

**Participation in the European  
Project: How to mobilise citizens at  
the local, regional, national, and  
European levels**

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# Introduction

This study contains four parts.

Part I outlines the context and approach of the study. It provides accessible definitions of concepts that are used in the study, and raises different issues that have been considered important in the elaboration of the remainder of the work. It also introduces two key approaches to participation in the ‘European Project’: sector-based, and territorial initiatives.

Part II of the study provides key data concerning each of the Member States of the European Union. The choice of data elements was validated during the course of a workshop held in Brussels. These ‘Country Sheets’ are intended to provide key comparative data across the EU, to highlight the differences in context and potential initiatives or measures that can be taken by Local and Regional Authorities to engage citizens in issues of a European nature.

Part III of the study consolidates a large amount of primary and secondary data concerning various cases that have emerged during field and desk research. It starts with some insights into the key actors involved in participation exercises in the EU, and then addresses some key issues for consideration when designing engagement and participation initiatives. The bulk of Part III is dedicated to detailed case studies from several EU Member States.

Part IV provides some reflection concerning the major challenges for Local and Regional Authorities in a European Union context, and addresses some of the concerns and challenges for engaging citizens. After evaluation of past strategies and policies, it also makes some initial suggestions as to the future of a European Communication Strategy, and does so through a two-way process: looking from the top-down, and the bottom-up.









# **Part I: Definition of terms and concepts**

# 1. Mobilising participation in the European Union

Democracy has clearly been undergoing a series of challenges; some analysts believe that this is subject to new pressures such as globalisation and new technologies, and others believe that these challenges are inherent to democracy. In any case, the role of citizens in influencing government activity has emerged as a point of discussion in Western Liberal democracies. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in large agglomerations, such as the ‘giant demos’ of the European Union, which presents its own complex multi-level structure.

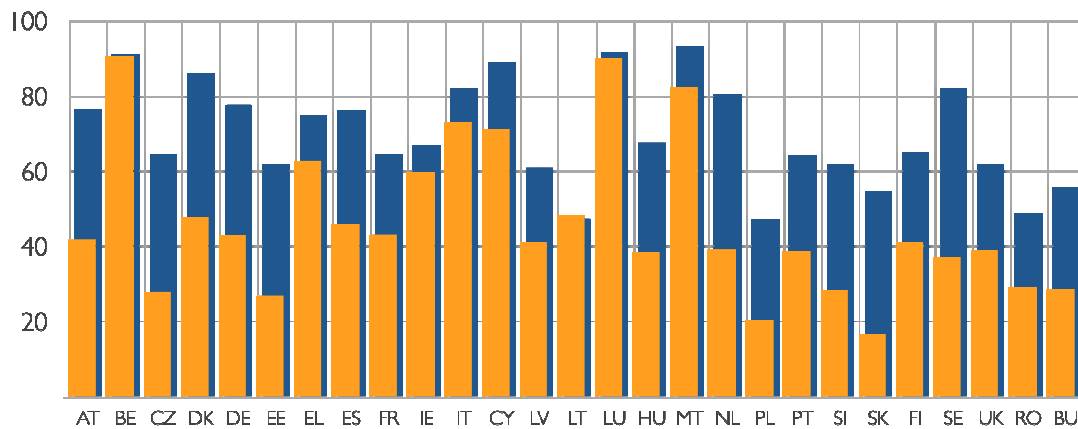
Analysing the role of citizens in democracy provides policymakers and all actors involved in policy-making with a set of fundamental challenges, which are addressed throughout the study. It suffices to say here that these challenges place a great responsibility upon politicians at all levels to make politics *relevant* to citizens in today’s Europe, in order not to slide into a situation where apathy and misunderstanding provoke a complete ‘disconnect’ between citizens and their representatives. Models of democracy that only consider election time as the sole moment for interaction between elected and electorate need to be reconsidered; instilling the political goal of engagement with all elements of society, including citizens, needs to be done more than every four or five years (Benz & Stutzer, 2004). **Public institutions lose democratic legitimacy if citizens are not actively aware of the workings of government.** Government is not the only actor in the political field, and being in control of the executive branch of a state does not give *carte blanche* to anyone anymore.

