice & Guidance** ★★★★★

**Project Success** ★★★★★

**Customer Service** ★★★★★

**Feedback Loop** ★★★★★

**Recommendation** ★★★★★

**Polco**<http://www.polco.us>**Remit  
Score****76%****Who should use this?**

- Planners and politicians who want to gauge voter sentiment on straight-forward questions
- Politicians who want to ensure they are listening to registered voters

**Overview**

Founded	2015
CEO	Nick Mastronardi
Clients	>500 Communities

Polco started out as a US national vote tracking platform that allowed voters to see how their political representatives voted on bills and then compare this to the voters' own political preferences.

Since then Polco has evolved into a full-fledged civic engagement platform with particular focus on local government and community activation.

**Scope of Offering**

<b>PB</b>	<b>DM</b>	<b>D/C</b>	<b>Id</b>	<b>PC</b>	<b>TA</b>
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗

Polco's platform allows decision-makers (e.g. city councils, town boards) to get input into political decisions from residents in their districts. Decisions are made up of questions and what Polco calls 'background

information': text, images, videos and links to documents that help to inform the voter.

Participants can answer questions posed as a simple yes/no or as multiple choice options. Organisers can access extensive analytics to understand voter sentiment. Of particular note is the ability to compare voter profiles against registered voter lists which allows Polco to display the geographic distribution of voter sentiment. This helps to surface the impact a decision could have on different subsets of a community.

While Polco does not have its own participatory budgeting software, communities can integrate Balancing Act's participatory budgeting tool which helps users understand the current distribution of funds and then allows them to give recommendations as to how they should be distributed in future.

Polco's freemium business model (some functionality is available at no cost to local communities) has fuelled a rapid expansion (Polco is used by over 500 communities across the United States). With its modern interface and fully mobile-enabled platform, Polco is well positioned for rapid adoption.

## Mission / Vision

Polco's mission is to "help organizational leaders and constituents seek and provide quality input on important items". The software seeks to do this by gathering input from as many people as possible (not just the most passionate and vocal) and by encouraging people to be civil and constructive in providing their input. The latter is achieved by requiring participants to vote first and only then allowing them to provide a comment on the matter at hand. By following this approach, Polco hopes to ensure that people have a say in the decisions that affect them.

Polco's method of tying discussions to actual votes, as well as strong commitment to protecting the privacy of those giving input, convincingly creates an incentive for voters to share their opinions, and makes it harder for elected officials to ignore them.

## Ability to Execute

Polco's expertise lies in data and this shows in the structure of the company. Not only does Polco employ a dedicated team of research analysts, it also boasts its own research institute, the National Research Centre (NRC), acquired in 2019. Owing to its freemium business model, Polco already has a wide reach, with over 500 communities using its free or paid services.

Polco's unique selling points, such as its ability to geo-map support levels for a certain decision, have helped it appeal to political decision-makers, culminating in a (self-reported) customer retention rate of 70%.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★★★★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★★★★
<b>Experience</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>Workforce</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>Social Media</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>USPs</b>	★★★☆☆

## Security

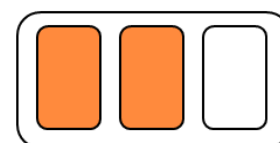
Polco maintains a detailed privacy policy and its approach is designed to protect individually identifiable voter data from both its clients and third parties. Polco uses standard website encryption and gives its users control over third-party cookies and tracking. All Polco data is stored on AWS Cloud Storage.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Able to measure and visualise geographic distribution of voter sentiment, e.g. by electoral district
- Can compare user groups voting on the platform with publicly available voter lists or other lists provided by the client, creating politically actionable datasets for every decision

## Accessibility



Considered in implementation but no active certifications

## Rousseau

<https://rousseau.movimento5stelle.it/>

Remit  
Score

77%



### Who should use this?

- Political parties and movements that want more member participation and control
- Very large organisations that need a scalable tool capable of handling tens of thousands of users



### Overview

Founded	2016
CEO	Davide Casaleggio
Clients	1 (over 120k active voters)

Rousseau is the brainchild of the late Gianroberto Casaleggio, a well-known visionary in Italy, who together with comedian Beppe Grillo founded the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S or Five Star Movement), a political movement currently part of the Italian government coalition.

Now run by Gianroberto's son Davide, Rousseau is used by members of the M5S to discuss and vote on the political policies of the movement and has had an impressive run, inter alia, setting the world record for most online votes on a single day when 80,000 members voted on the government coalition agreement. Rousseau is now looking to offer its services to movements in other countries.

### Scope of Offering

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

Rousseau has a number of different modules, all of which are designed to enable M5S's members to influence the policy direction of the movement.

The module Lex Parlamento is used by M5S MPs to discuss proposed laws, while the Lex Iscritti function can be used by any member of the party to propose a new law. At pre-determined intervals, the two member proposals with the most votes on Lex Iscritti get taken to parliament. A third module facilitates the selection of candidates for political offices (thus far M5S has over 1,500 local councillors and 300 MPs). For the selection process, candidates can choose to display what M5S calls merits – badges displayed on their profile to indicate expertise in a certain area such as economics, energy, etc.

These merit badges can be obtained by verifying a relevant degree, showing evidence of work experience in a certain area, or by completing online courses on the website. These are then used to determine the order in which candidates are displayed for voting by members.

