

Shaping our future together

The citizens' assemblies organised in Budapest District XVIII in 2025

We would like to show you how we worked together with the residents of Budapest District XVIII over the past year, and what great ideas emerged from the collaboration of local people. Our municipality believes that the best decisions are made when they are built on the experiences of those who live here.

What is InnoK, and why is it needed?

The **InnoK Tudásmenedzsment Intézet (InnoK Knowledge Management Institute)** is a non-profit professional workshop whose tasks include bringing the city leadership and the population closer to one another. It is like a bridge: among its many other duties, InnoK acted as a background institution to ensure that the 2025 citizens' assembly was scientifically grounded, yet open and understandable for everyone. With the help of dozens of staff members, external experts and volunteers involved in the process, InnoK enabled the municipality to map out precisely what matters to those who live and work in the district, as well as those who pass through it.

InnoK's mission is simple: to help local citizens become not merely those who endure or observe change, but active shapers of it. Our work centres on data- and knowledge-based decision-making, knowledge management, citizen involvement, social innovation and collaboration-based development. To this end we carry out research, questionnaire surveys and social analyses, lead resident discussions, organise educational days, and run planning weekends and community events within a friendly, structured and smoothly run framework.

One of InnoK's defining activities is the organisation and professional implementation of citizens' assemblies. We were the first in Hungary to develop and regularly operate citizens' assemblies based on a unique methodology, which involve residents in shaping local affairs within a dialogue-based, transparent and participatory framework. Throughout the process, the analysis of questionnaires, the mapping of residents' needs, and the organisation and running of events that support joint thinking all served to ensure that municipal decisions are more closely connected to the experiences, needs and proposals of those who live, work and spend time in the district.

Why a citizens' assembly, and why do we need one here?

What is a citizens' assembly?

This is not a traditional, dull public forum or town-hall hearing where participants merely listen to presentations. A citizens' assembly is a form of joint thinking resting on rigorous methodological foundations, where residents, with the help of experts, discuss the district's most important issues in detail in small groups, and work out concrete, viable proposals for the decision-makers.

Why is this important for Pestszentlőrinc-Pestszentimre?

Budapest District XVIII is vast, colourful and extremely complex. A family living on the Havanna housing estate faces entirely different challenges than a resident of a Pestszentimre garden suburb. While surveys show that the effects of climate change (such as summer heat or the mosquito invasion), traffic congestion and parking difficulties affect almost everyone, the solutions must be found locally, tailored to the needs of each part of the city. Whether it concerns the noise of the expressway or the drainage of rainwater, the best answers are known by those who live there day after day.

Why is this important for the municipality and the body of representatives?

Because in this way we obtain a professionally grounded overview that is also sound from a social-science perspective regarding the ideas of those living in the district and the developments and changes they consider necessary. This is of fundamental importance for the municipality, whose leaders and representatives are committed to deciding on district developments with the maximum involvement of those who live here. The results of the citizens' assemblies serve as direct guidance when planning the municipality's future budget and investments.

How we involved the district's residents, or the methodology put simply:

In order for the proposals to truly reflect the opinion of the whole district, we devised a careful, fair process:

1. **Questionnaire research:** as a first step we launched a detailed online questionnaire, completed by nearly **1,700 district residents**. This gave us a reliable compass regarding the main problems.
2. **Personal discussions (focus group studies):** in mid-September we invited **50 residents** from four different parts of the city (Pestszentlőrinc, Havanna, Pestszentimre and the area around the expressway) to talk in an informal way about their everyday difficulties.

3. **The district "in miniature"**: for the actual citizens' assembly we selected the participants from nearly 500 applicants on the basis of official statistical data (by gender, age and place of residence). We took care that younger and older people, as well as the various parts of the district, were represented in exactly the same proportions as in reality.
4. **The joint work**: The process began with a substantive preparatory day at the end of September, then continued with an intensive, good-spirited planning weekend in October. In the end, **45 motivated residents** worked through two weekends, which counts as outstanding participation even by international standards! According to their place of residence, the participants worked together in 5 colourful teams (Blue, Orange, Red, Yellow and Green teams).

What ideas and results emerged?

The residents did not just brainstorm; they put complete, fully developed proposal packages on the table. A total of **15 great ideas** were born across three major themes:

A) How can we travel more comfortably? (Public transport)

- **Blue team (the most popular proposal)**: they designed 3 new or modified bus routes that would connect the more isolated parts of Pestszentimre (Belsőmajor, Erdőskert) with Jahn Ferenc Hospital, the shopping centres and the train.
- **Red team**: they proposed a north-south express service between Felsőcsatári út and Nagykőrösi út, as well as a flexible, on-demand BKK Telebusz for Erzsébettelep and Bélatelep.
- **Orange team**: they envisioned an environmentally friendly electric minibus between Ganzkertváros and Vecsés, serving the local nurseries, schools, the care home for the elderly and Market Central.
- **Yellow and Green teams**: they proposed new bus connections between Gloriett, Ganzkertváros, the Havanna housing estate and Ferihegy, aligned with the new department stores and the residents' daily routes.

B) Safer and calmer streets. (Local road safety)

- **Yellow team**: they proposed a new roundabout at the intersection of Méta utca and Ipacsa utca, so that the freight traffic of the wholesale market and the industrial estate could be handled more safely.
- **Blue team**: they requested the fine-tuning of traffic on Nagykőrösi út, making Vasút utca one-way, and the creation of safe "Kiss & Ride" zones around schools allowing a 5-minute parental stop.

- **Red, Green and Orange teams:** they proposed the synchronisation of the traffic lights at the junction of Felsőcsatári út and Gyömrői út, safer pedestrian crossings on Lakatos út, the accessibility upgrade of Szarvas csárda tér, and the pruning of overgrown vegetation for better visibility.

C) A greener and more liveable environment. (Renewal of green spaces)

- **Blue team:** they would transform the neglected area at the edge of Belsőmajor into a recreational park with a running track, decent toilets and a nature trail showcasing the values of the marshy section.
- **Red team:** they would turn the Piac tér in Lónyaytelep into a community park with a small producers' market, rainwater-retaining ponds and a resident tree-adoption programme.
- **Yellow, Orange and Green teams:** they designed a nature-like recreational corridor along Halmi Erdő, proposed greening the area around Lőrinc Center (with grassed tram tracks and green roofs against the heat-island effect), as well as developing the venerable Bókay-kert with an educational garden and underground rainwater collectors.

How do we make use of the results of the citizens' assemblies?

The participants themselves coined the finest slogan at the end of the weekend: **“The community wins!”**

What happens to the proposals now?

The 15 worked-out plans are extremely valuable for the municipality. Every proposal package has officially landed on the desks of the district's policy and urban-development planners. These plans serve as direct guidance when planning the municipality's future budget and investments.

Residents also help with implementation

It is a particular joy for us that most of the plans also build on the voluntary work of local people (for example through joint tree adoptions or park-care programmes), so that the values created will later be protected together as well.

Methodological fine-tuning for the future

We learn from experience. Based on participants' feedback, the InnoK team is already working to make the next occasions even smoother. We plan to shorten the expert presentations in future, schedule more restful breaks, and seat the municipality's engineers directly at the planning tables, so that residents can get an immediate answer about how something can be implemented technically.