

CIVIL and DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

How to empower citizens to participate in the public life
of their communities



Citizens, Equality, Rights
and Values programme



THE PROGRAMME



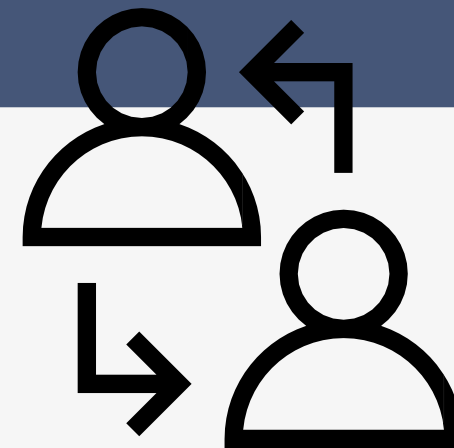
Objectives
and
Stakeholders



General
Framework
for Civil
Participation



How to
engage



Toolkit



PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY



Participatory democracy is based on
the right to seek to
**determine or influence the exercise of the public authority's
powers and responsibilities.**

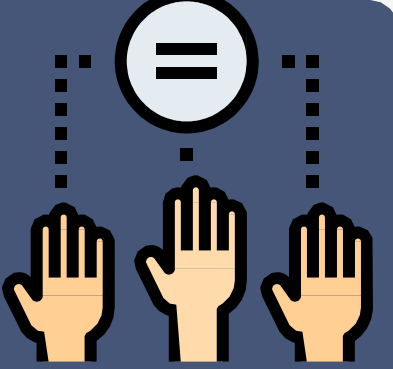
It contributes to **representative and direct democracy.**

Participation of citizens is at the very heart of the idea of
democracy.

Effective democracy depends on citizens having a say and being
heard.



PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY



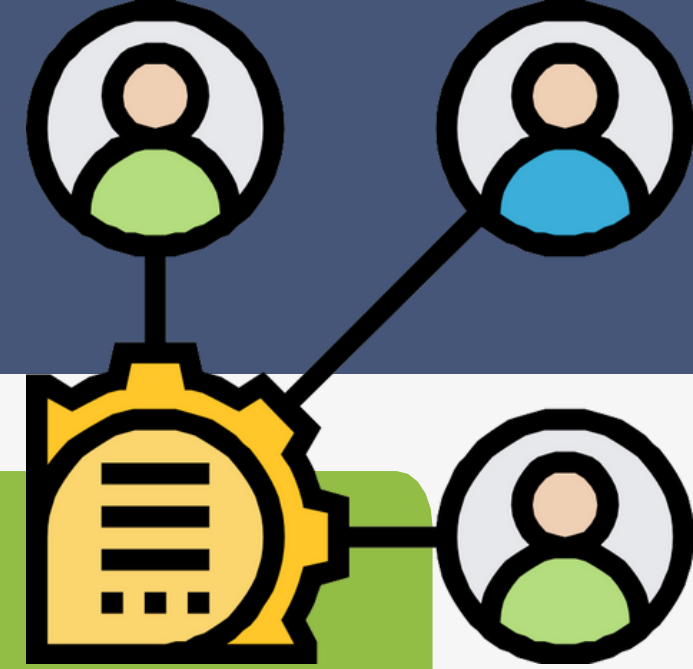
Participation by all groups of civil society in decision-making at all levels of government is one of the prerequisites for a functioning democratic society and for fostering democratic security.

Why?

- It is crucial to help sustain the **legitimacy** of the decisions and deliver **accountability**. LAs are not able to act as effective community leaders if they lack a base of popular support.
- Governments need to listen and learn in order to design **better policies and services**. How does one know if public services are meeting people's needs unless they have been asked in a coordinated and sustained way? Participation enables more effective learning and better decisions: **sustainability of the policies**
- Good governance is not just a matter of delivering good outcomes. The manner in which they are achieved is at least as important: **ownership of the process**. It is good that people are actively involved in the decision-making process of their communities. Again, this affects the sustainability of the policies. The more they are grounded on the citizens' awareness and participation, the more they are likely to respond to real needs and be appropriate and sustainable in time.