Those candidates who receive the greatest number of member votes are then selected to run for office on behalf of the movement, subject to a background check (e.g. no criminal record, etc.). Rousseau is also used by M5S to create party policy with members able to contribute ideas and vote on different policy proposals. Finally, Rousseau's eLearning module, with courses such as "How to be an MP", "How to read a public balance sheet", etc. seeks to make it easier for members to enter the political process.

## Mission / Vision

At the centre of Rousseau's vision is a quote from its founder, Gianroberto Casaleggio: "the web does not replace the physical place, but integrates and completes it".

Rousseau seeks to enhance this physical place with new models of citizen participation, collective intelligence and direct democracy. The platform has been particularly successful in turning online collaboration and engagement into offline engagement, with members of M5S confirming that they also meet people they initially met on the platform in real life.

## Ability to Execute

While technically only serving one current customer (The 5-Star-Movement), Rousseau has done so on multiple governmental levels (local, regional, national, EU level) with hundreds of thousands of participants across the different areas of the platform. It has operated under great scrutiny both from the political establishment in Italy and abroad as well as its 187,000 certified platform users and millions of voters. As a consequence Rousseau is by no means a start-up, having evolved the platform in response to hundreds of real-life scenarios.





<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	☆ ☆
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

Among Rousseau's greatest assets is its social media reach with close to 50,000 Facebook followers and 4,000 Twitter followers, as well as its highly professional marketing abilities.

## Security

Rousseau's security setup can best be described as 'battle-hardened', owing to the large number of attempts which have been made to hack the platform (at some stage a weekly occurrence). Besides the usual https encryption of its website, Rousseau uses two-factor authentication (email + phone), locks all access to its databases while a vote is ongoing, and has each vote supervised and certified by a notary to ensure that the proper process was followed. Rousseau has also developed an internal algorithm that flags suspicious user activity on the platform.

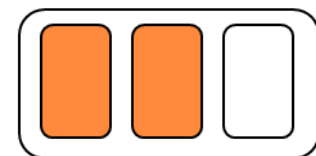
While Rousseau demonstrated a working model of porting their voting system to Blockchain at a Hackathon in 2019, it is not yet being used on the live platform.

<b>Encryption</b>	
<b>User Data</b>	
<b>Storage</b>	 
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- One of the few solutions on the market that provides a constructive pathway for mass, digital governance and that meaningfully empowers people via traditional representative democratic structures
- Proven ability to handle tens or even hundreds of thousands of participants concurrently
- All-around functionality, including candidate selection, policy proposals, and scrutiny of laws

## Accessibility



Considered in implementation but no active certifications

## Client Feedback

As Rousseau is currently only implemented as the party-internal decision-platform for M5S, we spoke to party members who have used the platform. Overall, the feedback was extremely positive, with members commenting on how frequently Rousseau seeks feedback from members to improve the platform, the eLearning element of the site, as well as the underpinning security. Members tended to enthusiastically emphasize that Rousseau had fundamentally changed their relationship with politics and that they desired even more participation. One element members felt Rousseau could improve was to empower members generally to initiate votes on issues rather than having the initiative-power rest in a committee as is presently the case under M5S's rules.

<b>Expectation Setting</b>	n/a
<b>Advice &amp; Guidance</b>	n/a
<b>Project Success</b>	★★★★
<b>Customer Service</b>	★★★★
<b>Feedback Loop</b>	★★★★
<b>Recommendation</b>	★★★★☆

**democracy.space**<http://www.democracy.space>**Remit  
Score****55%****Who should use this?**

- Political candidates committed to enacting the expressed will of their constituents
- Groups who want to use the Petition feature to build awareness and pressure on political issues

**Overview**

Founded	2016
CEO	David Ernst
Clients	10

democracy.space, formerly known as United.vote and Liquid.us, is a US-centric implementation of the Liquid Democracy approach, in which voters can choose to either directly vote on a given measure or to delegate their vote to someone they consider more knowledgeable in that area. Though similar to

tools like LiquidFeedback used by a number of Pirate Parties around the world, democracy.space is a stand-alone application that also includes cryptographic protection of voter information using Blockchain.

**Scope of Offering**

<b>PB</b>	<b>DM</b>	<b>D/C</b>	<b>Id</b>	<b>PC</b>	<b>TA</b>
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
<b>X</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

democracy.space provides a simple interface to vote for or against a motion – currently these are primarily bills introduced to the U.S. Congress which are uploaded to the website.

Users can add comments to justify their vote and provide information for undecided voters. Users can decide to remain anonymous or publicly reveal their identity as part of the voting process. democracy.space also allows users to initiate petitions which other users can sign and comment on.

democracy.space's strength lies in its approach to protecting individual votes while making it possible for voters to confirm that their vote hasn't been altered. This is achieved by calculating a unique hash from a user registration ID, a unique email and a passphrase. In its current implementation using U.S. Congress data, democracy.space also provides an overview of how elected representatives actually voted and allows users to contrast this with the input derived from voters.



## Mission / Vision

democracy.space's ultimate goal is a "system that improves education and debate around issues, ensures the political process enacts the will of the people and upends the dominance of money and partisanship in politics".

Founder David Ernst has also been gathering a network of candidates to run on his Liquid Democracy platform in Senate and even Presidential elections. If elected to office, these candidates have pledged to let voters steer the candidate's vote on every issue.

Since we last reviewed democracy.space in 2019, few changes have been made to the platform, as the team behind democracy.space is focussed on creating a secure platform for internet voting – SIV, which we cover towards the end of this report.

