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STRATEGY PROPOSAL FOR LONG-TERM STRATEGY

FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY



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Document produced in 2023 within the framework of the Programme
Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV), Network of Towns
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titled “Active EUcitizens”



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THINK GLOBAL ACT LOCAL

STRATEGY PROPOSAL FOR LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

PROJECT NAME: ACTIVE EUCITIZENS: THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

ACRONYM: ACTIVE EU

PROJECT TASK : WORK PACKAGE 7

NAME OF ACTIVITY: LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Time of action initiation: Think Global Act Local project Activity: Workshop Workshop for project members and citizens 19-21.09.2023

Lead Beneficiary: Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic

Activities related: Physical workshops and online meetings, dedicated to the development of the strategy

Output: Long-term Strategy for citizens involvement and participative democracy

Aim: The strategy is a tool guide for the consortium partners for a long-term cooperation regarding the development the local community, civic participation and reaching the goal of civil society actively participating in decision-making processes (R4making).





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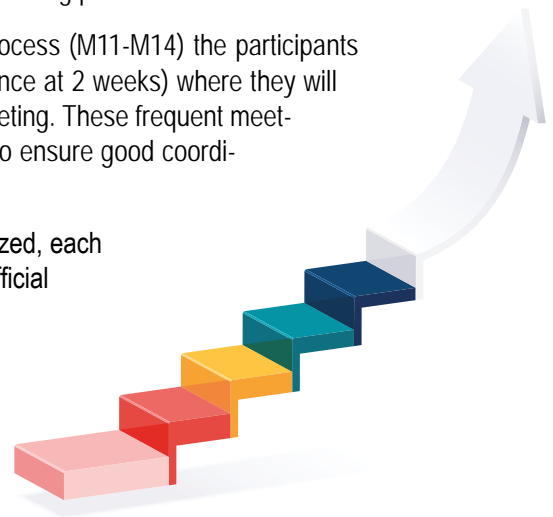
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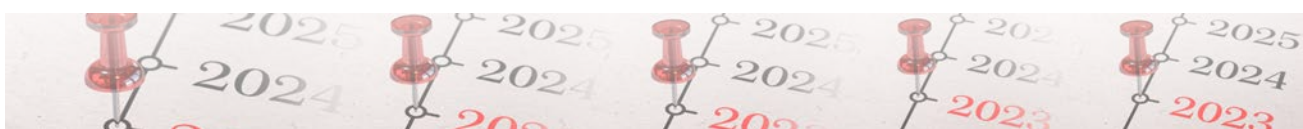
Timeline of development:

1. **Expert Board development:** In month 11 after the data consulting analysis meeting (WP6) each partner will select one expert to be responsible for the strategy making. The experts will be persons that work with data analyses, they will gather all the information and will start the writing process.
2. **Online meetings:** During the 4 months of the strategy writing process (M11-M14) the participants that are involved in this WP will have frequent online meetings (once at 2 weeks) where they will check the evolution process and will set new tasks for the next meeting. These frequent meetings are important to keep the writing process under control and to ensure good coordination between the experts involved and the project coordinators.
3. **Translating:** In the fourth month, after the writing strategy is finalized, each consortium partner will have to translate the strategy into the official language spoken in each country so they can present it publicly and during the council meetings.
4. **Promoting the strategy event:** This activity will be organized in Poland and will revolve around a key event of centralization and finalization of the transnational strategy on participatory citizen consultation and visibility at EU level between partners.



Stages of strategy development:

1. **October 2022 - June 2023** - Survey research in local communities
2. **June 2023 - August 2023** - Analysis of the surveys and proposals for the strategy
3. **August - September 2023** - Start of work on strategy outline initiated by APC ERB and LP
4. **19-21 September 2023** - Workshop dedicated to the creation of the document and first presentation of the strategy outline as part of consultations with citizens (workshop and study visit to Elbląg)
5. **11 October 2023** - online meeting of the Strategy's creative team (Expert Board meeting)
6. **16-19 October 2023** - Workshop dedicated to the creation of the document and second presentation of the outline of the Strategy as part of consultations with citizens (workshop and study visit in Romania)
7. **31 October 2023** - Online meeting of the Strategy's creative team (Expert Board meeting)
8. **21 November 2023** - Finalization works of the strategy content
9. **Beginning of the November** - Final touches and development of layout
10. **December 2023** - Translation of the prepared strategy and publication





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BACKGROUND

Under the Active EUcitizens project, the consortium carried out a comprehensive survey across 1500 EU citizens from Spain, Italy, Greece, Poland and Romania. Each partner from the consortium carried the survey with approximately 300 citizens from their local communities.

The survey data and conclusions constituted the starting point for the Expert Board meetings, while discussing and drafting **the key final deliverable of the project: Long-term strategy for citizens' involvement and participative democracy.**

Responses under the survey were received both in online and off-line format, in order to ensure accessibility to all citizens and not limit the use of the survey based on digital competences. This applied especially to the citizens with fewer opportunities (elderly, social difficulties, limited digital competences)

The survey focused on the needs identified in the Active EUcitizens application, and structured the 37 questions in four key areas of interest for the citizens and local municipalities:

- **Part 1 - The state of citizens' knowledge and involvement of the citizens in the local communities**
- **Part 2 - The state of information and cooperation between citizens and local community**
- **Part 3- Key advantages and unicity of the local communities in the European Union diversity context**
- **Part 4 - Citizens' state of identity with the European Union values**

All answers from the citizens across the 5 consortium communities were processed anonymously and were solely used for statistical purposes, in order to better understand the local state of play in the communities of the partners, as well as the needs of the citizens.

The conclusions of the survey are widely heterogeneous across the 5 consortium countries. In terms of age, the majority of respondents are above 40 years old, except Greece, where we identified an interest for the younger generation (below 40).

- Over 80% of the respondents across all 5 countries are residents of the local community for more than 10 years, while over 50% of the respondents are residents since birth. Below 2% of the respondents are not residents.
- In terms of gender, most respondents are females, with 56% in Romania, 76% in Spain, 53% in Italy, 57% in Greece, 56% in Poland. A high level of engagement was also shown by women for the in-situ project activities, with is a very important incentive in terms of gender equality and involvement of women in the life of the local communities.
- Regarding the work status, the distribution is the following: Full-time or part-time job: 80% in Romania, 52% in Spain, 71% in Italy, 40% in Greece (39% did not disclose their working status), 73% in Poland.



Following the assessment, stratification and interpretation of the survey data and conclusions, the consortium members worked on drafting the Long-term strategy for citizens' involvement and participative democracy, in order to better respond to the need of our citizens on matters such as active civic participation in the life of the community, European values and identity, diversity and inclusion of citizens with fewer opportunities, communities development perspectives in a european cooperation framework.



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INSIGHT

The following strategy produced under the Cerv: Think Global Act Local [TGAL] project will be disseminated by the members of the consortium, who are committed to recommending it primarily to the organizers of participatory processes (i.e. - most often - civil servants), as it has been recognised from their experience and after consultation with citizens that they need support, being mainly the formal initiators of such activities.

The following strategy should be treated as a tool box, where all interested stakeholders can find guidance on how to prepare for, run and cope with the challenges of participatory processes, mainly focusing on public consultations and different methods of involving citizens in decision making-processes. In addition to theory, there is also room for practice presents by project members and local citizens from 5 European countries: Romania, Poland, Greece, Italy, Spain.

This strategy include not only toolbox, general frames and best examples successful participatory tools and methods and should primarily serve beginners in local government, but many threads will also be useful to advanced organizers of participatory processes.

The starting point of this strategy is to achieve a state of civil society in our local authorities, but to do so we need to understand what it is civic society perceived by Active EUcitizens: Think Global, Act Local project participants.

Civil society refers to all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to nor managed by state authorities.

It is also worth recalling the understanding of civil society as a way of functioning of an organized space, pointing to the operational definition created for the purpose of this strategy.

Reflections on the nature of civil society intuitively lead to definitional formulations in which there is space for the full subjectivity of citizens, their communities and other diverse communities, responsible local public authorities, a good state, all based on universal principles and values. With reasonable simplification, to meet the requirements of a good starting point for the construction of strategic assumptions and operational proposals, it can be considered that:

- “Civil society is the space of action of institutions, organizations, social groups and individuals, straddling the family, the state and the market, in which people engage in free debate on the values that make up the common good and voluntarily interact with each other to pursue common interests.”
- “A civil society is a society in which there are active, community-minded citizens, political relationships based on principles of equality and social relations based on trust and cooperation.”

It is also worth referring to the definition of the civil society organizations which this strategy intend to support

A civil society organization is an organizational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and citizens.

Article 15 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union recognises civil society's role in the good governance of the European Union (EU). Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union stresses the need for the EU to have an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society organizations, for example when preparing proposals for EU laws.

Examples of such organizations include:

- social partners (trades unions and employers' groups);
- non-governmental organizations (e.g. for environmental and consumer protection);
- grassroots organizations (e.g. youth and family groupings).



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The European Economic and Social Committee represents workers' and employers' organizations at the EU level and has a vital role in the lawmaking process of the EU. Sectoral social dialogue committees are established to further involve social partners in the decision-making process.

The European Commission regularly engages with non-governmental organizations through initiatives such as the EU stakeholder dialogue or the 'Progress' programme.