THE STAKEHOLDERS



INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS

- **Local** (municipalities, municipal agencies, towns, cities, metropolitan cities, etc.) and **regional authorities** (regions, provinces, counties, etc.) for processes concerning the local level of decision-making;
- **National authorities and national agencies**, such as government departments, ministries, etc. for decision-making processes implying the need to consult at national level;
- **Cross-border institutions** (EGTC, Euroregions, etc.) for decision-making processes impacting at transnational level.

CIVIL SOCIETY

- Youth associations
- Women associations
- Associations representing the interests of minority groups
- Associations representing the interests of disadvantaged groups
- Volunteering associations
- Awareness-raising associations
- Consumers' associations
- NGOs
- Trade unions
- Trade associations (chambers of commerce, etc.)
- Professional associations
- Private investors (foundations, trusts, etc.)
- Entrepreneurs

4 LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION



INFORMATION



CONSULTATION



DIALOGUE



PARTNERSHIP



1

LEVEL: INFORMATION



Access to information is the basis for all subsequent steps in the involvement of NGOs in the political decision-making process.

An accurate, timely and complete information shall be ensured:

- throughout the whole **policy cycle**: agenda setting, policy drafting, decision, implementation, monitoring and reformulation
- In all the **stages of the participation** (incl. consultation, dialogue and partnership)

SOME KEY RULES:

When shaping a communication message, it is key to take into consideration the following:

-What is the **objective** of my communication? What do I want to achieve?

-Who are the **targets** of my communication? (i.e. youths, experts, women, foreigners, etc.)

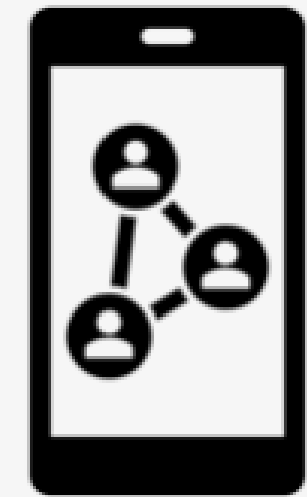
-What are the most appropriate **channels** for informing my target group? (i.e. digital or paper? Physical meeting?)

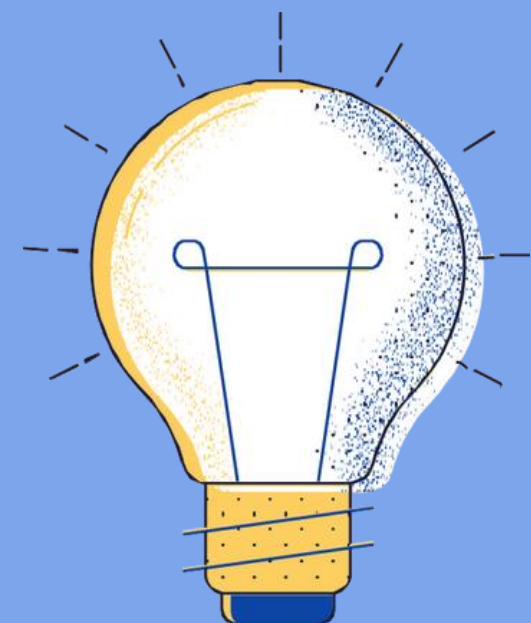
Hint: Any meeting shall be organised in a place which is well known, accessible, at convenient timings for the citizens

1

TOOLKIT and MECHANISMS

- Publishing agendas, reports and other relevant materials online, on **public authority websites or social media** (i.e. mid-term reports);
- Providing relevant information (i.e. convocation of public events) via **WhatsApp or SMS**
- Paper material: **posters, brochures** (to be disseminated at community meeting areas, so as to ensure reaching also citizens with limited or no internet access, or no digital competencies)
- **Municipal office** dedicated to the information and services for the citizens
- **Public meetings**