## Ability to Execute

For a relatively small company, democracy.space has attracted a lot of interest, not least by the half dozen candidates actively using the software in their electoral races. While the software still lacks some of the functionality of other product suites, the simplicity of the setup and the ability for political campaigns to quickly integrate the system into their website has the potential to spread quickly.

To do that, democracy.space requires exposure (apart from a limited Youtube channel the organisation does very little marketing), but even one of their candidates winning a seat could change this overnight.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★☆☆
<b>Case Studies</b>	★☆☆
<b>Experience</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>Workforce</b>	★★☆☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★★★☆☆
<b>Social Media</b>	☆☆☆☆
<b>USPs</b>	★★☆☆

## Security

democracy.space uses standard https encryption. The software allows users to create an account without a password, instead assigning single-use sign on codes for every session. It also collects additional identifying information (such as address and phone number) to verify eligibility to vote in a certain district. The public facing website is hosted in the US.

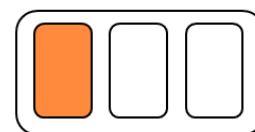
democracy.space uses Blockchain to store voting records.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	🔒🔒

## Standout Features

- Simple layout and intuitive set-up
- Website widget that allows candidates to integrate Liquid Democracy into their campaign

## Accessibility



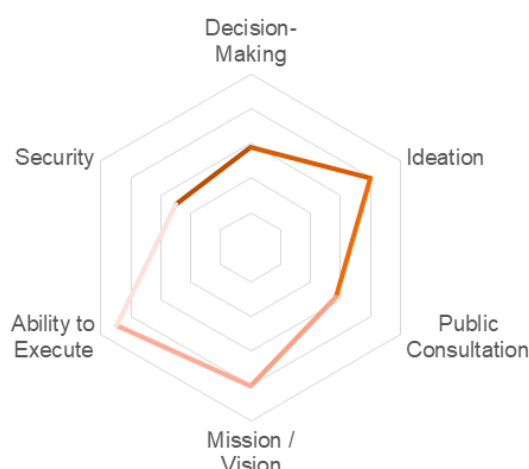
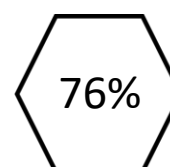
Not implemented or no information available



## MyVoice

<https://manabalss.lv>

Remit  
Score



### Who should use this?

- Government entities that want to open the legislative process to citizens
- Political parties who want to gauge support for policy proposals



### Overview

Founded	2011
CEO	Imants Breidaks
Clients	>300,000 users

MyVoice (ManaBalss in Latvian) is a public participation platform that allows Latvian citizens to submit and collect signatures for legislative proposals on the national, regional and municipal level. Set up in 2011 in Latvia, ManaBalss now has a sister website for Ukraine

and advises the North Macedonian Government on a similar solution. Out of the 59 proposals that were initiated on ManaBalss and presented to parliament, 36 have led to legislative change (a success rate of 66%).

### Scope of Offering

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
X	✓	X	✓	✓	X

Any citizen of Latvia who is over the age of 16 can create a suggestion for legislation on the ManaBalss website. As long as the proposal does not contravene higher-ranking law, provides a solution and includes a plan of action, volunteer

experts and lawyers will be assigned to turn the suggestion into a formal proposal. All active proposals are then visible on the ManaBalss platform, with the most 'dynamic' petitions, i.e. those attracting the most signatures in recent days, at the top.

Citizens can sign initiatives by authenticating their identity using their online bank account (a common authentication method in Latvia), the official Latvian eSignature system or via "iDenfy", an authentication tool developed by ManaBalss for Latvian citizens who cannot access the eSignature system. A cleverly integrated micro-donation system allows citizens to donate towards the upkeep of the platform after they sign a petition. A social media sharing function helps to promote initiatives, with most of ManaBalss's traffic originating on social media.

Users may choose to sign (or not sign) petitions in their entirety – there is currently no option to leave comments. Under Latvian law, petitions which attract 10,000 or more signatures must be voted on by the parliament, with the initiator of the petition allowed to nominate experts to testify on the topic to the parliament.

While the platform is free to use for private citizens and non-profit organisations, companies and political parties can (and do) use the platform for a cost (currently between 2-5k EUR per initiative).

## Mission / Vision

ManaBalss's vision is to use electronic participation tools to capture public opinion and to facilitate proposals for significant change – thereby promoting the development of a civil society.

## Ability to Execute

ManaBalss has enjoyed a meteoric rise. Over 1.5 million votes have been cast across 1,700 initiatives with the most popular initiative attracting over 55,000 signatures. ManaBalss has a strong brand in Latvia, even hosting a TV show for three years where proponents and opponents of currently active petitions publicly debated the issues.

With over 6,000 followers across social media, including regional social network Draugiem, ManaBalss is strongly positioned in Latvia and, through its sister project Miivibir, also gaining a foothold in Ukraine.

With only 7 permanent employees, ManaBalss is punching above its weight – but will likely need to grow its revenue base to expand further.