Simply put, to consider relations between citizens and politicians as being the role of government is swiftly becoming old-fashioned and contemporary understandings and practices of representative democracy need to be challenged, and refined or redesigned. This has become more prominent as the level of trust of citizens in their politicians decreases (see, a.o. Norris, 1999). In the European context, this is also coupled with the perceived ‘democratic deficit’, which can be seen as more of a ‘communication gap’ in line with recent proclamations from the European Commission and other European institutions. Is democracy failing in European Union Member States?

The easiest way to see whether citizens are engaged in democratic activities or not is to examine voter turnout. The core principle of representative democracy is the participation of citizens as demonstrated by their voting in elections. The most common reason quoted for not voting is that politicians do not listen. This is leading to a situation where citizens are feeling a loss of ownership to the democratic process and where the ‘representativeness’ of elected assemblies is put into question. Is there a role for media organisations to engage and interact

with citizens to increase interest and participation in politics? Political philosophers and democratic theoreticians have considered these arguments for a long time, but the arrival of new interactive technologies will clearly have an impact on this. Policies (as will be seen below) exist to encourage engagement in the European ‘project’, and yet the research that has been carried out on the current and potential impact of new media on media organisations has either examined this from a managerial perspective or from a commercial viewpoint (and invariably with a focus on the U.S.).

**Figure 1-1 Comparison of EU vs National voting turnouts in period 2004-2008**  
 Source: Authors’ calculations based on Eurostat and other data.



Although democracy is not solely about voting, the ballot box is a crucial element of democratic behaviour. As the easiest, and most recognised, benchmark concerning democratic participation, turnout at elections can show some simple facts about the health of a political institution. Figure 1-1 shows a comparison of the percentage turnouts in elections at the national and European levels in the period 2004-2008. European turnout is far less than at the national level, and turnout at European and national elections are both, in many countries, below the 50% mark. Turnout, however, is only one benchmark. **Politics is happening outside the voting booth in many countries**, and this study provides examples and ideas of how to capitalise upon this phenomenon.

Our traditional understanding of the constitutional model of democracy is facing strong challenges from below (the citizen) and above (the international system, meaning, e.g. financial markets, and even the European Union itself). Whilst the term globalisation has come to mean almost nothing and everything at the same time, it is important to consider the impact of non-state forces on traditional forms of government. Technology, and the increasing availability of means to connect to citizens in other countries with only the slightest hint of international borders, whilst not being the only factor, has played a key role in encouraging us to reassess this model. Ironically, technology is also seen as a central tool to help rectify this situation, as will be shown in a large number of cases that are



revealed in Part III of this study, and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) have a key role to play in engaging citizens, not only in the local sphere, but also in national, European, and global issues. As actors at the level closest to the citizen, these institutions can act as the ‘relay’ between higher levels of governance and the people that reside in their localities. The cases showed in this study highlight some of these facilitating roles that LRAs can play, which revolve notably around education and information provision, ensuring relevance to local citizens, and reporting back to higher levels in the governance structures, such as the national and European levels.

### **1.1. Globalisation and crises in democracy**

A country without a government would be inconceivable in today’s day and age, and yet many aspects of society are being both privatised and internationalised. Health care, welfare, and even prisons in certain countries are under control of private companies, and global issues such as sustainable development are highly important to certain groups of citizens. Government responses, as shown by the frenzied activities concerning the global financial situation, which peaked in early 2009, are tempered by other influences, beyond the control of states. Democratic legitimacy, as one of the fundamental characteristics of the European Liberal Democratic State, is also being challenged by this lack of control.

Despite these challenges, politics must continue. Increasingly, democratic institutions are being asked to justify why they have been granted authority to carry out work on behalf of citizens: in other words, **their legitimacy is being challenged**.<sup>1</sup> A vacuum in political legitimacy has opened up, and as nature abhors a vacuum, there is a desire to fill it quickly. National governments, as well as European institutions are trying to develop policies, initiatives, and even develop new modes and models of governance to fill these holes. Within this turmoil, there is room for local authorities in particular to make their voices heard in a more efficient, and perhaps louder, manner. In the United Kingdom, for example, recent years have seen the growth of regionalisation programmes, with the establishment of several regional assemblies. Other countries are undergoing similar exercises, in some cases, with greater autonomy being given to particular regions.