SOME EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION

My Budget Online Application

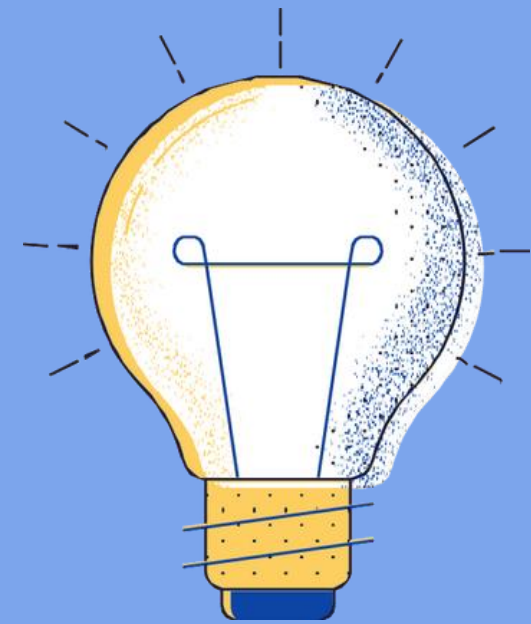
Subject: Online tool on the official website of the municipality of Centar in Skopje, North Macedonia

Target groups: Citizens of the Municipality of Centar, Skopje

Highlights: In addition to participating in budget forum meetings, citizens can use the online tool on the website of the municipality to:

- **be informed** about the municipal budget, and its definition and discover the sources of funding and expenditures for municipal investments
- **submit their proposals** for creating the budget and share their vision about municipal priorities





SOME EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION

The language used shall take into account who are the users!

Group "Scintilla", Vicenza, Italy

Information provided in Italian prevented the communities of foreigners, who are strongly present in the area, to join the participatory process for the requalification of the neighbourhood. The process lacked representativeness in this phase.



Digital or paper?

Elections of the neighborhood councils in a community located in a piedmont area.

In 5 out of 7 neighborhoods only the whatsapp group worked

In the remaining 2 (mostly mountain) neighborhoods, only the notice boards and brochures worked, as no internet is available.

2 LEVEL: CONSULTATION

Consultation allows public authorities to **collect the views of individuals**, CSOs and civil society at large on a specific policy or topic as part of an official procedure. Public authorities might take into account the inputs collected, but this is not compulsory.



SOME KEY RULES

A) Elaboration of a message clear and precise, to be submitted to consultation

- Preliminary analysis of the context, before the meeting
- For which aspect of the public policy am I opening a consultation?

B) The format

- The venue of the public meeting (a venue which is open and accessible to all)
- The format of the meeting (avoid an excessively official format): on-line, in presence, hybrid)
- The agenda of the meeting shall allow an exchange with the public and not end up with a long presentation of the subject
- a facilitator who can animate the debate, coordinate the dialogue and manage potential conflicts

C) Follow up

- The consultation must ensure feedback about the following process of decision – making, to avoid frustration and loss of trust from the citizens

2

TOOLKIT and MECHANISMS



- Public meetings

- Consultative committees

Permanent or regularly requested by the municipality, divided by theme (e.g. committee for the elderly, parents' committee).

They address key elements of the political programme of the municipality (health, environmental policy management, etc.)

- Surveys.