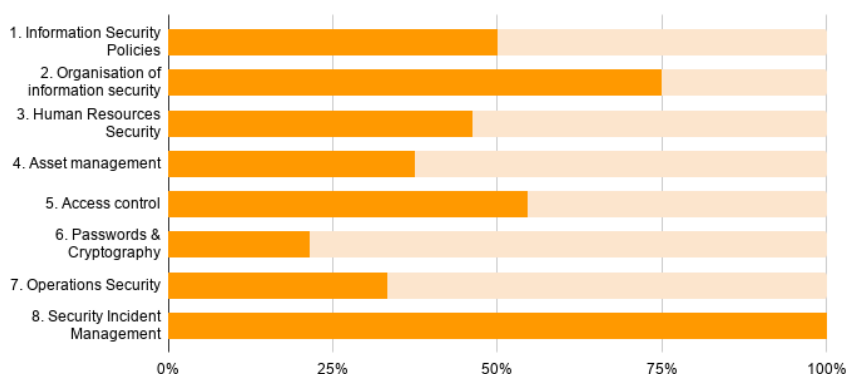
<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ☆
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

## Security

ManaBalss uses standard SSL encryption on the platform. While ManaBalss authenticates users using their bank login or electronic ID, it does not verify whether a user is a citizen or over the age of 16. Instead it passes the data to the government who then verify this information with the participating banks.

ManaBalss participated in this year's security survey and performed particularly well in IT Security Organisation as well as Incident Management, although there is room for improvement in its handling of Asset Management, Operations Security and Cryptographic Controls.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒 🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a



Overall Security  
Assessment Score

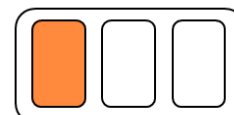
47%

ManaBalss has, as of yet, limited formal policies governing security, although security is regularly discussed as part of 1:1 and group discussions, and particularly enforced when it comes to de-provisioning account access when employees change roles or leave the organisation. While there is room to improve formal security processes, this is balanced by the fact that any successful petition is still audited by the Latvian government to ensure the validity of votes, as well as by the fact that ManaBalss's integration with the existing authentication procedure offered via online banks protects the integrity of the process.

## Standout Features

- Full lifecycle e-petition solution with a focus on the feasibility of policy proposals
- Deep integration with online banking software allowing for authentication and micro-donations

## Accessibility



Not implemented or no  
information available

## Client Feedback

ManaBalss received outstanding overall feedback from the users we spoke to, with particular praise given to the transparency and simplicity of the platform. Customer service was consistently highlighted, with ManaBalss even helping to organise press coverage for projects. While strictly outside the control of ManaBalss, initiators raised concerns about the lack of follow-through from the national government on some proposals. These concerns should, however, be balanced against the detailed success stories ManaBalss have documented on their website and the evidence of government follow-through on a large percentage of proposals.

**Expectation Setting** ★★★★★

**Advice & Guidance** ★★★★☆

**Project Success** ★★★★☆

**Customer Service** ★★★★★

**Feedback Loop** ★★★★★

**Recommendation** ★★★★★

**politik-digital e.V.**  
<http://aula-blog.website>

**Remit  
Score**

67%



### Who should use this?

- Schools and other childrens' organisations
- Those who want an open-source solution



### Overview

Founded	1998
CEO	Dr. Steffen Wenzel
Clients	20

Politik-digital is a German not-for-profit organisation. Its school-based democracy platform Aula is led by Marina Weisband, a former leading member of the German Pirate Party.

### Scope of Offering

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
X	✓	✓	✓	X	X

Politik-digital's school democracy platform Aula has been designed to give pupils a greater say in the day-to-day running of their school.

Aula works with schools to create a legally non-binding 'contract' in which the school agrees to implement ideas from the pupils as long as they are within the competency of the school, are feasible to implement and receive a certain quorum and the majority vote of pupils. Pupils can then brainstorm ('wild ideas' phase), ideate together with a school appointed moderator (often a teacher or a student representative), submit the idea for approval by the school and then put it to a vote. Following a positive vote, the originator of the idea then works with other pupils and teachers to implement it. Finally, all participants review the project and identify key learnings for future votes.

A key strength of the Aula system is that every component has been designed to drive accountability for the students and the school: No vote is put forward unless it is possible to implement (thereby avoiding the frustration of holding a pointless vote); the school administration agrees to refrain from blocking votes as long as they are within the agreed remit; and the originators themselves lead the implementation. Aula also provides a 60-page guide book, as well as slide decks for schools and teachers to help run the project and align it to desired learning outcomes.

A simple interface guides pupils through every step of the process. Participants can comment, up-vote / down-vote and even change or withdraw their vote while voting is open.

Aula is open-source software published under AGPLv3 license.

## Mission / Vision

What on the surface looks like a simple platform for pupils, teachers and education officials to communicate more effectively, also inculcates a deeper understanding of democratic processes. This enables – as Politik-digital puts it – the “education of responsible citizens” and develops competencies in the areas of communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

## Ability to Execute

While the core team is small (only three employees are listed on its website), Politik-digital have created an extensive network of advisors, partners and ambassadors (school officials, teachers, etc.) to help promote its vision.

With 20 existing clients and over 5000 followers for their Aula social media accounts (and over 20k for the organisation), Politik-digital is well-positioned to grow its client base.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Workforce</b>	☆ ☆ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ★
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

## Security

The Aula web portal uses standard https encryption and maintains a standard policy for handling user data. One time passwords can be used to increase security.