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PART 1 - INTRODUCTION TO UNDERSTANDING CIVIL PARTICIPATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The CERV: Think Global Act Local [TGAL] project and proposed strategy is based on the experiences of participants representing various social groups, authorities and citizens of practice, wants to increase among the project beneficiaries and future recipients, on the one hand, theoretical knowledge about the principles, methods, and techniques of increasing and building civic involvement and civic participation, and on the other hand, to promote the best local practices, which can then be transferred to other local communities after the project end. Civic engagement and participatory democracy are essential components of a healthy and thriving society. They empower citizens to actively participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities. This strategy proposal aims to outline a long-term plan for promoting civic engagement and participatory democracy, fostering informed and active citizenship, and strengthening the democratic foundations of our society. Each partner is obliged to adhere to this strategy and is committed to using the indicated tools to strengthen participatory approaches for the next 2 years after the completion of the TGAL project.

2. THE ABC OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Citizen participation can take many forms and address issues of very different scales and topics, as we discuss in more detail later in this publication. However, it is important at the outset to have a good understanding of a certain way of thinking about decision-making and governance that is behind the term 'citizen participation' and what values are inherent in this way of governance.

Participation is, in other words, involvement. It is actively speaking out on issues that affect us.

Through participation, citizens are able to engage in discussion, express opinions and co-decide on issues affecting their community. This is why this type of participation is called civic, or citizen participation. It is based on communication between authorities and citizens and focuses on dialogue processes to support (self-)government decision-making. Such participation is sometimes referred to as 'vertical participation' (because communication runs, so to speak, 'from the top' - from government representatives to local community representatives and vice versa). However, there is also the issue of so-called horizontal participation, which primarily concerns the cooperation of different groups or individuals in achieving a common goal (e.g. neighbors wanting to develop a common courtyard or different organizations dealing with people with disabilities taking joint action).



Civic participation can take various forms, which are assumed to take into account the varying degrees of citizens' involvement in the decisions made. This division is called the participation ladder.

Information is the simplest form of participation, involving citizens the least. The authorities' actions come down to informing citizens about decisions that affect them.

However, there is no room here for any active influence of people on the shape of actions taken by the authorities; they are only reduced to the role of passive recipients. However, it should be noted that information is the basis for any more advanced forms of involving citizens in co-decision-making - without the necessary knowledge that we provide them, they cannot be full partners in decision-making processes.



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Consulting is the next “step” on the so-called participation ladder due to increased citizen participation in activities. In addition to providing information, the government gives citizens the opportunity to comment on planned activities. People participating in consultations act as “advisors” who are asked for their opinion and opinions on a specific matter. Citizens’ votes are therefore considered, although there is no guarantee that they will be implemented. Currently, due to, among other things, legal regulations, it is one of the most popular forms of civic participation in Poland. However, it is necessary to seek citizens’ opinions only when we really want to take their opinions into account and we have the opportunity to do so.

Co-determination is the highest level of civic participation due to the full partnership between the government and citizens, which involves transferring to them some competencies (but also responsibility) regarding the actions and decisions taken. In a way, this is the perfect implementation by the authorities of the simple (although very difficult in reality) assumption that “people know better what they need.” Thus, citizens have a real influence on planned activities that concern them (directly or indirectly). Importantly, they not only have a significant influence on the shape of the decision but also share responsibility for it with the authorities. An example of co-determination is a participatory budget (also known as a citizen budget).

3. SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC AND CIVIC CONSULTATIONS

Based on the experience of the TGAL project participants who have been involved in the project since 2022 up to 2023, including representatives of the central administration, local governments and non-governmental organizations, consortia members managed to create a set of operationalized principles and minimum standards to which all participatory processes should be subject.



They fully reflect the values that should accompany every participatory process. Fulfilling them - in our opinion - should bring us closer to building mutual trust and a culture of dialogue.

Among them we can distinguish, among others:

1. GOOD FAITH

Consultations are conducted in the spirit of civil dialogue. The parties listen to each other, showing their willingness to understand different points of view.

2. COMMONNESS

Anyone interested in the topic should be able to find out about the consultations and express their views there.

3. TRANSPARENCY

Information about the purpose, rules, course and results of consultations must be publicly available. It must be clear who represents which view.

4. RESPONSIVENESS

Everyone who submits an opinion is entitled to a substantive response within a reasonable time, which does not rule out collective responses.

5. COORDINATION

Consultations should have a host who is responsible for the consultations both politically and organizationally. They should be properly anchored in the administration structure.



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6. PREDICTABILITY

Consultations should be conducted from the beginning of the legislative process. They should be conducted in a planned manner and based on clear rules.

7. RESPECT FOR THE GENERAL INTEREST

Although individual consultation participants have the right to present their particular interests, the final decisions made as a result of the consultations should represent the public interest and the general good.

They should be included when preparing the consultation process so that it meets the above seven principles, which should facilitate and strengthen participatory processes

4. ACTORS OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

In participatory processes, dialogue takes place between government representatives and citizens. However, both the terms “authorities” and “residents” are broad enough that at this stage planning the participatory process is no longer valuable. Therefore, here we can define three terms “organizers”, “participants” and “partners” of the consultation and outline who they can be and what their role is.

A. Organizers:

Participatory processes regarding public affairs can basically be organized by anyone (non-governmental organizations, informal groups, etc.), but by default, this is the domain of central and local authorities who want to obtain feedback from residents and other stakeholders on a specific issue. From the point of view of the usefulness of the process, it is crucial that its initiator and organizer is an entity that has the ability to later use/take into account the collected comments, suggestions, demands, etc. Organizing participatory activities in public matters by persons or entities from outside (local) government administration may result in the opinions and comments obtained not being taken into account by the authorities that were their proper addressee. However, it also happens differently: that a bottom-up participatory process, without the formal participation of the (local) government, results in the acceptance of the conclusions drawn by officials.



It is best if the office that decides to involve residents in decision-making has a separate position or even an entire unit (e.g. a department or department) for civic participation, communication with residents, social consultations, etc. The presence in the office of people dealing exclusively with organizing consultations and other forms of participation will, on the one hand, ensure higher quality and coherence of these activities, and on the other - it will relieve other officials whose work is of a completely different nature (e.g. finance, spatial planning, environmental protection, etc.), which would make it difficult to combine with planning and conducting participatory processes.

Good cooperation between employees dealing with civic participation and specialists from other departments and subordinate units who deal with matters related to the process on a daily basis is an important component of the success of the entire process - it is worth making everyone feel part of it from the beginning and jointly create a plan for the participatory process. , e.g. consultations.



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B. Participants

One of the seven principles of consultation that we wrote about in an earlier chapter is universality. According to this principle, every person interested in the subject of consultations should be able to learn about them and then take part in them. Potentially, the set of consultation participants includes all residents: private individuals, informal groups, representatives of the administration, other public institutions and non-governmental organizations, entrepreneurs, etc.

Of course, when organizing a participatory process on a specific issue, we know in advance that only selected groups will be particularly interested in it. For example, when carrying out consultations regarding the modernization of a neighborhood square, we will try to invite, especially local residents and entrepreneurs, and when working participative on the local government strategy for older people, we will want to listen primarily to the voice of seniors themselves and institutions dealing with various aspects of senior policy. This, of course, does not change the fact that as an office we should inform all residents about the planned participation processes, preferably through various channels, adapted to the needs of different groups (via the website, announcements in the media, posters, leaflets, etc.).

A well-done stakeholder analysis is crucial for the success of the participation process and potential participants in the process.

C. Partners

Organizers of participatory processes focus (and rightly so!) on informing and involving various groups of residents in their activities, sometimes forgetting about other important actors who can be of great support to them in organizing the process, e.g. its promotion.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations and universities, journalists dealing with the topic discussed in the consultations, as well as local leaders - they can all become allies of the organizers if they are invited to cooperate early enough. The role of partners and the degree of their involvement may vary - from disseminating information about consultations to providing substantive or organizational support at the planning or implementation stage of the process.

Involving citizens in deciding on public matters should be treated as an investment and should be considered in terms of a long-term process that translates into mutual trust. Once established, bond and trust can greatly facilitate cooperation and better quality of participatory processes. Unfortunately, failure to ensure the reliability of actions may also translate into a lower willingness of citizens to get involved in the long run.

5. TOPICS OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

Looking at the experiences of TGAL consortia members participatory processes can cover very diverse topics - we could even say basically everything, as long as it is important for the life of a given community and falls within the competencies of the organizers. Processes may concern matters of various scales - from those that are locally important to those that affect the life of society throughout the country. When organizing the consultation process, we suggest selecting or specifying its topic in such a way that it concerns matters on which we would like to examine the opinions of the participants, build consensus, and come up with a solution together.





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Here are some examples of thematic areas that participatory processes may cover:

- creating/consulting documents → e.g. consulting city development strategies
- space planning → e.g. jointly inventing the development of a certain space, e.g. the interior of a museum, a yard, a park, consulting a land development plan
- creating an offer/program → e.g. classes at a cultural center, public library
- consulting public services → e.g. evaluation by users of transport services, health
- budget planning → e.g. jointly deciding on the allocation of the budget or part of it. It is good to realize that these are only some of the possibilities, because, as we have already noted, the topic

The participatory process can basically be anything: from designing a flower bed in a neighborhood yard to developing a model of cooperation between non-governmental organizations and local governments to developing a national energy strategy.