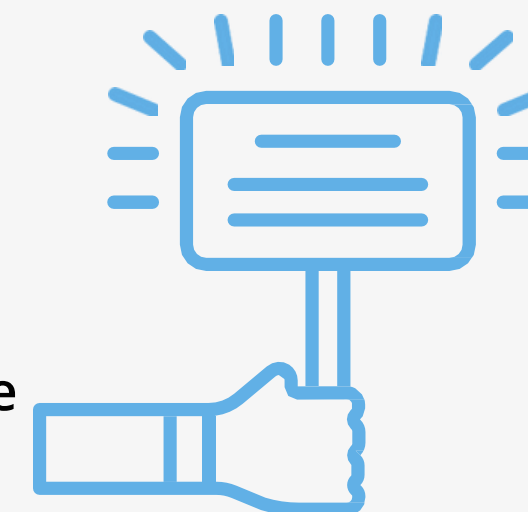
They can be:

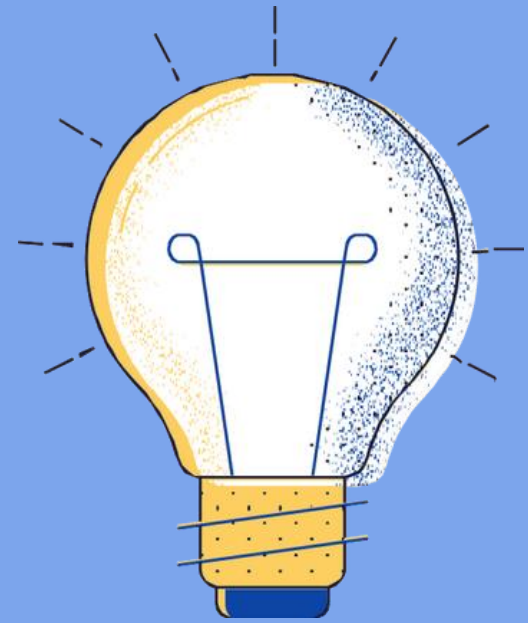
- filled by hand. In this case, it will be sent by post or distributed in public places. It is key to identify the modality and the venue of the distribution
- Digital. In this case, it is key to take into consideration the capacity of the users to interact with ICT tools

- Consultative Referendum.

This tool is often authorised and provided for in several European countries on specific themes, in particular on themes of urbanisation or medium and long-term commitment of public resources (investment and others). It requires considerable organisation and its regulation varies according to the number of inhabitants in the municipality.

-**Petitions**. It is often a collection of signatures to attract the attention of public institutions and to try to influence the decision-making process. The minimum number of signatures required may vary from case to case and from Country to Country.





EXAMPLES OF CONSULTATION

Consultative committees

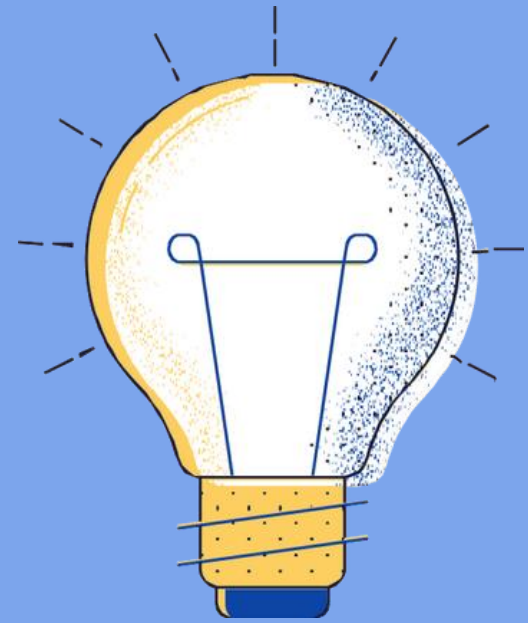
Senior citizens' councils in Denmark

Senior Citizens' Councils are based on Danish social legislation and are tied to the local politicians and local government. They support senior citizens' participation in and influence on decisions and actions in their communities.

In the context of an ageing population, the presence of this committee allows for the regular representation of a large part of the population (approximately 20% of the Danish population is elderly (which will be about 27% in 2030)).

<https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/community/opengov/case/statutory-elected-senior-citizens'-councils-denmark>





EXAMPLES OF CONSULTATION

Petition

The Informal Group 'Youth For Change' emerged in Vlora, Albania, in 2020 as a response to the long-standing indifference of the local government and lack of public investment in the local public infrastructure.