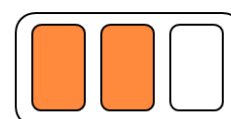
Aula does not use Blockchain.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒 🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Drives accountability throughout every step of the process
- Step-by-step guide for teachers and administrators

## Accessibility



Considered in implementation but no active certifications

**Polys**<http://www.polys.me>**Remit  
Score****63%****Who should use this?**

- Anyone wanting to get rid of paper ballots
- Simple participatory budgeting projects
- Those who want to set up a vote quickly and securely

**Overview**

Founded	2017 (part of Kaspersky)
CEO	Eugene Kaspersky
Clients	30 major + 100s of smaller projects

Polys was created by Kaspersky's internal Business Incubator Division to address concerns surrounding the security of online voting. As one of the world's leading online security companies, Kaspersky is well placed to tackle this challenge – and its embrace of Blockchain gives it the technology it needs to do so.

Initially, Polys was primarily used for online votes at conferences and universities, as well as for participatory budgeting projects with large numbers of participants. However, since we reviewed Polys for the first time in 2019, they have expanded into large municipal and regional projects, such as the Moscow City Parliament elections of 2019, as well as remote voting for the regions of Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod (where over 250k votes were cast) in the recent Russian constitutional referendums of 2020. The technology has also been used, along with video conferencing, by the Russian Supreme Court to continue its operations during the coronavirus pandemic. Polys is also in talks with several countries to put their technology to the test at a national level.

**Scope of Offering**

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

The Polys platform allows organisers to quickly set up votes and supports single selection, multiple selection and ranked voting. This allows it to accommodate a wide range of voting systems (first-past-the-post, single transferable vote, mixed-member proportional voting, etc.)

Of particular note is Polys' ability to show the progress of an election (i.e. how many people have voted so far) in real-time while keeping the result secret until polling has ended. Polys can also issue individual, physical voting tokens for extra security.

The real magic happens behind the scenes, however, where Polys uses a sophisticated implementation of Blockchain technology (using specialised provider Exonum) to secure and distribute the voting ledger. Voting outcomes are only revealed once all observers (political parties, candidate representatives, etc.) have computationally validated that the voting ledger has not been modified and once the voting window has closed (so as to not influence voters who haven't voted yet). At the same time, every voter can validate that their vote has been correctly counted by logging into their account which is automatically created when a user votes for the first time.

## Mission / Vision

Polys wants to transfer paper-based voting processes online, believing that there is a resurgent interest in democracy and citizen participation, but that this energy is kept at bay by doubts over the security of online voting. By providing a secure, Blockchain-enabled voting platform, Polys hopes to change this and digitalise the conventional process of selecting leaders or conducting simple participatory budgeting exercises.

## Ability to Execute

Polys is fully funded and operated by Kaspersky Lab – an organisation of 4000 employees, and this shows in the professional set up of the Polys project team, complete with product management, development, sales and marketing teams. Polys has patented the technology which allows it to store voting data on the Blockchain while keeping individual votes secret (patented in Russia and patent pending in the US, Japan and China), and has published an extensive white paper detailing security.

Polys has a number of large success stories, including a PB project with over 80,000 participants and a university election where over 1,000 students completed the vote in less than 12 hours.

While the marketing is professional (case studies, website as well as an animated video explaining the software), Polys' social media presence is still limited with just a little over a thousand followers across major social media sites.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ★
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ★ ☆
<b>USPs</b>	★ ☆

## Security

Security is where Polys is to the fore of many other vendors. Not only does it utilise industry-standard encryption and offer a full privacy policy, all voting data is directly stored on Blockchain. While voting outcomes (and the number of voters) are public, the privacy of individual votes is protected by encryption.

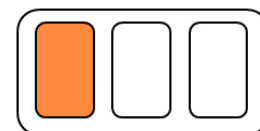
<b>Encryption</b>	
<b>User Data</b>	
<b>Storage</b>	
<b>Blockchain</b>	

Polys participated in part of this year's Security Analysis. While we did not receive information in all areas due to time constraints, what we were able to analyse is consistent with what one would expect from a subsidiary of a major internet security organisation, with strong performances across IT Security Organisation, Incident Management and Cryptographic Controls. Polys runs annual online courses for all of its employees to stay on top of information security.

## Standout Features

- Extremely simple interface, allowing anyone to set up decisions quickly and share the voting process (and outcomes) with an audience in real-time
- Maintains the secrecy of the vote while allowing voters to verify that their vote has not been manipulated

## Accessibility



Not implemented or no information available

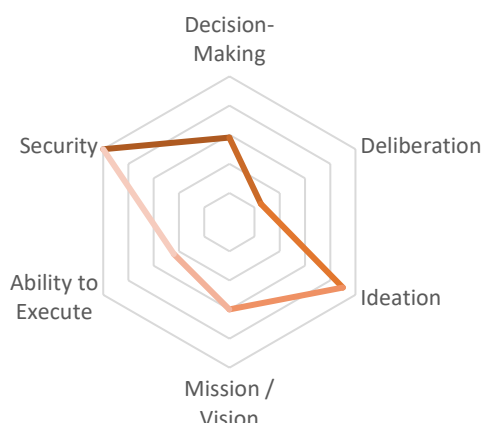


# Rahvaalgatus

<https://rahvaalgatus.ee/>

Remit  
Score

56%



## Who should use this?

- Anyone interested in crowdsourcing proposals (legislative or otherwise)
- Those looking for a platform that provides an end-to-end environment for the serious user to initiate, discuss and vote on proposals
- Those who prioritize an open-source solution



## Overview

Founded	2016
CEO	Kairi Tilga (ECA)
Clients	172,000 signatures

The Rahvaalgatus.ee platform (Estonian for Citizen Initiative Portal) was set up by The Estonian Cooperation Assembly (ECA), with funding by the Estonian President's office, to implement a law, passed in 2014, that allows residents of Estonia to propose and sign collective

proposals for the government to consider. If 1,000 residents sign the proposal (or 1% of voting age residents for local proposals) it must be debated by the Estonian parliament (for national issues) or by the relevant local authority. Over 140 proposals have been submitted via the platform with over 140,000 signatures collected.