6. BARRIERS AND DIFFICULTIES OF SOCIAL CONSULTATION

They appear both on the part of the consultation participants and their organizers. The shortened list has been prepared after TGAL project actions mainly based on individual consultations and experience from numerous contacts with representatives of offices and residents participating in the consultations, observing processes taking place in 4 countries and abroad, our own practical experiences, as well as from those conducted in 2021 and 2022 year on Polish local governments to study the effectiveness of the social consultation mechanism.

We believe that by familiarizing ourselves with the list of barriers and difficulties faced by both participants and organizers, we increase the chance of avoiding them or better understanding their source when they appear.

Barriers and difficulties on the part of (potential) consultation participants

Fears often result from a lack of trust in the authorities or the process (these are particularly difficult to overcome, especially at the beginning):

- lack of trust or even hostility towards officials,
- lack of faith that officials will consider the opinions expressed as valuable,
- fear of sanctions for unpopular opinions,
- a sense of façade and superficiality of the process.

Barriers also result from poor preparation of the consultation process:

- the consultation period is too short,
- not knowing that consultations are taking place at all,
- complicated or incomprehensible procedure for submitting comments,
- organizational factors: date not adapted to the participant's capabilities, inaccessible place,
- conducting consultations at too late a stage,
- inviting the same participants to consultations or limiting consultations to a small group of people,
- lack of sufficient information about ongoing consultations,
- lack of facilities for consultation with participants with special needs (people with disabilities, people who do not use the Internet, etc.).



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Difficulties may result from reasons beyond the control of the process organizers:

- lack of consultations regarding matters falling within the sphere of genuine interests of citizens,
- lack of time to participate in consultations,
- no opinion on the matter being consulted.

Every organizer of the participation process, whether a beginner or a more advanced one, should be aware of these challenges - on the one hand, to better understand the perspective and concerns of residents, and on the other, to be able to respond to them and look for solutions.

Barriers and difficulties on the part of (potential) consultation organizers

Organizers of participatory processes also face challenges related to including other actors in decision-making:

First, there are concerns about consultation procedures:

- lack of confidence in the knowledge and competencies of participants to participate in consultations,
- insufficient practical knowledge of conducting consultations,
- lack of trust in residents.

Then it may also be bad experiences with implemented processes:

- fear of particular interests of consultation participants (interest groups instead of common concern for the public good),
- the discouraging experience of low engagement or hostility among participants,
- lack of ability of organizers and participants to find a common language,
- lack of knowledge about experts and organizations dealing with the issue being consulted (e.g. it is not known who should be interested in a given issue).

There are also problems within the office:

- staff shortages (e.g. lack of consulting positions),
- budget and time issues ("competition" in the official's limited time),
- inconsistent position of the office on the matter being consulted,
- lack of clear consultation procedures.





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PART 2 - PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION TECHNIQUES

Part 2, collects some basic, not very expensive and commonly used tools that can facilitate participatory processes. We would like to remind you that the selection of an appropriate technique should result from the purpose of the consultation and be consistent with the decision regarding the involvement of key stakeholders. There are more universal techniques - such as open meetings or consultation points, and there are those that are worth thinking about when we are doing, for example, a small diagnostic process (animations, workshops) or asking for an assessment of the space (research walk). We will choose others when we operate in a conflict situation (working group), and still others for a large community (survey). The wise use and combination of techniques require practice and experience, but we hope that the list below will help you avoid mistakes and facilitate the organization of the participation process in line with your expectations and needs.

1. SURVEY (PAPER OR ONLINE)

This is a research technique that allows you to collect a fairly broad, although often not representative, opinion of residents and other users on a given issue. However, the survey does not provide representative results, and in the case of an online survey - although it allows reaching more people than a paper survey - it reduces the participation of some groups (e.g. older people) in the survey.





Paper Survey

AIM	gathering general information on the issue to be consulted
PARTICIPANTS	any number of passers-by who can also be tried (every other man / every other woman/seniors only, etc.).
DURATION	between one day and one month - time to complete the survey approx. 5-15 minutes - time to complete the survey
COST	average
PERSONNEL RE-SOURCES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the person preparing the content and design of the survey 2. interviewers 3. the person processing the results
ADVANTAGES, USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a tool that ensures anonymity - easy to prepare and use - reaches a large number of users in the area, including some who would not have consulted on their own - allows for comparable quantitative data - a good tool to use at a polling station or other participatory activities in the public space
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the ability to prepare the content of the survey so that it can be carried out quickly - the need to choose an optimal time and place for the survey (frequently used location, timing synchronised with other events taking place in the area, etc.). - the need to prepare interviewers to provide more information about the consultation to which the survey relates
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This method is becoming less and less used due to the problems of aggregating results after a survey has been completed. Its subsequent analysis is time-consuming and requires running to metric systems. ● Among TGAL members, this is a method that is being abandoned, as demonstrated by the project's own questionnaire survey. ● It is recommended to use other methods.



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Online survey

AIM	gathering more detailed information on the issue consulted issue
PARTICIPANTS	potentially all residents and stakeholders with internet access
DURATION	approx. 1 week - 1 month - time to complete the survey approx. 15-45 minutes - time to complete the survey
COST	low
PERSONNEL RE-SOURCES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the person preparing the content of the survey 2. the person responsible for putting the survey online 3. the person processing the results
ADVANTAGES, USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a tool that is easy to use - reaches out to many people - allows specific questions, even complex ones, to be asked and quantitative data to be obtained - allows additional material (reports, maps, visualisations, etc.) to be attached to the questions - increases the likelihood of obtaining truthful and honest answers (due to the lack of direct contact with the researcher) - a tool for those who use the internet on a daily basis - a good tool for supplementing answers obtained in a paper survey (street survey)
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to prepare the content of the survey - questions and how to answer them the questions and how to answer them (scale, cafeteria, etc.). - the need to disseminate information about the survey
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experience from Greece Municipality of AAK : In the context of preparing the Strategic Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) of the City of AAK, the Project team organized and conducted three (3) on-line consultations with citizens and stakeholders in order to depict the current problems of mobility in the city, address their needs and contribute with innovative ideas to the solutions. More info: SUMP Consultations (agan.gov.gr) ● As the TGAL project departments have shown, this is an effective method that does not present problems with the metric system. Very easy to aggregate and present data. However, there is a lack of contact with the respondent and some answers may be misinterpreted.



2. EVALUATION/SCRATCH COUPON

This is a type of evaluation survey that does not require anything to write. Questions with possible answer options are placed at the edges of the paper. The answer is marked by tearing the coupon in the appropriate place.

AIM	examining key satisfaction indicators of meeting participants
PARTICIPANTS	participants in major events
DURATION	depending on the duration of the event, from a few hours to a few days - time to complete the survey up to 5 minutes - time to fill in the voucher
COST	low
PERSONNEL RESOURCES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the person preparing the content and design of the voucher 2. the person processing the results
ADVANTAGES, USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a tool that is very easy to prepare and use, yet attractive attractive and therefore capable of generating a high return on investment - allows quantitative data to be obtained - a tool good for large events
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to prepare simple content and a clear graphic design for the voucher so that the survey can be carried out quickly
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A method that is not applicable in any partner organisation and is therefore new to TGAL consortium members ● A method worth testing and using in local conditions ● It is worthwhile to use an experienced partner who has used these solutions before.

3. Research walk

The walk is conducted according to a prepared scenario, allowing for mapping specific places and elements requiring intervention, and examining the feelings and needs of the surveyed people regarding various aspects of space. It is best when max. participants participate in the walk. 3 persons. A research walk is a technique that allows you to engage participants quite easily and allows you to interact with them in a friendly atmosphere. However, it requires good preparation and competence of the person conducting it (from knowledge of the examined space to the ability to ask questions and note down answers while moving). Two walking scenarios are possible: (1) a walk with a planned route, used to assess specific elements of a given space (e.g. arrangement of benches, lighting, the comfort of use), (2) a walk in which the respondent leads the interviewer along his or her route, on a route designated by the researcher terrain - this serves to better understand the space in terms of the guidelines from the scenario (e.g. favourite, friendly or unfriendly places, etc.)



AIM	exploration of space, mapping of specific places and elements requiring intervention, survey of feelings, needs of the people surveyed about different aspects of space
PARTICIPANTS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a walk moderated by the leader according to a prepared scenario 2. a group of local residents (preferably 1 to 3 people), depending on the subject of the process, walks can be carried out with specific groups, e.g. young people, elderly people, disabled people, parents with young children, etc.
DURATION	approx. 30 min - 1.5 h - excluding preparation and processing time
COST	Average
PERSONNEL RE-SOURCES	facilitator - the person or persons leading the walk (may be local animators or volunteers)
ADVANTAGES, USE	possibility to diagnose the function of the space and to collect ideas for its improvement directly from the participants and based on their direct experience of the space
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - well thought-out designation of the route and the issues/elements of the space to be explored - good preparation of the scenario and the walk leaders
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experience from Poland: Research walks with older people in Gdynia Finding out the opinion of a specific group of users, namely older people, about a particular urban space (its appearance, functional solutions, barriers). The information collected in this way will be taken into account by relevant urban institutions in planning future renovations and investments. More info: https://partycypacjaobywatelska.pl/strefa-wiedzy/przyklady-dzialan/przestrzen-publiczna/spacery-badawcze-z-osobami-starszymi-w-gdyni/ Film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvrXqww0CZI ● This method is very effective in bringing local politicians, local administrations and citizens into direct contact with each other. ● It is very effective when used in addition to placemaking.