- First step: door-to-door meetings, open community meetings
- Second step: preparation, signing and submission of a **Petition about the deteriorated public infrastructure of the neighbourhood**, asking for interventions to improve it



A large crowd of people, seen from above, is arranged in a shape that resembles a large number '3'. The people are wearing various colorful clothing, and their shadows are cast on the white ground. The '3' shape is formed by a continuous line of people, with a small gap at the top left where a blue circle containing the number '3' is located.

3

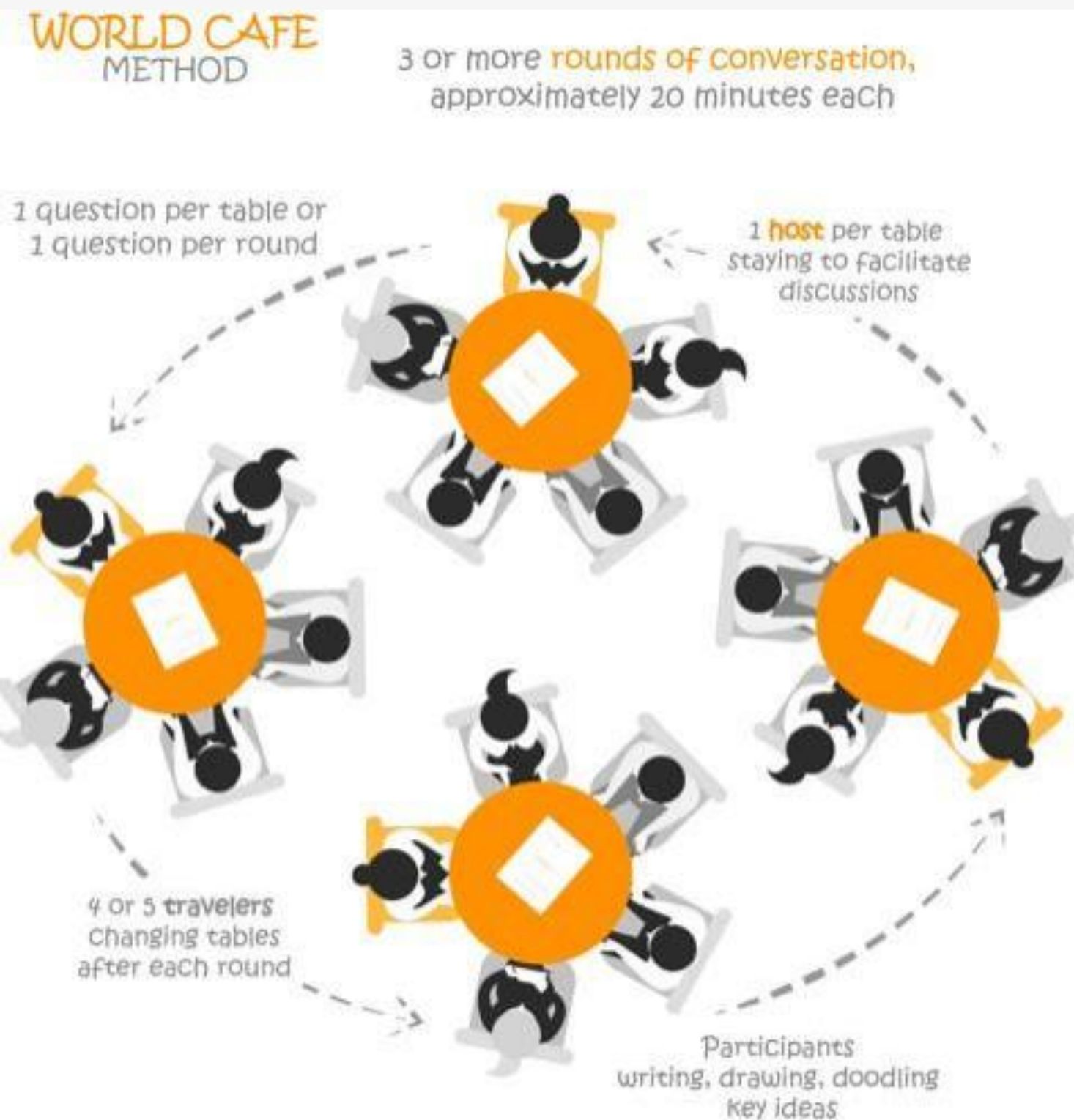
LEVEL: DIALOGUE

The dialogue is a structured, long-lasting and results-oriented process which implies a two-ways communication. It consists of joint, often frequent and regular, meetings between LAs and the civil society to develop specific policy strategies. At this stage of the civil