## Scope of Offering

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
X	✓	✓	✓	X	X

Any user can upload a proposal and discuss it with other users to create a draft bill. Users can also link to external documents to inform the debate. Once a proposed measure has been finalised, users can vote on it, as well as leave public comments. Any

proposal that reaches the required threshold is then submitted to the Parliament or local authority. All votes are digitally signed to ensure that users are authorised to vote. After a proposal is submitted to the parliamentary committee, ECA continues to track its progress by publishing updates on the legislative process as well any government documents, responses, etc. to the proposal.

## Mission / Vision

Rahvaalgatus.ee has its origins in the Estonian People's Assembly of 2014, a platform aimed at crowdsourcing ideas and proposals to amend Estonian laws related to the practice of democracy (eg. electoral laws). Its aim is to create "more possibilities for citizens to engage in policy-making between (and in addition to) elections". By providing a transparent record of what happens with proposals raised on the platform, Rahvaalgatus.ee hopes to break what it calls the "vicious circle of distrust", where citizens don't engage with the legislative process, because they have not seen follow-up on previous proposals.

## Ability to Execute

While Rahvaalgatus.ee is currently only used in Estonia, the platform has been released as open source. The open source licence conditions also allow commercial use and the platform could thus easily be adapted to other countries and customers.

With a small workforce and limited exposure (less than 1,000 followers across Social Media), Rahvaalgatus.ee has some way to go to build awareness.

Yet the simplicity of the platform and the transparency it provides for citizen-initiated legislation make Rahvaalgatus.ee a compelling offering for countries looking to deepen citizen participation.



## Security

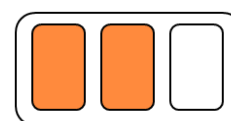
Rahvaalgatus.ee is able to leverage Estonia's advanced public digital infrastructure to fit seamlessly into the national digital architecture. This includes using the national digital signature process to sign proposals, as well as the national data processing and privacy procedures which utilise blockchain. Digital signatures submitted via Rahvaalgatus.ee are verified against the national register by government officials. Users can delete their user account and all associated data.



## Standout Features

- Full ideation process prior to submission – leading to well-articulated proposals
- Transparent process along the entire lifecycle of an initiative

## Accessibility



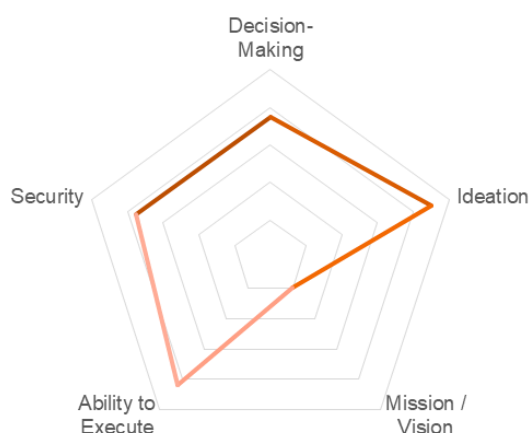
Considered in implementation but no active certifications

## Slido

<http://www.sli.do>

Remit  
Score

68%



### Who should use this?

- Organisations that want to enhance participation in face-to-face or virtual meetings and gain fixed data points (e.g. poll results) that can structure and focus a conversation



### Overview

Founded	2012
CEO	Peter Komorník
Clients	Undisclosed (used at over 1,000,000 events)

Slido is an audience engagement platform that allows organisers to pose questions, polls and quizzes to participants. Headquartered in Slovakia, Slido now has offices in the UK and the US and has been used at over 1 Million events with nearly 25 million poll votes submitted using the system. Slido has been used in over 120 countries and counts

companies like Lufthansa, Oracle and the BBC among its clients.

### Scope of Offering

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
X	✓	X	✓	X	X

Slido offers its customers multiple ways to engage with their audience: Questions (where the audience can ask and vote on existing questions – with the ability for a moderator to select a subset to display on stage); Surveys & Polls (which can be single choice, multiple choice, open text, word cloud or star rating); Quizzes (which can be used with automatic timers); and Ideas (which let participants start from a blank canvas and add ideas, comments and vote on other ideas).

For all engagement types, results update in real time on the screen, nudging other participants to engage and creating a gamification feel to the experience.

Slido comes with full integration with Google Slides, Power Point and Microsoft Teams, allows clients to embed live video and even offers a Switcher app which allows organisers to seamlessly switch between PowerPoint and Slido. The comprehensive analytics tool lets organisers understand the most popular questions, identify influencers in the audience and share data with the audience using infographics.

## Mission / Vision

Slido's mission is "to transform how meetings and events are run around the world". For a software solution primarily designed for the corporate world, Slido certainly offers increased participation for employees and conference attendees and some of the features (e.g. the ability to comment or submit ideas anonymously) strengthen an honest exchange of information. Slido's focus remains on the employer side, allowing companies to partially choreograph participation by filtering the information the audience can see. All of this makes sense from a commercial point of view, but underlines that Slido is more engaged in corporate evolution than political participation per se, despite significant crossover functionality (e.g. in facilitating discussion and handling information flows) that could be applied in more public contexts.