4. ANIMATION METHODS

Methods supporting and accompanying participatory processes. Useful for collecting information, especially at the diagnosis stage. They also have great integration potential for the local community. Animation methods include simple and cheap tools, such as questions on a string (blank sheets of paper with a simple question are attached to a string hung in a public space - thanks to this, residents can answer at any time convenient for them, and additionally they can also read the answers others), a neighborhood dinner (an integrating local event during which you can ask questions important for the participatory process), an identity map (created from personal memories and places in a given space that are important



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to residents), a mini-street survey (short surveys containing 2-3 questions, asked to passers-by encountered in a given space), creating personas (inviting residents to describe a group of residents, e.g. seniors or families with children, by marking the characteristics of this group on a board or cardboard in order to look at particular needs), or casual consultations (collecting important for the information process while carrying out other activities, e.g. gathering knowledge about the problems and needs of young people during psychological workshops).

AIM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of the local community - gaining diagnostic knowledge about the local community
PARTICIPANTS	The local community in the area that is subject to the consultation process
DURATION	From 1 day to a month
COST	low
PERSONNEL RE-SOURCES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inventor and designer of tools 2. Implementer of the actions 3. Person writing up the results and analysing them
ADVANTAGES, USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inexpensive and visually appealing methods to quickly obtain knowledge about the local community and its needs - Methods requiring little methodological preparation - Methods integrating the community, helping to build the identity of the methods that integrate the community, help build group identity, assist in diagnostic processes - Methods which integrate the community, help build group identity, assist in diagnostic processes For use in spatially limited areas and to investigate the needs of small communities
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experience in carrying out animation tasks - a pre-thought-out plan for the results to be achieved - inter-personal skills of the leaders and the degree of integration into the group
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A method popular in Poland, especially during co-creation workshops and hackathons, used mainly by third sector organisations carrying out tasks for local and regional authorities. A method used by large municipal entities which pride themselves on good cooperation with experienced third sector organisations ● Due to its conditions, the method is difficult to implement by local government employees. ● It is best to use the services of third parties if you want to use this method in practice ● A method with very good results when it comes to finding out the opinions of residents and not just dry facts



5. WORKING GROUP

This work technique allows for the development of complex and multi-faceted solutions in a workshop manner, and can also be successfully used when creating strategic documents or making decisions about controversial and difficult matters. The working group may consist of various stakeholders, e.g. residents, experts, officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations - this is not always necessary, but diversity of experience and knowledge is often very useful when making decisions. The group can be selected deliberately (by sending invitations to specific people) or openly (by collecting registrations, e.g. at meetings and consultation points).

AIM	advanced work on a specific topic, a complex issue
PARTICIPANTS	approx. 5 to 20 persons
DURATION	depending on the needs (length of the process, frequency of meetings), but in order to maintain the group process it is advisable to have at least 2 to 3 meetings
COST	low
PERSONNEL RESOURCES	Group facilitator, chairman of the meeting
ADVANTAGES, USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversity of knowledge and competences, which is useful for group work-group work - Through longer involvement and working in an unchanging group, the opportunity to look at an issue in depth and make a more informed decision - The working group can be a solution when conflict needs to be resolved - A technique good for analysing a multithreaded topic and extracting a single solution, therefore recommended as an element to analyse the material already collected during the participatory process
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A certain level of knowledge and experience of group members in a given subject is required - external support from outside the group as a consultative body is welcome - Consideration should be given to a longer-term outcome stage and a well-defined decision-making process for the group.
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experience from Italy: School lunch commission <p>A selected group, made up of parents, teachers, school canteen staff and administration representatives, meets periodically to discuss issues relating to school meals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This method allows reports and suggestions to be promptly received and the service offered to be improved.



6. OPEN MEETING

The open meeting is one of the most basic techniques. Its aim is primarily to present the subject of the consultation - presenting important information and conditions for the discussed topic and providing additional explanations or answers to participants' questions. The meeting has primarily an informational purpose - this is facilitated by its "classic" formula of a forum conversation. However, it should be remembered that an open meeting, apart from the presentation part, should provide the opportunity for participants to ask questions and exchange reflections or comments between them. It is very important that the meeting is led by a moderator - responsible for the entire course, knowing the order of the speakers' speeches, and in the part where the participants can speak, supervising the order of the conversation (the order of speaking and giving answers, toning down any strong emotions that may appear among the participants, ordering the messages conveyed). information and arrangements). If the topic is difficult and controversial, it is worth considering hiring an external facilitator to help maintain neutrality and allow the office to focus on substantive conversations with participants.

Open meetings can be organized at any time during the participation process, but it is especially worth doing it when we have a lot of important information to share and we clearly want to highlight a specific moment in the process - e.g. its beginning, the end of a stage or a summary of the results.

The technique does not make it possible to get acquainted with the in-depth opinions of the participants.

AIM	to present the subject of the debate, to obtain the views of participants on the material or information presented, to provide additional explanations or to answer questions
PARTICIPANTS	all interested parties
DURATION	1- 2,5 h
COST	low
PERSONNEL RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - moderator - experts
ADVANTAGES, USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - freely accessible to all interested parties - applicable to all subjects - practically applicable at all stages of the consultation process
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide opportunities for an exchange of opinions not only between authorities/officials/experts and residents, but also for interaction /discussion between residents themselves - avoiding the format of an information meeting where representatives of the local community are mainly recipients of information provided ex cathedra by the meeting organisers
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open meetings are used in all TGAL partner municipalities with varying degrees of success. ● The method consists of organising regular open meetings, an open door policy that allows for meetings with residents at least once a week (fixed visiting hours).



7. CONSULTATION POINT

A consultation point is a simple, inexpensive and effective method of obtaining opinions from residents in public space (often outdoors or in the place concerned by the consultation process). The great advantage of this method is that the organizer reaches out to the residents - and not, as is the case with many other consultation techniques - invites them to talk in a designated place. Thanks to this, residents can express themselves simply by passing by and spend as much time talking at the point as they can or want. The great advantage of a consultation point is that the visitor can decide on the time scale of his/her involvement, because the structure of activities and tasks for seeking opinions at the point is usually flexible. It is also a great way to promote consultations and provide residents with information about planned/prepared solutions. The point can be mobile - change the place where it is placed - or be stationary (i.e. always set up in the same place - e.g. at the office or in one place in public space: in a gazebo in a park, on the street, in a public library) . Stakeholder should always carefully consider what place or places to choose for the consultation point and at what dates it is best to set it up in order to collect the opinions of residents (also making sure that these are the opinions of representatives of groups that may have different views).

AIM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to gather information on the issue consulted - providing information on future activities planned by the organisers - promoting the consultation (e.g. distributing leaflets inviting to meetings)
PARTICIPANTS	any number of visitors to the point
DURATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the visitor can spend a short or quite a long time at the point - it is up to the visitor to decide how much time he or she wants or is able to spend at the point. However, the facilitator should plan on the assumption that, on average, the visitor will spend between 10 -15 minutes at the point. - a technique that can be repeated several times as part of the consultation process - at different stages
COST	low
PERSONNEL RESOURCES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a person who prepares information and consultation materials 2. animators of the info point - people who talk to residents visiting the point and introduce them to the consultation issues 3. a person who compiles the results
ADVANTAGES, USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it enables information to be obtained from residents who would be unlikely to take part in a consultation in another format - a tool good to use for other important local events - a technique that is effective in encouraging residents to attend other consultation events and providing information on the changes that the organizers are planning



SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preparing information materials on the consultation to introduce residents to the consultation context and to collect their opinions - the choice of an optimal time and place for the service of the consultation point (frequently used location, timing synchronized with other events taking place in the area, providing opportunities for different groups of residents to express themselves, etc.). - the need to prepare the contact point operators to provide more information about the consultation (its themes and the process itself) for which the contact point is being organized.
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consultation points are also a well-known method used by TGAL partners e.g. for tourism issues, local referendums, public consultations. ● A very important element supporting this method is the right kind of information of the citizens about the possibility to use the consultation center, its signposting and media support.

8. WORLD CAFE

A method for organizing and energizing discussions through the rapid exchange of information and ideas and determining the needs and expectations of all parties involved (but not necessarily finding specific solutions). It involves a simultaneous conversation about several aspects of a given issue (assigned to separate tables) by participants divided into groups. After a dozen or so minutes, the conversation participants change tables except for one person who acts as the host - writing down conclusions and introducing subsequent groups to the issues already discussed.

It is important that after a closed cycle of table conversations (i.e. when each group talks about each of the topics proposed at each table), a plenary session is organized - summarizing the discussions on individual topics on the forum.