participation, in fact, it is the public authority that mostly feel the need to include the stakeholders' capacities and competences into the decision – making process, thus creating incentives and occasion for a mutual exchange with the stakeholder.

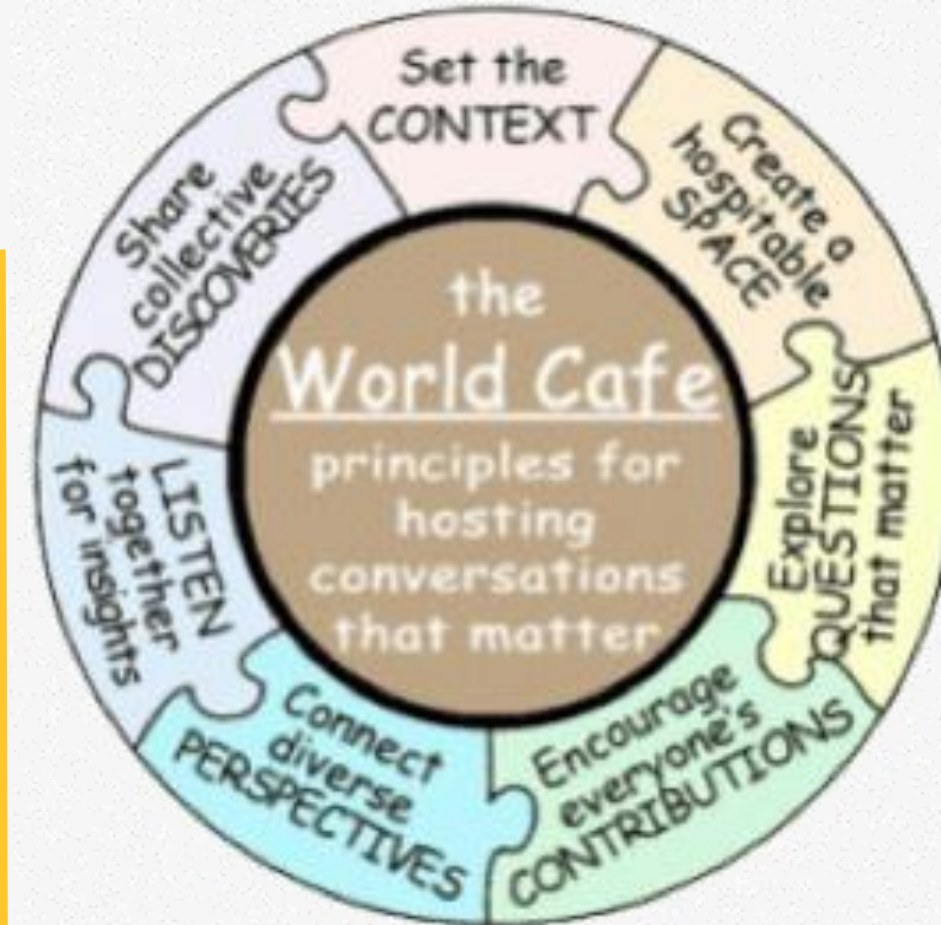
3

WORLD CAFÉ

TOOLKIT and MECHANISMS



The core design philosophy of a World Café session is that people possess an **intrinsic ability and insights to address issues of decision-making or planning effectively** and that natural conversation is one of the best options for eliciting such dialogue. As participants rotate between tables over the course of a session, individual conversations build off one other, and ideas and issues “cross-pollinate”. In doing so, the collective intelligence, focus, and experiences of the group are brought to bear on a particular issue or issues with a collective sense of purpose and direction.