New thinking about how to deal with these and other challenges has led to use of the term governance instead of government. Governance is about how

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this, see King, 2003, and for an EU focus, see Moravcsik, 2002.

political actors and institutions (be they public or private) share tasks and responsibilities in social, political and administrative spheres. In other words, it is about how actors in a certain political setting interact. In this framework, the role of government is a crucial part, but not the only part.

As will be shown in these pages, the current landscape for democratic activity is subject to several crises, which include, but are not limited to:

- A crisis in traditional forms of government, identified by, for example, a decrease in turnout in elections at all levels.
- A lack of trust between governed and governors
- Fragmentation of the political scene, with global issues and local politics dominating citizens' lives
- A sensationalisation of political debate, leading to a simplification of many complex political debates, and therefore a lack of deliberation
- An increasingly demanding lifestyle, leading to less time to engage in political discussion between citizens, and less time for citizens to spend on understanding how political institutions work.

Added to this list of challenges for democracy in the EU Member States is the notion of the ever-increasing power of the European Union, which is seen by some elements of the public sphere (notably the media in many countries) as taking freedom of decision-making from the national level and shifting authority and power to the more distant European institutions.

## **1.2. Governance in Europe**

It is not only globalisation that is taking away power from states. In Europe, as the EU evolves, increasingly more decision-making powers are shifted 'to Brussels', as popular parlance would contend. What is sometimes forgotten in debates about public institutions and their relations with citizens is the consistent and omnipresent existence of a media sphere, which provides a relationship between citizens and representatives as a sort of 'fourth estate' (See Chapter 2 for more on the media).

The European Commission took steps to address this situation in 1999 after the fall of the Santer Commission, for reasons concerning malpractice of EU Research Funds, amongst others. The Commission launched an initiative to describe and create a model of governance for the EU. As a result, the Governance White Paper was developed, along with many other initiatives concerning Administrative Reform of the European Commission. The Commission defines governance as: "taken to encompass rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised at European level, particularly as regards accountability, clarity, transparency, coherence,

efficiency and effectiveness” (European Commission, 2001: 4). This definition focuses upon the mechanisms required to reduce the perceived democratic deficit (or communication gap). However, there are subtle undertones inherent in any discussion of this type: the European Commission obviously is intent upon making the voice of the European Union sound more democratic, and thus, recognizing the importance of the European level not only in policy-making, but also in citizen-governance relations. It obviously does not make sense to talk of a European government in our traditional understanding of the term; but it is not beyond our imaginations to deal with the concept of European governance. Whilst concentrating upon the democratic deficit, European governance also seeks legitimacy – and thus a self-sustaining role for itself – in relations between citizens and the European Union.

**Table 1 Characteristics of European governance**

|          |                |               |           |               |              |
|----------|----------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|
| Openness | Accountability | Participation | Coherence | Effectiveness | Transparency |
|----------|----------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|

Table 1 highlights different characteristics of governance, as described by the European Commission, and adds transparency as a central key element towards engaging citizens. This is considered a necessary addition due to the large amount of distrust surrounding political institutions and the seeming perception that public institutions don’t always act in the public interest, but are rather held under the influence of more powerful, mainly global, undemocratic structures of authority, such as multinational corporations, etc. Some of the detailed case studies provided in Part III of the study use these characteristics as a benchmark, to facilitate a broader understanding of how these have an impact upon governance. They are also described in greater detail in Chapter 2 of this study.

This vision of governance disseminated by the European Commission complements the discussion of governance at the theoretical level: the aims of the White Paper are to “ensure more clarity and effectiveness in policy execution, and maximise the impact of the Commission’s actions” (European Commission 2001: 8). European governance, according to the Commission, can be seen as a model of democratic steering that involves certain principles that seek to enhance understanding, support and agreement regarding policies made at the European level between a complex set of actors, and the model of network governance naturally lends itself to this cause (Kohler-Koch and Eising 1999). The fact that there is no traditional ‘government’ at the European level, that the policy-making activities of the European Union can be separated functionally, and that they genuinely cross borders, all contribute towards acceptance of this model as the best explanation for governance in Europe.

