Guide: Polis for Assembly Organisers

This guide is for anyone wanting to organise an assembly and use an interactive poll on Polis, or as a stand-alone 'sentiment check' on an important issue.

How to Organise and Use Polis

It can be difficult to get an accurate picture of people's opinions and feelings on sensitive or complex topics. Polis is a great tool for you to open conversations, first by seeding some initial facts or position statements into your poll. Secondly by allowing participants to vote on these and add their own, if they feel that important, relevant issues have been omitted.

People can then vote on these added statements; this ability to actively engage is the value of an interactive poll.

You will be supported by the UK Assemblies Team. You can request training on how to run a poll, how to frame your question, how to write good seed statements and how Polis works within an assembly.

Find more general information here on What is Polis?

Difference Between Polis Questions and Statements

Open questions are used as the topic for your Polis poll.
Statements are concisely expressed facts or perspectives for people to respond with either: 'AGREE' / 'DISAGREE' or 'PASS' / 'UNSURE'.

The Question

A good polling or assembly deliberation question or topic inspires, fires imaginations and invites all involved to participate in a spirit of hope, trust, openness, inclusion, creativity and empowerment.

There are no wrong and right answers to designing your Polis question, but it is important to be clear about your ultimate goal first. Then refine and distill the topic to serve your agreed purpose. Think about what will inspire feeling as well as ideas, because that will generate real enthusiasm for the process and can help generate energy for putting in place ideas generated!

How to Frame the Polis question

Begin with getting clear on the purpose of your poll and who is participating. How you frame it is important, because it sets parameters and keeps people focused.

Does your organising group want:

- to expand thinking?
- to find a solution for a specific issue?

Consider who the issue is relevant to, is it...

- a XR movement-wide issue and just XR rebels will participate,
- a local/regional issue (open for just XR rebels or the wider community), or
- a UK-wide issue open to all citizens.

Sense-checking

Co-creating with others will help you develop your question and statements for participants to vote on.

- The question for deliberation needs to be clearly understandable.
- It needs to be summarised in as short a sentence as possible.
- It will be broad enough to allow for creative thinking, but not so broad that a structured poll and possible later conversation around it is difficult.
- Keep participants focused with e.g. geographical locality or time-based limits.

Example Question Openers

- Broad = How might we... How can we...
- Narrow = Should we do X or Y? Do you agree with this or that?

Example Questions

Open questions but with boundaries work well and open up discussions by inviting all voices to join in.

How can we nurture nature in (community / village / town, etc.) across the seasons?
This question sets a geographical limit, which will suggest solutions that can be implemented locally and offer a breakdown of recommendations based on different times of year. It may also suggest where there is a need for possible actions at a national or even international level.

How can (name of locality / town / county) make sure that everyone in our community can access healthy, affordable food for the long term?
Food resilience is a massive topic, with many threads, all of which could be addressed by expert or enthusiast groups coming together on specialist areas.

How might XR be more focused on its demand for systemic change - a Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice?
This could be asked just for UK circle role holders and it could be narrowed down to what they could do within their curren role or team. Or it could be asked to whole movement to get wider ideas of what to do locally.

How might communication be improved between the UK Circles, Nations and Regions, Local, Campaign and Community groups?
A movement wide Polis on this could come up with new ideas and show where there was strong agreement.

Possibly too broad:

How can [locality: local, regional, national] do something about climate change together within the next year?
Being a broad question, it will involve a longer poll, with many more statements to vote on. However, Polis will automatically show which statements gain the most popularity to help prioritisation and point to possible connected issues.

How might we rely less on fossil fuels?
There are no timelines in this question, which broadens the scope. The locality may offer some limits to statements to vote on. This is potentially a huge topic, which will generate need for further deliberation.

Statements

Some examples (each statement cannot be more than 140 characters):

- For XR to stand out and get attention is for our action design to include creative, colourful elements.
- The best way to get feedback on any Movement Strategy or Actions Plans is by presentation with Q&A to every group that requests it.
- Regular Polis polls on different topics would help to understand the views of the movement.
- Local groups should make time for social gatherings to build connection and community between rebels.
- The offer of free cake is the best way entice new members to join a meeting.
- Zoom meetings shouldn't be longer than one hour, unless a break is included.
- I have made good friends within the XR community.

NOTE - always double check that someone can answer with 'AGREE' / 'DISAGREE' or 'PASS' / 'UNSURE'.

Moderation of Polis

Running an interactive Polis poll requires **Moderators**. The work closely with Assembly Organisers.

Moderators are needed to:

- protect those taking part,
- protect the system from abuse,
- join a Mattermost channel for support and to access full guidance.

They moderate peoples' added ideas, e.g.:

- remove Personally Identifiable Information (PII), e.g. phone numbers,
- remove abusive comments,
- edit ideas to better fit criteria for the polis topic or assembly question,
- ensure transparency of the process by explaining rejected ideas via a UK Assemblies hosted ‘XR Polis Broadcast’ Telegram channel.

If you have any questions or need support - contact the UK Assemblies Team.