3 OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

OST is participant-driven and less organizer-convener-driven.

The scheduling of which talk, on which topic in which room is created by people attending, once they arrive.

This methodology repose on a total trust in the capacities of the group.

This method best works when some conditions are met:

- A real and serious issue at stake (not too broad or undefined topic)
- A high level of complexity
- Multiple points of view
- Widespread conflictuality
- Necessity to find a solution quickly



Key principles of the OST: 4 rules

- Whoever comes to the OS is the right person
- Whatever happens, it is the only thing that could happen
- When it starts, it's the right time
- When it's over, it's over

3

FOCUS GROUP

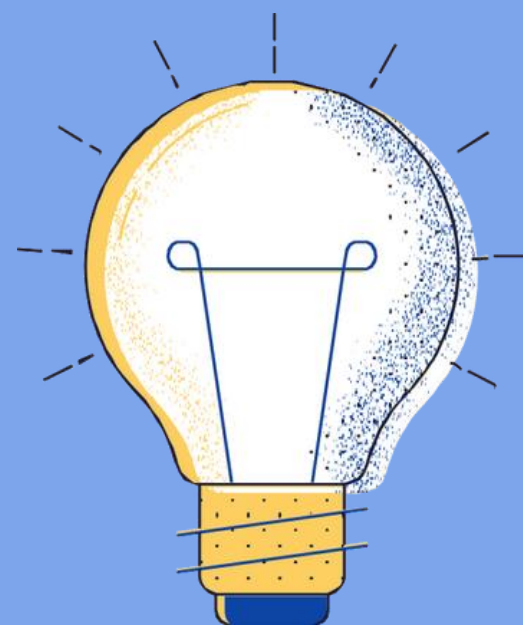
The focus group is a participatory methodology that allows for in-depth data gathering and debate on a specific issue. It is not advisable for preliminary phases of a decision-making process, such as a priority setting (better served by the implementation of a World café methodology), but might be very useful to revise the drafting of the policy or to work on the policy tuning after monitoring opportunities.



Focus group meetings work very well for groups up to 10 -15 participants, so to allow for an in-depth analysis of the topic at hand.

The participants are experts in the topic debated and it is advised that also the facilitator possesses a certain degree of competence. Differently from World café, during a focus group stakeholders act based on their role and actual knowledge, as the information they share needs to be checked against actual resources and feasible

EXAMPLES OF DIALOGUE



Gruppo Scintilla - vivere meglio adesso

@grupposcintilla · Community

Since 2019....

Group of « resource people »

World café with the citizens

An action plan: « Viale Milano, the place to be »

Two - way dialogue with the public institutions

**Social and
Cultural
Events to
create a
sense of
Community
and keep the
Motivation
high**



4 LEVEL: PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is a **highly integrated form of collaboration** between civil society and local authorities,
which foresees a shared journey from problem identification to formulation and implementation. It places citizens at the same level of responsibility as local authorities or decision-making committees.

Partnerships represent a **stable form of collaboration** between local authorities and a civil society organisation (an association or a group of associations).

They can be **validated by an agreement or by recognition** from the municipality and are often thematic. The link between the two actors is permanent and aims to find solutions jointly.