## Ability to Execute

Slido has successfully established itself as a leader in the audience engagement space, with numerous corporations and major events (e.g. the WebSummit) relying on its technology for attendee engagement. With a workforce of over 140 employees, Slido is well positioned to continue to dominate this niche. Slido's integration with other industry-leading applications (e.g. GSuite) makes it an attractive proposition for corporate clients already using these products. Slido has a substantial media presence with over 32,000 followers across social media. It has received numerous awards inside the tech and conference industry (e.g. the 2018 Deloitte Technology Fast 50 Laureate).

<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ☆
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

## Security

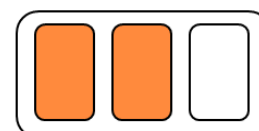
Slido uses 256-bit encryption for storage and data transfer and offers integration with multiple Single-Sign-On solutions (Google OAuth, OneLogin, etc.). All data is hosted on AWS servers in Ireland.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Switcher app that allows organisers to seamlessly transition between PowerPoint and Slido
- Real-time audience updates to create an interactive experience for audiences

## Accessibility



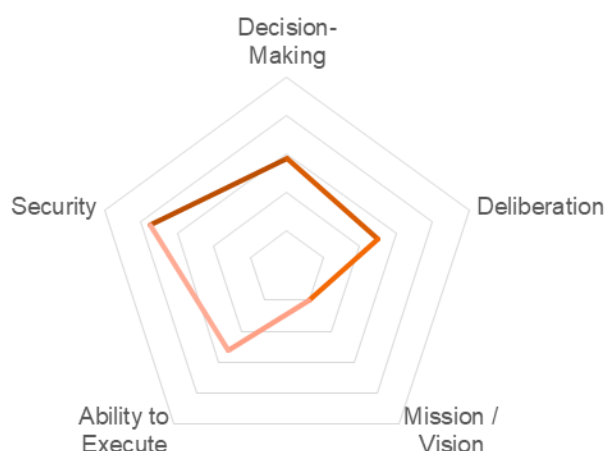
Considered in implementation but no active certifications

## VoxVote

<http://www.voxvote.com>

Remit  
Score

47%



### Who should use this?

- Anyone looking for a sophisticated software with wide functionality for live audience interaction



### Overview

Founded	2013
CEO	Vincent van Witteloostuyn
Clients	>80,000 users

Founded in 2013, VoxVote is the creation of Dutch data scientist Vincent van Witteloostuyn. It aims to replace the need for clickers and similar physical voting devices during audience participation at conferences. Drawing on his background in market research and data analytics, van Witteloostuyn and

his small team have turned VoxVote into a highly customisable tool to get actionable audience feedback.

### Scope of Offering

PB	DM	D/C	Id	PC	TA
Participatory Budgeting	Decision-Making / Voting	Deliberation & Consensus Building	Idea Generation	Public Consultation	Government Task Automation
X	✓	✓	X	X	X

VoxVote is a straightforward product that allows presenters to pose questions onstage which the audience can answer by either going to a website or by using an app on their mobile phones. The presenter can then display the outcomes on screen, along with

customisable text and images. Its look and feel is designed to mimic a Powerpoint presentation which allows presenters to seamlessly move in and out of their presentation to ask questions.

However, beyond the simple façade, VoxVote is a sophisticated survey product, allowing presenters to utilise simple and multiple choice questions, scored ranking, weighted averages, word clouds and free text questions. In addition, the software can merge results from several questions (called 'crossing' by VoxVote). Its mobile app also allows audience members to ask private questions to the presenter which can then be clarified as part of the presentation.

Owing to the range of question methods (and its freemium business model), VoxVote is particularly popular with academic institutions and maintains a list of over 2,000 educational institutions that can use the software free of charge.

## Mission / Vision

VoxVote's mission is to "allow any vote anywhere" and to replace voting hardware (such as clickers). VoxVote at times feels like a hobby project or 'pursuit of passion' rather than a commercial company – its website is informal and there is a lack of formal marketing and business development. Despite this, over 8 million users have used the platform for voting to date.

## Ability to Execute

With a strong (and, judging by online reviews, satisfied) user base, and functionality that outpaces many commercial vendors of audience engagement software, VoxVote should be strongly positioned to grow its market share.

Its small team of six employees includes a Customer Success Manager, but no outbound sales or marketing team, making it dependent on its freemium business model (and word of mouth) to win over new customers. Its social media presence is limited, with only a little over 600 followers across the major social networks.

Still, with the right focus, and investment in sales & marketing, VoxVote could be a serious contender in the audience engagement and deliberation space.

<b>Active Customers</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Case Studies</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Experience</b>	★ ★ ★
<b>Workforce</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>Sales Channels</b>	★ ☆
<b>Social Media</b>	★ ☆ ☆
<b>USPs</b>	★ ★

## Security

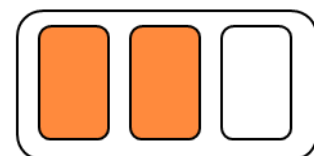
VoxVote maintains an extensive security and privacy policy, encrypts communication with their service using standard SSL (https) and salts passwords stored on the platform. VoxVote uses Microsoft Azure for Cloud Storage on European servers.