Governance at the European level is necessary because its Member States have agreed to work together in a way that is highly complex and cannot be simply

dealt with in our traditional understandings of how political institutions function. This study starts from the premise that one single government for the European polity would not be manageable, feasible, or desirable. Discussions regarding the issue of European governance are timely: governments are increasingly under pressures from global forces, which include the environment, human rights, employment, immigration and global capital markets. These pressures have led to the creation of a political will to resolve issues at a European level, but have led to a complex arrangement for the execution of these common political aspirations. This is due to a number of reasons, including national interests, the desire not to forego sovereignty, and historical contingencies from the EU. This complex arrangement, at least in the eyes of the citizen, is often referred to as the European Union. In more general terms, as Cerny states: “In order to pursue policy goals which are beyond the control span of the state...a network of international and transnational regimes has grown up, some with more general and some with more circumscribed jurisdictions.” (Cerny 1996: 133). These regimes resemble, in some cases, an “international ‘quangocracy’” (Cerny 1996: 133), bodies which are beyond and outside of the traditional electoral feedback loop described in Chapter 2, and therefore seen as outside of the control of citizens.

When we look at the European Union, and the relationship it has with European citizens, there are two main issues that need to be raised. Firstly, the EU is criticised by many as being undemocratic. Many criticisms of the European Union’s democratic characteristics focus on the so-called non-democratic nature of institutions such as the European Commission, and the lack of ‘presence’ in daily life of the European Parliament (Lord 2000, 2001). Citizens within Europe’s borders are often misinformed about the policies being formed at the European level and this does not provide the political process with any legitimacy.

Secondly, given the relatively young age of the European institutions, the constant debates on further enlargement of the EU, and the constant discussion over revisions of treaties and new powers and new methods of dealing with allocation of power to the European institutions, the European Union is constantly in flux. It becomes more and more difficult to explain this growing political body to most citizens.

**Therefore, Regional and Local Authorities have a key role to play in facilitating information sharing amongst themselves, communication from the European institutions towards the citizen, and interaction between citizens and themselves in their local area, and potentially beyond if this is advantageous to all parties.**

Developments in European politics have a profound impact upon their daily lives. As Beate Kohler Koch notes: “Since Maastricht, Community competence has been enlarged, covering many aspects of daily life.” (Kohler Koch 1999: 14.) For example, in Sweden, estimates show that approximately 60 per cent of the issues dealt with by municipal and county council assemblies are directly or indirectly influenced by European funding or decisions taken by the EU.<sup>2</sup> In France in the year 2000, Zürn contested that “a good 50% of the acts passed in France today are in fact merely the implementation of measures decided upon in the opaque labyrinth of institutions in far-away Brussels...” (Zurn, 2000:184). However, these policies are not legitimated by the general populace in the way that local and national policies are, due to the need to carry out a complex decision-making process between a whole host of institutions, including 27 sovereign states, one transnational parliament, a body of law interpreted by the European Court of Justice, a growing ‘executive’ in the form of the European Commission, and two advisory bodies that represent local, regional, and economic and social actors within this ‘giant demos’.

The deepening of political ties between existing members of the Union all require serious consideration and debate, and not just from and between policy-makers. However, the creation of a European polity seems to be lagging behind the development of policy, but the utility of a single European polity is also contestable, and maybe undesirable, given the inherent obstacles involved when trying to engage nearly 500 million people in political activity. Furthermore, in most OECD countries, an average of approximately 80% of citizen interaction with government is carried out at the local level (SOCITM and I&DeA 2002).