'Active Citizenship' project

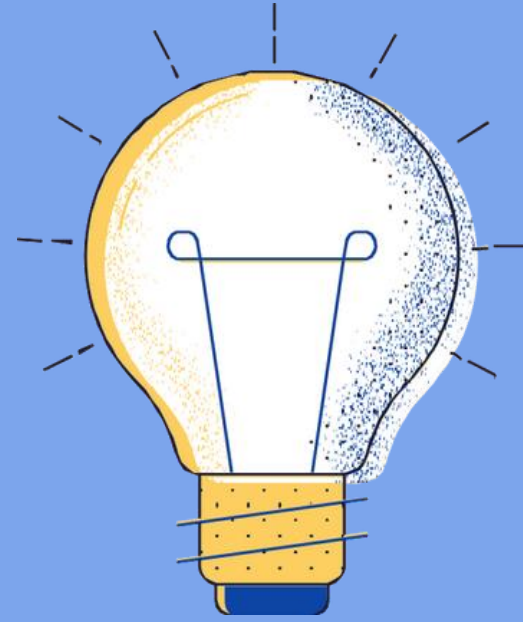
Implemented by the NGO "Syri i Vizionit" in Kosovo* in 2012-2013

Involving two regions and seven municipalities

A successful example of **collaboration** between **Local Authorities** and
Civil Society

Outcomes:

- Creation of 7 territorial community councils in Pejë and Prizren
 - Drafting of activity plans for local community councils
- Providing advice to many citizens about the form of advocacy and their right
 - Addressing citizens' requests to the relevant institutions
- Mobilizing citizens and raising their voice for participation in decision-making processes



EXAMPLES OF PARTNERSHIPS

EMPOWERING NEIGHBOURHOOD

MANIFESTO CONSIGLIO DI QUARTIERE N. 3 (PIANE, SS. TRINITÀ, RESSECCO)

AL CENTRO DEL PROGRAMMA DEL CONSIGLIO DI QUARTIERE N. 3, PONIAMO COME PRIORITÀ: L'AUMENTO DELLA PARTECIPAZIONE ATTIVA, IL MIGLIORAMENTO DEI SERVIZI E DELLE OPPORTUNITÀ E LA RIGENERAZIONE DI DIVERSE ZONE DEL QUARTIERE.



IDENTITÀ

- Comune e Consigli di Quartiere si impegnano a trovare **spazi comuni** da poter utilizzare per eventi e riunioni;
- Creazione di un evento per conoscere la **diversità del quartiere**



RAPPORTO CITTADINI - AMMINISTRAZIONE COMUNALE

- Realizzare un elenco di "esempi pratici" per ogni **funzione dell'amministrazione**;
- Avere un **Consiglio formato** per affrontare ogni problematica
- Installazione di una cassetta in quartiere **per i più anziani** che non usano mezzi tecnologici
- Mettere a disposizione **tecnologie adsl** in zone poco coperte



INVESTIMENTI

- **Viabilità**: necessità di divieti di sosta, aumento del controllo della velocità, miglioramento dello stato dell'asfalto in zona Piane
- **Rifiuti**: aumento dei bidoni e migliore distribuzione nelle varie zone
- Manutenzione del **verde privato sporgente** e nel perimetro di proprietà
- Finanziare un **parco giochi** nella zona Piane



RUOLO DEL CONSIGLIO DI QUARTIERE

- Corsi di **formazione per i consiglieri di quartiere** su come interagire con i propri cittadini
- Creare momenti di **condivisione con i propri cittadini**
- Offrire corsi di **educazione civica** (tenuti dal Consiglio di Quartiere per i propri cittadini)

Reviving Neighbourhood Councils stimulating participation and new ideas

Permanent structures, which serve as a point of contact between the citizens and the city council. They do not have legislative power, but they hold executive power at the neighborhood level.

Depending on the municipal regulation, the LA delegates to them the management of specific services for the neighborhood, with a dedicated budget. The neighborhood council can be elected and by the citizens of the neighborhood they belong to.

Councils



THANK YOU

For more information:
milena.dimitrovska@alda-europe.eu