<b>Encryption</b>	🔒
<b>User Data</b>	🔒
<b>Storage</b>	🔒 🔒
<b>Blockchain</b>	n/a

## Standout Features

- Free for educational institutions and maintains a list of over 2,300 of them, automatically opting in new users with a matching email address to their free service
- 'Crossing' feature that can combine answers from multiple questions into insights in real-time during a presentation

## Accessibility



Considered in implementation but no active certifications

## Upcoming Technologies

As part of our research for this report, we were not always able to provide a full analysis on every vendor we have encountered. We are featuring some of these organisations here and are working towards a more comprehensive assessment for the 2022 edition.



Headquartered in Boston, Voatz is a provider of online election solutions with an impressive level of security and technical sophistication. Used primarily by local municipalities, but also for party conventions, Voatz allows voters to mark, review and submit election ballots online.

Users download a mobile app that scans the phone for malware and validates the voter by uploading a government issued ID and checking it against the voter roll. The app generates a facial match using a motion selfie and then – after linking the device to a unique anonymous ID – deletes the personal identity information from its system.

Voting data is securely transmitted to the election authority while a copy is stored on a multi-node Blockchain and an encrypted copy is returned to the voter. The mobile app can then decrypt the voting confirmation on the user's device. This allows voters to verify that their own vote has been correctly submitted. Once voting concludes, voters can also conduct what Voatz calls a "Civic Audit" where any voter can compare any ballot against the anonymised voting record. Thus far 100% of all votes conducted via Voatz have been audited in this fashion.

Voatz has been used in over 70 elections, facilitating up to a thousand votes at a time, but can be scaled to facilitate bigger events. In some jurisdictions, voters living with disability, as well as members of the military and US citizens living overseas are permitted to cast their votes using Voatz. With real votes on the line, Voatz puts significant emphasis on security, is regularly audited externally and runs a bug bounty programme to rule out any vulnerabilities in its software.

## SIV

Secure Internet Voting (or SIV) is a new venture by democracy.space (separately featured in this report). Secure Internet Voting does just what it says on the box, creating a secure environment for voters to submit their ballots electronically in elections. In 2020, the solution was used for internal party elections in the US, with a small number of Members of Congress as well as a sitting US governor taking part in the process.

SIV provides a simple interface for voters to prepare, submit and validate their ballots. Upon registration, voters are checked against the voter role and an invite is sent to the user to create their ballot. Once the voter has filled in the ballot, the system creates a unique ID ('verification secret') that the voter can later use to ensure that their vote has been properly counted without revealing the identity of the voter. Votes are sent to the server encrypted along with a voting authentication token which is used to confirm that a vote is valid.

Trustees (usually representatives of opposing political parties) are each assigned a piece of a decryption key which is used to unlock and tally the results.

At no stage of the process can the voter be linked to the content of their ballot, i.e. how they voted, while still allowing the voter to use the verification secret (generated at time of voting) to check their vote on the system.

SIV supports First-Past-The-Post, Ranked Choice Voting, Approval Voting and Score Voting methods. The online voting process can be combined with traditional mail-in or in-person voting, giving election authorities flexibility and allowing voters to opt-in.





Created by the people behind citizens.is, Iceland's hugely successful open source engagement solution for governments and NGOs, its sister company Idea Synergy is targeted at private sector organisations who want to democratise their workforce, as well as political parties who want to open up their internal decision-making.

Its software, called Your Priorities, is an internal network where organisations can allow their employees to ideate, discuss and decide on projects. Users or admins can upload ideas, vote and leave comments, with the option to separate comments for and against an idea into separate columns.

Idea Synergy maintains an extensive list of references with detailed screen shots and live demos, in addition to mock environments for an airline, a football club and a bank to illustrate the capabilities of the software.

Its most impressive example of a successful and scalable implementation in the private sector is the work Idea Synergy has done for the massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) Eve Online, where users participated in voting on player-submitted stories to include in a comic book. Over 100,000 users voted, with over 10,000 individuals adding content to the site over the space of 14 days.

Another interesting use case is Malta-based start-up Ellp which used Idea Synergy to crowdsource product feature requests from their customer base.

## Solutions in Progress

The following vendors either do not have a publicly available product, or are still at the beta phase of product rollout with a limited number of clients. We are showcasing them below to help them gain awareness and may include them in future reports once they have a fully developed and publicly available version of their product.



NewVote is an Australian Institute and app developer focussed on issue-based voting. The app, which is currently being tested by the University of Queensland as well as the Queensland University of Technology, and which has been used at the Woodfordia Festival, will allow users to vote on issues, leave comments and upload external information for and against proposals. NewVote's institute arm researches different forms of deliberative and direct democracy and works with several international democracy organisations such as Democracy International and Designing Open Democracy.

<http://www.newvote.org>



Flux is technically an Australian political party that, however, self-describes as “more a celebration of democracy than a party”. Flux will allow Australian citizens to elect what Flux calls “Proxy-Senators” who, without regard to their own personal political opinion, would vote in line with the expressed will of the party members, of which Flux has just shy of 9000 at the moment. The idea is for members to use the Flux app to vote on every bill coming before the Senate – and for the Flux Senator to then vote in line with the majority.

<http://www.voteflux.org>

**Solonian Democracy Institute clg**

**Kandoy House**

**2 Fairview Strand**

**Dublin 3, Ireland**

**[contact@solonian-institute.com](mailto:contact@solonian-institute.com)**

**<http://www.solonian-institute.com>**