**One of the potential strengths inherent within the current institutional setup of the European Union would therefore be the possibilities to engage with citizens through local and regional authorities in a more effective manner, thereby overcoming issues of ‘distance’ and ‘relevance’ of European issues to the European citizen.**

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<sup>2</sup> The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions <http://www.skl.se/artikel.asp?A=48687&C=6393>

## 2. Terms and concepts

### 2.1. Politics and policy-making, legitimacy and participation

In the first instance, participation and engagement from citizens is desirable due to the fact that an engaged citizenry is more likely to be a satisfied citizenry. Robert Puttnam's work on social capital shows that a strong sense of social capital is commensurate with a healthy democracy (Puttnam, 1993). In other words, when people work and live together in strong communities, their appreciation of the democratic process is enhanced. Cases provided in detail in Part II of the study, below, highlight the fact that when citizens are involved in a decision-making process, they are more likely to accept the outcomes, even if they do not provide them with their optimal desired result.

Secondly, it is useful to engage in dialogue and deliberation as a key element of the decision-making process, due to the fact that the numerous actors now involved in governing and managing society cannot be simply co-opted into government any more. These involve actors in the private sector, as well as those from outside of the respective territory.

Another issue relates to when and where participation should take place. The OECD (2003) divides the policy lifecycle into five stages:

- agenda-setting
- analysis
- policy formulation
- policy implementation
- monitoring/evaluation.

**Clearly, there is scope for citizen involvement at every stage in the process,** and to a limited degree, this is already apparent. However, many authorities blur the distinction between the participatory process, and policy formulation stage, otherwise known as consultation.

Particularly with respect to Local and Regional Authorities, active participation from citizens at each stage in the policy lifecycle is of importance and relevance. As actors in the European policy-making process, LRAs provide an opportunity for local actors to feed directly into European decisions and deliberations, but also to highlight areas of concern to citizens and therefore participate in agenda-setting activities.

Figure 2-1 The 'organisation' of political institutions

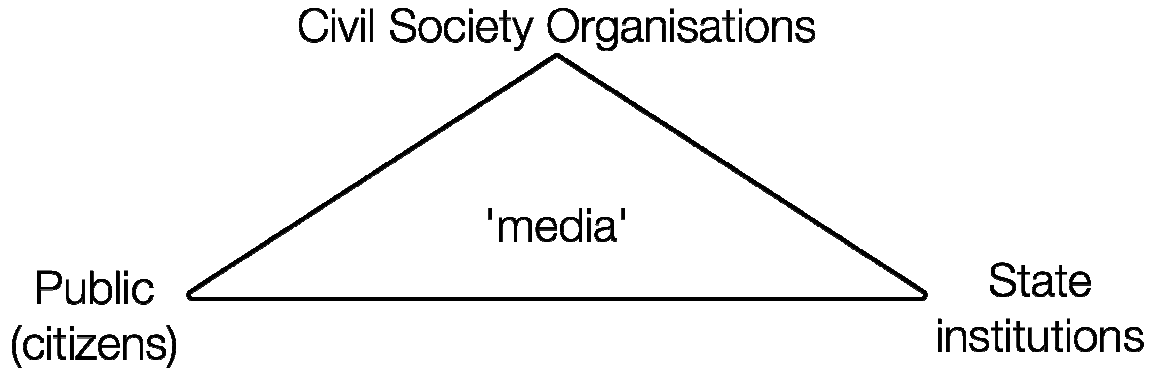


Figure 2-1 above shows the dynamic between citizens, state institutions (government and the public sector) and the so-called third sector, or civil society. Importantly, this model places the media at the centre of these relations. The media provide an important link between all of these institutions, as it provide, disseminate, and sometimes even generate, issues of relevance to citizens. In some instances, it can be more effective for a politician to deal with a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) than with separate citizens. As will be shown in Part III of this study, CSOs also perform a highly motivating role, as well as providing a filter for information that individual citizens may not wish to receive, hence they would participate in a CSO.

However, this model is also fluid and can be seen to be shifting, as all actors, including citizens, governments and other organisations (including the private sector) are moving to 'embed' dissemination of information into their own institutions.

Most experts see active citizen participation as a vital part of a thriving democracy as well as being necessary for the successful transformation of modern societies. New channels and processes for participation are therefore sought to ensure a potentially more inclusive involvement of citizens in the decision making process, and to compensate for certain democratic deficits. The aim is to broaden and deepen popular engagement in democratic processes to ensure strong democracy in Europe.