AIM	exchanging information and ideas and identifying the needs and expectations of all parties involved (but not finding concrete solutions)
PARTICIPANTS	all interested parties, open selection
DURATION	c.a. 2-3 hours
COST	low
PERSONNEL RESOURCES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a moderator at each table 2. a timekeeper to keep track of time and the overall order of the discussion
ADVANTAGES, USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - helps to generate interest in the topic and create a committed group of people around it - is useful for collecting ideas, opinions or diagnoses - allows a lot of information to be gathered in a short time, but often it is quite general and needs to be further specified - can be used to collect ideas to be taken as a 'starting point' for further consultation



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SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organization of the venue: several tables - creation of a café-like, informal, friendly atmosphere - paper tablecloths or large sheets of paper on which participants can write and draw, so also markers, felt-tip pens, crayons
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<p>Experience from Poland: South Baltic Youth Core Groups Network conducted in local communities of Dzierzgoń, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Gdynia, Elbląg and Baltic municipalities in SE, DK, LT</p> <p>The primary method of action at this level has been ‘round tables’ - debates attended by representatives of authorities, young people and stakeholder organizations - so-called local youth groups.</p> <p>Link: https://wymienikownia.org/projekty/projekt-sb-ycgn/ https://lis.gdynia.pl/o-transporcie-przy-okraglym-stole/</p>

9. FUTURE WORKSHOPS

There are many different formats of workshop work with participants in participatory processes. A common feature of all workshops is that their aim is to stimulate the imagination of participants, to provoke them to go beyond the usual and most obvious opinions (or ideas for solutions), and that they provide more in-depth information. What is important is that the workshops enable participants to interact and exchange views during a meeting with a set course - consisting of individual stages and activities arranged in a non-random sequence. Next, we describe an example format of this type of conversation: future workshops. Future workshops involve dialogue between diverse groups (residents, local authorities, entrepreneurs, etc.) to create a common vision for an area. It assumes 4 basic phases: preparation, criticism, utopia and implementation, i.e. coming up with specific solutions. 1. Preparation: the group gets to know each other, learns the rules of the meeting and the topic subject of discussion. 2. In the criticism phase, information about deficiencies is collected based on the experiences of all participants and brainstorming, then written down on cards and systematized together in small groups. 3. In the utopia (fantasy) phase, solutions are created in the form of “play” - without paying attention to constraints imposed by reality, e.g. financial restrictions. 4. The implementation phase is an attempt to make the best elements of the fantasy phase come true: what was invented is clarified, participants personally take responsibility and look for partners to form alliances. The proposals are made more concrete, the feasibility of their implementation is verified, and specific steps for further action are established.

AIM	stimulate dialogue between diverse groups (residents, local authorities, entrepreneurs, etc.) to create a common vision for the area
PARTICIPANTS	<p>Workshops can be conducted in groups of different sizes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - small (up to 15 people and a facilitator); - medium (15-40 people and two-three facilitators) - large (up to 200 people, one facilitator per working group)
DURATION	1-2 days
COST	average



PERSONNEL RE-SOURCES	Moderator
ADVANTAGES, USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enables the development of a shared vision and comprehensive solutions with an overall action plan - can serve to activate the untapped creative abilities and problem-solving potentials of citizens - basic principle: goals have the greatest chance of being realised if there is strength of expectation behind them
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - getting participants ready to work intensively for up to two days - moderating the work to break away from stereotypical perceptions of challenges and constraints
TGAL PARTNER USE and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future workshops enable participants to interact and exchange views during a meeting with a set course ● Sa rarely used method in TGAL partnerships ● They often take the form of hackathons dedicated to a specific group of professionals or a social group (e.g. young people). ● Due to its time-consuming and costly preparation, it is still rarely used as a method of community consultation

Other forms

Participation is a key principle of democracy. All the festivals have a broad repertoire of methods for facilitating participation. To the right is a list of examples of interaction formats used by the organizers (stakeholders, organisations):

- Talks – keynote and multiple short speed talks
- Open mikes
- Panel discussions
- Workshops
- Pop-up events in the streets
- Demonstrations
- Hot-chair interviews – or softer sofa-conversations
- TV-like interviews with journalists
- Voting
- Dilemma games
- Exhibitions – from just info to interactive versions
- Political stand-ups – like roasts
- Drinks and mingling/ socializing
- Speed dating/matchmaking events
- Concerts/theater
- Seminars
- Walking tours
- Sports contests
- Living library
- Lectures
- Installations



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PART 3 - THE BEST LOCAL EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICES

Actions carried out by municipalities to enhance the access and interest of the citizens towards them

All partners collaborated in the production of action proposals aimed at increasing citizens' interest and participation in the municipality's activities.

Everyone agrees that the involvement of citizens must go through the promotion of the territory and local realities.

1. BEST POLISH PRACTICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL:

A. CHALLENGES: Some of the challenges dedicated to increasing civic participation in Poland

- Mistrust in politicians and the governance systems
- Inability to disagree in a constructive way
- Disintegration and intolerance
- Echo chambers in Social Media
- Distance between the parliamentary systems and civic society/activist participation
- Poor public discussion and dialogue culture
- Decreasing voter turnout
- Insufficient practical dimension and knowledge about democracy and the EU values among the young generation -the knowledge possessed by the young generation about democracy and its advantages is mainly theoretical and does not translate into practical solutions based on participatory processes involving both decision-makers and young citizens. Young people today have no opportunity for other expression and dialogue with different social groups about the values of the EU and democracy outside the school environment.
- Narrow approach and low cooperation at a transnational level among civic dedicated organizations - stakeholders working for the democratization, for increasing social and civic participation have not yet cooperated across borders and have not had the opportunity to exchange experiences, techniques and methods of working with this specific target group.
- Lack of space and platforms allowing participation for all - Young people, smaller groups are underrepresented in decision-making processes which affects them although their engagement is crucial to democracy. They need access to physical spaces in their communities to support their personal, cultural and political development.
- Need of creation of inclusive societies in city/town - One-third of young people in Europe are at risk of poverty and



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social exclusion. Many do not have access to their social rights. Many continue to face multiple discrimination, and experience prejudice and hate crimes. The peripheral regions of the EU, such as the Baltic Sea regions, are particularly threatened by this state of affairs, especially now in a period of crisis of social values and uncertainty about the future (linked to existing threats)

- Moving peripheral youth forward - New migratory phenomena brought several social and inclusion challenges. Therefore, it is crucial to work towards the fulfillment of the rights of all young people in Europe, including the most marginalized and excluded ones.
- New development opportunities for young people from peripheral or less ruralized regions - despite the EU-wide commitment to rural development and given the fact that by 2015 almost one-third of the EU population was living in rural areas, prevailing differences exist between living in urban and in rural areas. Therefore, it is important to ensure equality and social/political engagement for young people in urban and rural settings.

B. SOLUTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES FROM PL – created general frames and dedicated funds for public administration for all kinds of activities

1. Council of the District/Neighborhood - The district council (Residential estate council, ward council) is the body of a subsidiary unit of a municipality in Poland.

- working only in bigger cities, they have a dedicated budget to distribute which came directly from the municipality
- the legislative body of the district is the council with the number of councilors: (15, if up to 20,000 inhabitants live in the district, 21 if the district has more than 20,000 inhabitants)
- aim to support local initiatives and solve the local problem of the district;
- acting as a link between the local community and the authorities;
- Its tasks include, among others: managing the financial affairs of the given subsidiary unit and electing and dismissing the executive body of the district. Some district councils are granted the right of initiative in the city council by the city statutes (e.g. Warsaw and Krakow). Other competencies of the district council, the method of electing its members, and other aspects of the council's operation are defined by the Act on Municipal Self-Government, the city statutes, and the statutes of the district in question.
- The executive body in the district is the board. The board is headed by a chairperson.

Examples: There is a 21 Gdynia Neighbourhood Council – 320 councilors with a budget of 2,5 EUR/ per citizen of neighborhood per total = 2,5 mln PLN + investment funds = 10 mln PLN

2. Citizens'/ Civic budget

- part of the municipality budget designated to meet local needs - an informal term for a dedicated part of a local authority's budget (usually a city's budget), under which a top-down amount of spending is allocated to initiatives and investment projects directly proposed by the local community.
- participatory budget, also civic budget - a democratic discussion and decision-making process in which the residents of a municipality decide how to spend part of its budget.
- The functioning of civic budgets has allowed the direct participation of residents in the decision-making process concerning the disposal of a part of the budget funds of the local authority. Thanks to such public participation in the exercise of power by the municipal authorities, civil society and the trust of residents are strengthened.
- Divided into two departments: a city-wide department (with a designated budget for the so-called green initiatives) and



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a neighborhood budget combining funds for soft citizen activity (cultural, sport, heritage) and infrastructure investments

Examples: Each Polish local authority has a dedicated citizens' budget in varying amounts depending on the size of the municipality and its budget. This institution has been introduced by government law to each local authority.

3. Support system for civic society: Strong third-sector communities and organizations

- a large number of non-public activities and a well-developed sector;
- good cooperation and communication with local authorities;
- these are grass-roots initiatives and organizations dedicated to a variety of topics, which cannot always be fully covered by public institutions
- they are mostly volunteers, activists, and enthusiasts - who come together and set up their organizations with legal status
- are responsible for soft actions but also investments

Examples: Joint investments dedicated to youth

Exchange House - Youth Center for Social Innovation and Design in Gdynia - Wymiennikownia (Exchange House) - Youth Center for Social Innovation and Design is a meeting place for people aged 13-35, located in the building of the former heat exchanger plant at Street Kartuska 20B. The building was donated to the youth in 2012, and was renovated and put into use in 2014.