To integrate and harvest these possibilities at a policy level poses tremendous challenges. This is the case at regional and national levels, as well as at the European level. All major European institutions, have for some time now been addressing the issue of participation and democracy, often as part of their strategies and activities in areas such as governance, inclusion, cultural heritage, and learning. Some of these issues are also currently being examined in the context of ICT, such as eParticipation where the European Parliament requested the European Commission to launch an eParticipation Preparatory Action in

2006.<sup>3</sup> The usage of ICT in daily lives of European citizens will grow in coming years and become embedded in daily life, just as the printing press, radio, television, and telephone have all become general purpose information and communication technologies.

Local, regional and national governments throughout Europe are striving to broaden democracy by providing new channels and mechanisms between themselves, citizens and civil society, aiming for a more open and transparent democratic decision-making processes. They are doing this because, firstly, there is a widespread sense that the public is increasingly disengaging from formal political processes, such as voting, joining political parties, following political news or getting involved in other political activities, and this disengagement is seen to reflect a crisis of public trust in governments of all sorts and efficacy (i.e. citizens' belief in their own capacity to influence public affairs). Secondly, there is a widespread belief that more bottom-up approaches which empower individual citizens, communities and different interest groups provide an important way forward in restoring participation and legitimacy. Media organisations have a clear role to play here, literally as 'intermediaries' between State institutions and citizens as well as creators and protectors of public spaces. This role is evolving, and therefore in need of greater analysis, as we head into a period where there are large shifts in control, attention, and - in general - governance issues in politics.

## **2.2. Traditional political processes**

The growing apathy to formal political processes does nothing to change current political policies but is at risk of undermining our current model of representative democracy. When that representation consists of representatives elected by a minority of the electorate, this brings into question the legitimacy of political decision-making. In a number of European countries where voting is not obligatory there has been a steady decline in the number of people willing to turn out and vote in local, national and European level of elections. The European Parliament was directly elected for the first time in 1979 and at each election since, voter turnout has fallen on average across Europe by about 2-3% every five years. The turnout in the 2009 elections followed a similar downward trend with the average turnout in Portugal approximately 37%, while in Slovakia it was even lower at 19%.<sup>4</sup> In some European countries this trend is unfortunately even more pronounced at local and regional levels.

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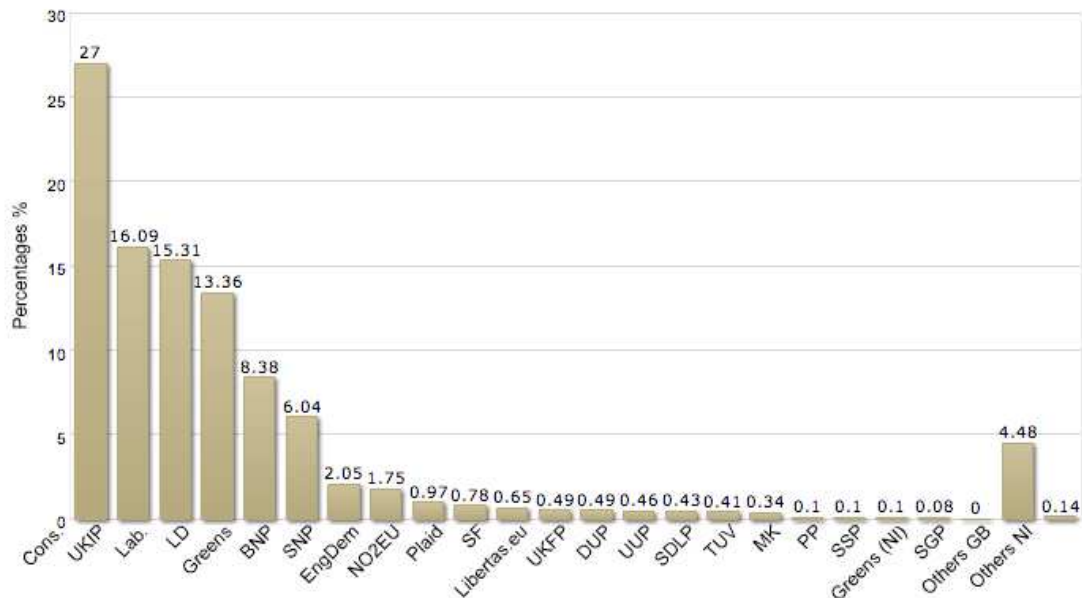
<sup>3</sup> More information can be found at [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/egovernment/implementation/prep\\_action/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/egovernment/implementation/prep_action/index_en.htm), where details concerning the projects financed through this action can also be found. (Accessed 28 July, 2009).

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.elections2009-results.eu/en/turnout\\_en.html](http://www.elections2009-results.eu/en/turnout_en.html)



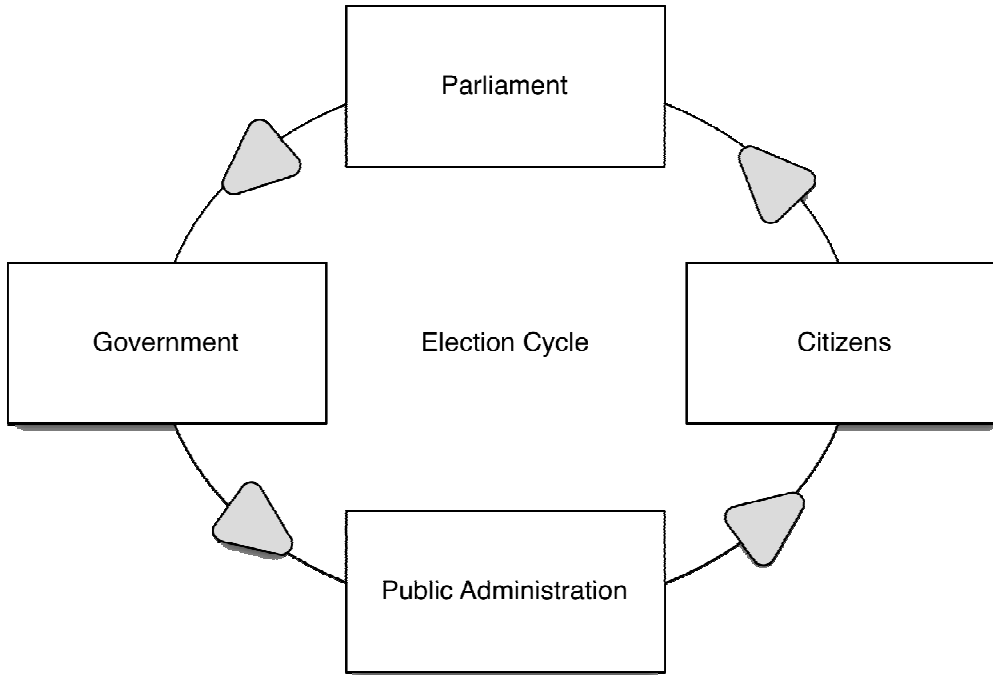
Hence, citizens have begun to feel that there is (again) a large gap between the ‘governed’ and the ‘governors’. Sometimes, as we see with certain political or protest movements against global capitalism, the reaction is to contest violently against the ungovernable powers that manage these structures. In other cases, people turn to the ballot box to vote against certain movements, as can be seen by the recent European election results from the United Kingdom, where well over one third of the votes cast went to parties with an anti-EU platform (including UKIP, Greens, BNP, NO2EU, etc.).

**Figure 2-2 UK EP election results 2009 source:**  
[http://www.elections2009-results.eu/en/united\\_kingdom\\_en.html#ancre1](http://www.elections2009-results.eu/en/united_kingdom_en.html#ancre1)



As Eising and Kohler-Koch state (Eising & Koch, 1999), governance, and not government is the focus, because: “authoritative allocation [can take] place without or outside of government”. Government is merely one part of what Hoff, Horrocks and Tops call ‘the electoral chain of command’ (Hoff et al., 2000). This electoral chain of command, however, resembles more a feedback loop than a hierarchical system, with Parliament, Government, Public Administration, and citizens fully integrated into a cycle of constitutional democracy (see Figure 2-3). This normative ‘chain of command’ makes the assumption that citizens only participate once during the election cycle.