The exchange house is a place for youth, shaped "by the young and for the young." It is a place to develop passions, develop individual and local resources. It is a space where you can freely spend time, meet interesting people, take part in activities, exchange passions, experiences and ideas. But also to do nothing - and that's ok too!

Most of the classes are conducted by people who have independently come up with the initiative, created groups and have been active for several years, still developing their passions. All classes, workshops and meetings organized within the framework of the "Exchange House" are free of charge.

Wymiennikownia was established by the local government of Gdynia, it is managed by the Laboratory for Social Innovation, and the activities carried out here are financed from the budget of the City of Gdynia and also from funds obtained, dedicated projects.

The site of Pomeranian Revitalization - Gdynia odNowa: Revitalization of the Zamenhof-Opata Hackiego area Opata Hackiego 33 Marina is one of 8 places created over the past few years on the map of Gdynia. It is part of a network of neighborhood centers, created and run in cooperation with residents. They are places to develop passions, make new friends and strengthen ties, as well as intergenerational integration. Anyone willing can lead activities, take part in meetings organized by neighbors, or just drop in for coffee. The marinas are shaped to provide a space for activity for people of different ages, with different experiences - including immigration and special needs. Opata Hackiego Marina is located in the center of the revitalized Zamenhofa-Opata Hackiego neighborhood, so a visit to this place is also an opportunity to learn about Gdynia's approach to revitalization.

During the visit we will talk about the idea of the Marina, but also about the revitalization of the neighborhood where it is located, the rules of the Neighborhood House and the most important activities. We will also be happy to answer any questions and show you around the space and the neighborhood.

The Marina Network was established by the Gdynia local government. It is run by the Laboratory of Social Innovation in cooperation - depending on the location - with other units min. Library, Senior Activity Center, Municipal



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Social Assistance Center. Gdynia Sports Center. The activities carried out here are financed from the budget of the City of Gdynia, and the activities carried out here are financed from the budget of the City of Gdynia and also from the funds obtained, dedicated projects.

4. Democratic Festivals

Democracy is more than democratic institutions and written rules. It is a culture that has to be nourished by creating spaces and platforms where people can physically get together, talk to each other, get inspired, exchange opinions and debate their ideas. Democracy festivals foster active civic engagement, a culture of discussion and critical thinking in response to the alarming rise of authoritarianism and nationalism in our geographic neighborhood.

The fundamental principles of Democracy Festivals in the Nordic and Baltic region are based on the celebration of democratic culture. Thus, the overall aim is to support and strengthen democratic dialogue. This phenomenon started in Sweden, in 1968, in Visby, Gotland, where a political speech was given by Olof Palme, Minister of Education at the time, from the back of a lorry during his summer vacation. Gradually it became a tradition for the Social Democratic Party and within a few years, the remaining parties wanted to join in. Hereafter, this festival has been an inspiration to many people across the region and today we celebrate the existence of eight national Democracy Festivals in the Nordic and Baltic countries. Examples: The practice was not tested on a large scale, but it took place in smaller towns and was dedicated to local communities.

2. BEST ROMANIA PRACTICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

A. CHALLENGES

Local circumstances

- In Slanic Moldova is located the first casino building from Romania and the fifth oldest in Europe. The local municipality has medium term plans to put into value the potential of this historical building, in order to emphasize the cultural heritage component. Plans are for creating a cultural space including theatre, spaces for leisure, cinema.
- Anthropogenic potential of the municipality: The Central Park (architecture and geographical positioning). The pavilion in the park is 130 years old, it's the place where the famous music composer George Enescu gave his first charity concert in the open air, at the age of 9 year old.
- There are currently over 30 mineral water springs in Slanic-Moldova, 13 of which are in operation, a tremendous natural heritage. The municipality has already taken steps to rehabilitate the mineral water springs and attract visitors from Romania and abroad, as part as a strategy for integrated medical tourism.
- The town hall organizes over 40 events per year, with the aim of developing tourism by promoting the local potential and raising awareness of the use of therapeutic waters in the treatment of medical conditions. Relevant events organized by the municipality to stimulate the natural and anthropic heritage are: Mineral Water Day, Mountain-bike/off competitions, Comedy/film festival, Craftsmen's Festival.





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Some of the challenges dedicated to increasing civic participation in Romania

Slanic Moldova has not developed a set of innovative methods for building civic involvement, but by using existing recommendations, proven methods it is trying to apply them in its local community.

Consortium recommendations for better EU level cooperation while enhancing cultural heritage and citizens participation:

- “Each group should be a community”, in terms of unity and efforts for common development. This statement emphasizes our approach for the sustainable growth of our communities. Acting on an individual basis will miss out on a number of opportunities and creates vulnerabilities to individuals. One such opportunity is the presence and promotion of culture and education as a public policy priority at local level. We aim for communities of individuals that enhance their competences and that identifies itself as such, including in the fields of cultural and artistic education.
- Enhancing the citizens participation at local level creates multiplier opportunities in other fields, supports the growing of the local NGOs, public administration and citizens. We should carefully approach the situations of citizens with fewer opportunities (those without material possibilities, young people from risk groups, schools in rural areas, underdeveloped areas, etc). From the local administration point of view, citizens’ participation should be scaled up at each level, including consultations for public policies, prioritizing the investments, education and culture.
- Local municipalities should provide better focus towards youngsters also, as a long-term key for enhancing cultural heritage.
- All activities should be developed co-responsibility, with participation of citizens and a civic sense that makes a community stronger and smarter.

B. SOLUTIONS AND BEST EXAMPLES

ANSBBR, through its member municipalities, is looking forward to identifying common solutions for bringing its citizens closer to the community, to increase their active participation and sense of European belonging. We provide below several examples from the member municipalities from Romania, with a potential to increase the civic participation of our citizens.

- **Cultural Heritage.** Several member municipalities of ANSBBR benefit from extended natural heritage, and monumental protected areas. On the anthropic heritage, municipalities incorporate old town areas, some of them dating back from the 19th century. The focus of the member municipalities was to incorporate the natural and anthropic heritages in a clear local development strategy, that emphasizes the natural heritage and the way tourism can be integrated in a smooth sustainable growth, with a focus on common European heritage. As a concrete example, Slanic Moldova is located in a unique natural protected area (Natura 2000 recognized site), which is currently under a EU project related “Implementation of Active Measures for preservation of the biodiversity in the Natura 2000 Slanic site”. This creates the premises to strongly trigger and also engage its citizens in recognizing the value of the natural heritage and biodiversity, in parallel with better understanding the initiatives of the EU in the field (e.g. European Green Deal, The New European Bauhaus). This approach on biodiversity has a strong multiplier component within ANSBBR umbrella association, since Slanic Moldova is currently holding the presidency of the National Association of Balneoclimateric Resorts in Romania (ANSBBR).
- **Slanic Moldova - the first casino building from Romania and the fifth oldest in Europe.** The local municipality has medium term plans to put into value the potential of this historical building, in order to emphasize the cultural heritage component. Plans are for creating a cultural space including theater, spaces for leisure, cinema.
- **Anthropogenic revival of the municipality of Slanic-Moldova: The Central Park (architecture and geographical positioning).** The pavilion from the central part of the park is 130 years old.
- **Over 30 mineral water springs in Slanic-Moldova, 13 of which are in operation, a tremendous natural heritage.** The municipality has taken concrete steps to rehabilitate the mineral water springs and attract visitors from Romania and abroad, as part of a strategy for integrated medical tourism.
- **Public events, with the aim of developing EU sense of belonging, by promoting the local potential and raising awareness of EU matters.**



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Further solutions identified at the ANSBBR (Romania) level for actively involving the citizens are:

- Local administration is working to draw clear programs and strategies regarding community development, which includes the citizens' priorities;
- To encourage citizens to form cultural associations through which to carry out the multitude of cultural activities - creating hypermobility, multiple associative and social ties and cultural affiliations, multi-territoriality, urbanization;
- To reinvent public spaces as platforms for cultural heritage, favoring their communal function to counteract the increasing dominance of their commercial function, promoting them as platforms for collective expression, democratic discourse and problem solving.
- Efforts to involve professionals to create a strategy to attract clear sustainable growth micro-ideas at the local community level, including public-private partnerships with local companies, as well better exploration of EU funding opportunities.
- Organization of Indoor or outdoor workshops with themes like: i) Learn about your past, compare with your present and create your future; ii) Sustainable development and environmental pollution; iii) Promotion of our local producers; iv) Digital technology.
- Focus on promoting sustainable cultural tourism, adopting a "responsible tourism" approach, based on lessons learned from cities suffering under "over-tourism" and in light of the challenges and changes brought on by the impact of crisis situations (climate change, refugees and migrants, COVID-19) in all localities;
- Creative workshops with raw materials produced by the local entrepreneurs, as well as hand-craft workshops
- To organize more civic engagement outdoor activities, like "Clean your city" or "Discover your city".
- Sports competitions

3. BEST GREEK PRACTICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

A. CHALLENGES: Some of the local challenges dedicated to increasing civic participation in Greece - based on the needs of AAK local strategy

- Lack of mutual trust between the citizens and the local government.
- Limited access to information for certain groups of citizens.
- Lack of motivation and commitment for cooperation (from both sides).
- Limited knowledge and awareness among citizens on their rights and responsibilities.
- Lack of skills and capacities, culture of participation and experience to facilitate participation.
- Lack of resources.
- Lack of policies, regulations, and rules to avoid discrimination in participatory processes against vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, the elderly and minorities.





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B. SOLUTIONS AND BEST EXAMPLES – created general frames for multi sectoral cooperation on democratic participation and involvement of all kinds groups of citizens from the examples of AAK

1. Civic Crowdfunding

Initiation of actual implementation of participating tools.

- Improves community awareness about crowdfunding.
- Rewards-based crowdfunding, with individuals donating to an AAK's project/action with the expectation of receiving a non-financial reward in return, such as tickets for the municipal cinema, etc., at a later stage.
- Alternative, on-line, funding tool, in cases where funding is insufficient and additional resources are needed.
- It concerns, mainly, soft projects/ actions of the municipality.
- New procedure in the daily operation of the Municipality (with many bureaucratic difficulties).
- Public awareness campaign through:

a) press releases about the launching of crowdfunding campaign on the municipality's website and social media, local newspapers, e-newspapers, etc.

b) Promo video of crowdfunding campaign shared in Municipality's social media accounts (Utube, Facebook, Google). Also, this video can be presented: 1) in the Municipal Cinema before the movies and 2) in the Recycling and Environmental Education Park of Agii Anargiri during the organized students' meetings from schools all over Greece.

Example: In December 2019, Municipality of AAK launched a Crowdfunding Campaign aiming to raise the amount of 20.000,00 euros for light energy efficiency improvements of a municipal nursery school. The campaign was not successful since the funding target was not reached, however, the Municipality gained significant knowledge and experience in designing and implementing a crowdfunding campaign which can be used in future projects and actions, in any field of activity. Moreover, the citizens had the opportunity to know first hand the process of crowdfunding and participate in the process. This campaign was a deliverable in the context of the project PRODESA, funded by HORIZON 2020.

2. Strategic mix of multiple tactics and tools of communication

- Citizens can use an online platform which allows the report of non-emergency issues encountered in their neighbourhood (e.g. potholes, street lighting, broken traffic signs, etc.). Through this platform, citizens report issues, request services, respond to polls, participate in surveys, and, in general, they voice their opinion.
- Citizens can, also, visit the Municipal Hall and submit requests/complaints or report issues, in paper.
- Moreover, they can attend council public meetings and express their opinion on a topic.
- They also report issues that affect their daily life, through the municipality's social media.
- During the conduction of the 4-year Business Plan of the Municipality, an online consultation is also administered in the city's website.
- As a result, a pool of microprojects is developed which are chosen and managed collectively by the Municipality and are also aligned with the city's annual action plans / 4-year Business Plans, developed through participatory, bottom-up processes. Through these activities, citizens are finding that they are part of good local governance and can make positive and concrete contributions to their communities. Local authorities are also learning that, by proactively sharing information and engaging local citizens, they can better mobilize financial resources and increase people's willingness to participate in the governance process, thus increasing their sense of ownership and accountability.



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Example: Citizens and local stakeholders participate in the preparation of annual action plans / 4-year Business Plans of the AAK Municipality, by submitting their complaints / requests / opinions, through the above mentioned communication tools (on-line and off-line).

3. Questionnaire Survey:

- Development of awareness campaigns about the topic (on site presentations and discussions).
- Sharing of knowledge and experience between citizens and the representatives of the City.
- Paper survey conducted among the vulnerable groups, children and the elderly, who do not have access to online tools.
- The paper survey is complementary to an online survey.
- The survey results integrate into the ongoing work of conducting studies, implementing actions and projects.

Example: In the context of preparing the Strategic Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) of the City of AAK, and since the participatory processes have great importance for such a project, the Project Team developed school and elderly oriented Mobility Campaigns. The Project Team managed a questionnaire survey in order to depict the city's current status in mobility and mobility options of the citizens. Questionnaires were distributed in certain groups, elementary schools and elderly people. Interesting info was derived through the 577 completed questionnaires.

4. BEST SPANISH PRACTICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

A. CHALLENGES: Some of the local challenges dedicated to increasing civic participation in Spain - based on the needs of Mislata local strategy

- In the processes of citizen participation, it would be necessary to have a greater presence in social networks, as well as a digital information point that links face-to-face actions with online actions.
- Failure to update and improve the portal for associations: SOM MISLATA.
- Strengthen the cross-cutting nature of citizen participation in the different departments of the City Council. This would make administrative procedures more efficient for citizens.
- To increase the information available to City Council staff and citizens on European Union measures and initiatives, as well as to raise awareness of the resources available to associations.
- Strengthen the municipality's associative sphere, through a greater number of material and personal resources to carry out its actions.

B. SOLUTIONS AND BEST EXAMPLES - creation of general frameworks and dedicated public administration funds for all types of activities

1. Update and improve the "SOM MISLATA" portal on the municipal website:

- Create social networks for information on participation processes of interest to citizens and local authorities.
- To make the work of associations visible to the rest of the public.
- Promote the creation of new associations and local entities.
- Strengthen the networking of Mislata's associations.



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Example: In 2016 the portal “SOM MISLATA” was created to publicise all the municipal associations in Mislata and their activities. A very useful tool to inform about the entities that are part of Mislata’s register of associations. With the arrival of new forms of online communication, such as social media, we propose an update of the portal format, as well as the creation of communication and dissemination channels adapted to the new formats.

2. Provide in-house training for municipal departments on citizen participation processes:

- Promote training among the different municipal departments to raise awareness of the reality of the world of associations.
- Provide an internal channel for reporting needs in the different administrative procedures.

Example: In 2021, a series of actions were carried out for City Council staff on some of the areas of citizen participation, such as social responsibility. These trainings had a very positive outcome and helped to raise staff awareness. With this new improvement, the aim is to follow this strategy in broader areas of citizen participation and associations.

3. To create a material resource centre to carry out projects of the associations of the municipality.

- To provide local bodies in the municipality with materials to be able to develop their actions.
- Support from the City Council to the entities in administrative and management tasks, in order to speed up their procedures.

Example: The City Council of Mislata offers its local entities the possibility of ceding their spaces for activities offered to the public. Likewise, they benefit from the exemption of fees for the occupation of public roads and in some cases, they receive economic aid through agreements and subsidies. The aim of this measure is to go further and provide the organisations with materials and human resources to facilitate their work in their activities.

5. BEST ITALIAN PRACTICES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

A. CHALLENGES: Some of the challenges dedicated to increasing civic participation in Italy - based on the needs of Gambassi Terme

- Lack of citizen participation regarding initiatives promoted by the local authority.
- Lack of motivation and commitment to cooperation.
- Lack of participation in the touristic promotion of the area.
- Lack of mutual trust between citizens and local government.
- Lack of resources.
- Inability to give constructive criticism, especially via social networks.
- Little knowledge and little interest in EU values and initiatives.
- Misinformation regarding local attractions both for tourists and for citizens themselves.

B. SOLUTIONS AND BEST EXAMPLES – created general frames and dedicated funds for public administration for all kinds of activities

1. Creation of a network of businesses with the aim of promoting the territory

- Promotes cooperation between local businesses.
- Improve awareness of local attractions.



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- Increases the perception of community and collaboration in the search for a common goal.
- Simplifies the dissemination of information.
- Simultaneously promotes local entrepreneurial realities and the territory.
- The presence of a single spokesperson for various companies simplifies their relations with the public administration.
- It allows member companies to intercept tenders and financing at both a national and European level.

Example: In 2020, the business network “The Gambassi Experience” was established in the Gambassi Terme area, which represents numerous commercial, agritourism and hospitality activities and has among its objectives the promotion of tourism, the eco-sustainability of tourism itself and the development of initiatives aimed at better qualifying the territory; In these 3 years the network has actively participated in the promotion of the territory and experiential tourism and has intercepted funds for the development of the companies that are part of it.

Furthermore, the business network, through a specific agreement, has made part of its website available to the local administration for synergistic management of tourism promotion and the dissemination of communications.

2. Organization of cultural events involving citizens

- Cultural events based on the history and tradition of the area allow for high involvement of citizens.
- Collaboration in the organization of these events helps citizens to feel part of the local community.
- The events also represent an attraction for tourists and residents of nearby municipalities.
- The creation of events through a participatory process with citizens allows us to generate constructive criticism that leads to improvements in the organization.

Example: At the end of August, for an entire week, the “Palio delle Contrade” takes place in Gambassi Terme. Every year the 4 districts compete in games of various kinds, as well as in the parade of allegorical floats, to compete for victory. During the Palio week, the historic center of Gambassi is also animated by shows, parades, concerts and stands presenting typical local products. This event was born with the intention of giving the city an opportunity to strengthen social ties, play to be together and rediscover itself between generations.

3. Collaboration with voluntary associations:

- Consolidation, through the support of local administrations, of local voluntary associations.
- Possibility of using the human resources of voluntary associations during local events and demonstrations.
- Effective resource management.
- Spread of volunteering as a tool for the inclusion of the most vulnerable categories of citizens.
- Promotion of volunteering among young people.

Example: In the Municipality of Gambassi Terme there are various voluntary associations active in the area, which take an active part in the events organized by the local administration and also organize their own events. An example is the “Pedibus”, a project promoted by the municipal administration with the collaboration of the local school, which plans to replace the use of the school bus with accompanying children on foot along established routes. This reduces pollution as well as teaching the child the rules of road behavior and autonomy, however this project requires a high number of chaperones available to supervise the children during the home-school journey. In this regard, the local voluntary associations have always made their volunteers available, creating a situation of safety and conviviality with the children.



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4. Collaboration with higher level bodies for the valorization of the territory:

- Enhancement of the thermal establishment.
- Enhancement of the stretch of the Via Francigena present in the area.
- Collaboration with other entities that present the same attractions.
- Promotion of territorial attractions on a national and international scale.
- Participation in national and international events.
- Increased visibility

Example: Gambassi Terme has an important thermal spring with related establishment in its territory and is crossed by a stretch of Via Francigena. To promote and increase the value of these two attractions, the Mayor and administrators regularly participate in meetings and events organized by national and international organisations, specifically “the Association of Thermal Municipalities” and “the European Association of Vie Francigene”. These initiatives, in addition to increasing the visibility of Gambassi Terme at a national and international level, represent an important source of inspiration for improving the local offer.





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PART 4 - THINK GLOBAL ACT LOCAL PARTNER CIVIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY FRAMES

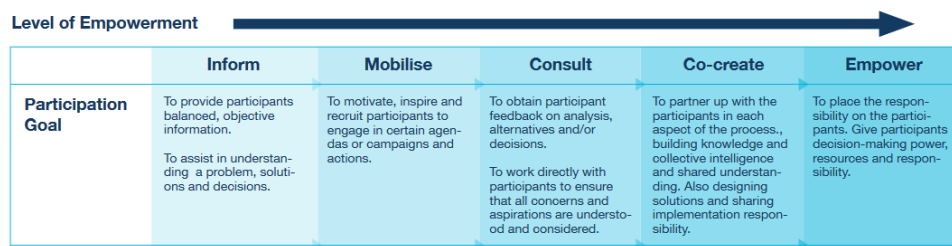
1. VISION STATEMENT:

The vision of all members of Think Global Act Local Consortia is to create an inclusive and vibrant democratic society where every citizen has the opportunity and motivation to engage actively in the democratic process, contributing to better governance and the overall well-being of their communities.

Goal: Increase and support Civic participation and democratic pro European shared values

Strategic objectives:

- Inform
- Mobilise
- Consult
- Co-create
- Empower participants



As part of the strategy, over the next 2-4 years, it is recommended that local authorities take steps to:

1. organize of inclusive participatory processes in a variety of formats; online or offline, as a series of events or other similar initiatives.
2. organize of inclusive spaces for dialogue around specific issues; involving diverse communities online or offline.
3. develop or implementing different types of platforms for public deliberation.
4. support civic dialogues, awareness raising, communication activities, public information campaigns on social media.
5. build coalitions and deepening partnerships with other civil society organisations, coordination activities and strategic cooperation between the non-governmental sector and public, private sector or other stakeholders.
6. Create or test new methods and forms of strengthening active citizenship in the context of taking, implementing or monitoring policy decisions at local, regional or national level.



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2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

1. Education and Awareness:

- **Goal: Increase civic education and awareness among citizens of all ages.**

Objectives:

- a. Implement comprehensive civic education programs in schools, promoting civic knowledge and critical thinking.
- b. Launch public awareness campaigns to inform citizens about their rights, responsibilities, and the importance of civic engagement.
- c. Develop and maintain an easily accessible online platform for civic education resources.

2. Accessible Civic Spaces:

- **Goal: Create accessible platforms for citizens to engage in meaningful discussions and deliberations.**

Objectives:

- a. Establish community centers and online forums for open dialogues and civic discussions.
- b. Encourage the use of digital tools and social media for constructive debates and information sharing.
- c. Facilitate town hall meetings and public hearings to involve citizens in local decision-making.

3. Youth Engagement:

- **Goal: Foster a culture of civic participation among young people.**

Objectives:

- a. Develop youth-oriented civic programs, including internships, workshops, and youth councils.
- b. Encourage schools and colleges to integrate civic engagement into their curricula.
- c. Support youth-led initiatives and platforms for peer-to-peer engagement.

4. Technological Advancements:

- **Goal: Using all available methods, techniques and innovations to build and strengthen participatory processes and the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes**

Objective:

Leverage technology to make civic participation more accessible.

- **Digital Platforms:** Develop user-friendly digital platforms for civic engagement, voting, and policy discussion.
- **Online Resources:** Provide accessible online resources explaining government processes, legislation, and local issues.
- **Virtual Town Halls:** Host regular virtual town hall meetings to engage citizens from all walks of life.

5. Community Partnerships:

- **Goal: Strengthen collaboration between government, civil society, and businesses.**

Objectives:

- a. Establish partnerships with local organizations and NGOs to promote civic engagement initiatives.
- b. Encourage businesses to support employee volunteering and civic education.
- c. Engage in regular consultations with community leaders to address specific local needs.



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3. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:

Legislation and Policy Reform:

- Advocate for legislative changes to support the implementation of the strategy.
- Develop a framework for evaluating the impact of policy changes on civic engagement.

Resource Allocation:

- Allocate sufficient resources to fund civic education programs, technology infrastructure, and community initiatives.
- Explore public-private partnerships for financial support.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Establish a monitoring and evaluation system to track progress and measure the impact of civic engagement initiatives.
- Use citizen feedback to adapt and improve programs.

Capacity Building:

- Train government officials, educators, and community leaders in effective civic engagement strategies.
- Foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Public Engagement Campaign:

- Launch a nationwide public engagement campaign to inform citizens about the strategy and encourage their active participation.
- Utilize social media, traditional media, and community events to reach a broad audience.

4. TIMELINE

Develop a at least 2-year timeline with annual milestones for each objective and action item.

5. BUDGET

- Each partner will prepare a comprehensive budget, including both short-term and long-term funding requirements.
- Organisations will focus on low-cost solutions with low financial and material outlays while looking for external resources
- Exploring possible sources of external funding in the form of projects dedicated to European values and enhancing participation and civic participation

6. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Collaborate closely with stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This long-term strategy for civic engagement and participatory democracy aims to create a society where citizens are informed, engaged, and active participants in the democratic process. By fostering a culture of civic responsibility and providing the necessary tools and resources, we can build a stronger and more inclusive democracy for future generations.



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING FOLLOWING STRATEGY

1. Very important element in bringing the consulted issues decided upon in participatory process development strategies closer to the public is the creation of supporting materials that allow the public to understand the key objectives, meaning and impact of the strategy. One such form is the use of a summary - written in a language understandable to the potential recipient; one can also suggest more frequent use of maps, cartodiagrams, charts, visualisations, which give a much better idea of the proposed solutions and the mechanics of strategy implementation.
2. it is worth initiating a public discussion on the draft strategy by preparing some basic problems to be developed during the discussion, or even questions or strategic dilemmas, which will give a clear structure and attractive dynamics to the discussion.
3. It is worth promoting the practice of feeding the strategic planning process at the regional level with reliably conducted qualitative social opinion surveys, diagnoses of needs and expectations, but also various types of environmental expertise (e.g. in the form of a representative group) increasing both the participation and the quality of the solutions to the strategies.
4. It is crucial to diversify the ways in which opinions on the strategy are sought and to select forms and tools according to the stage of the participation process and the participants in the consultation. It can be a good idea to combine innovative and interactive methods, e.g. using web-based tools, with traditional methods that are predictable and understandable to most participants, based on face-to-face interactions between officials and participants, reaching out to groups that do not use online tools;
5. The use of innovative and interactive forms of outreach, such as online consultation platforms, which can significantly increase the speed and improve the effectiveness of outreach to potentially interested citizens. The complexity of strategic planning issues at the local government level leads us to recommend that more emphasis be placed on developing diverse active methods of citizen participation. The following are particularly worth recommending, but rarely used:- deliberative polling (participatory qualitative opinion polling),
 - the future workshop,
 - RRGs [Representative and Recommendation Groups],
 - citizen panels and problem panels,
 - Word cafe.





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GENERAL STRATEGY CONCLUSIONS

The above outline of the Strategy for Supporting the Development of Civil Society is a document inaugurating **the process of shaping the ideological and programmatic content for the formation of a good, i.e. efficient, transparent and just local society and local self-government. A civic-oriented local government in which universal and overriding values, shared by and for all, should be the criterion for the social dream of a dignified Life and the ways of making it a reality.**

The Strategy is not a document out of context. It is a complementary, in relation to the overall analysis of the **vision of socio-economic development, part that is an expression of civic reflection within the framework of a common discussion and proposals for concrete actions, in the face of an attempt to answer fundamental questions: what do we want to achieve and how should our local government function to create an inclusive society participating in the most important processes within it.**

The dynamics of development processes do not allow for clear and definitive answers. But it does pave the way for thinking about fundamental goals and priorities, which are a prerequisite for the success of any important undertaking.

This is how the document should be understood and this is the context in which the invitation to debate its further shape and ways of operationalising it is formulated.





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