**Figure 2-3 The traditional electoral feedback loop**



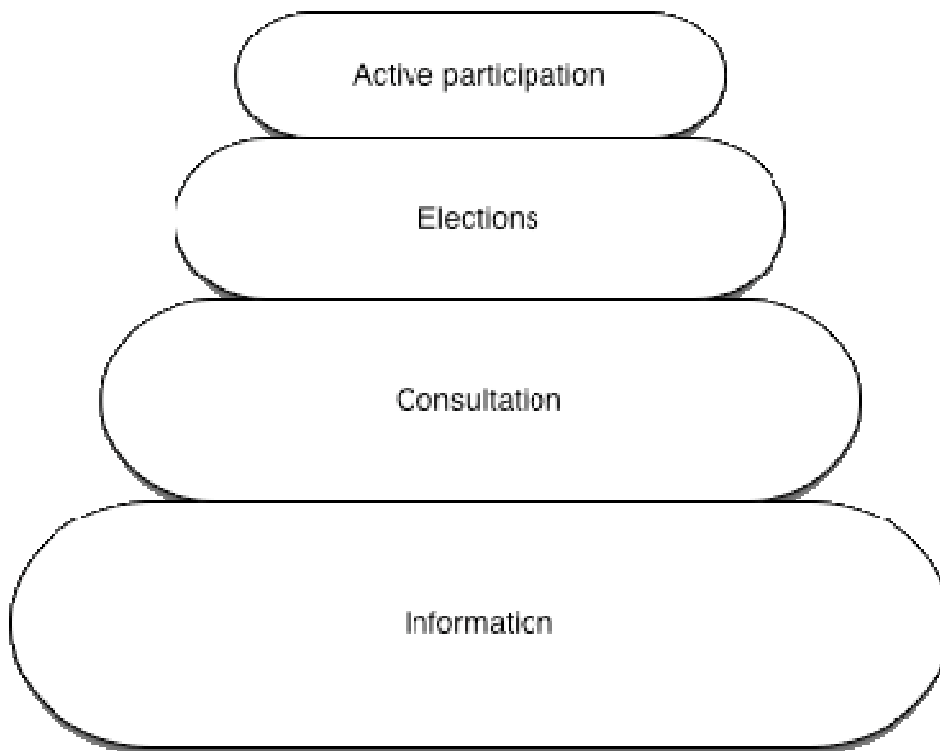
### **2.3. The OECD's democracy value chain**

Challenging the traditional electoral feedback loop has direct implications for existing democratic and participatory structures in Europe where a so-called perceived 'democratic deficit' has been recognised in recent years because of the loss of trust in politicians and in the political process, and falling participation rates in elections. Many of these issues are related to the so-called 'democracy value chain' (or cycle), which links the different aspects of democratic participation together in order to ensure complementary and reciprocal strengthening. The OECD has suggested a democracy value chain (OECD 2003) as stages towards greater empowerment:

- Information (enabling) – a one-way relation in which government produces and delivers information for use by citizens. It covers 'passive' access to information on demand by citizens as well as 'active' measures by government to disseminate information to citizens.
- Consultation (engaging) – a two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback to government, based on the prior definition by government of the issue on which citizens' views are being sought. This requires the provision of information as well as feedback mechanisms.

- Elections – on single issues (for example through a referendum) or for representatives in a council or parliamentary election.
- Active participation (empowerment) – a relation based on partnership with government, in which citizens actively engage in the whole policy-making process.

**Figure 2-4 The OECD's 'Democracy Value Chain'**  
 Source: OECD, 2003



These stages in developing an empowered citizenry are not necessarily linear, although the approach from public authorities when considering how to ameliorate the participation process would most likely consider it so.

#### **2.4. Governance**

The following subsection outlines several different aspects of governance that need to be considered, particularly in the European context, when examining how to mobilise citizens in the 'European project'. The emphasis on terminology used in the study purposely focuses upon the Governance White Paper, to ensure that recommendations that emerge from the study are in line with the general EU-level activity on the topic. However, several other concepts are introduced, which have been used when designing the case studies and their analysis.

#### 2.4.1. Multilevel Governance and subsidiarity in the EU

The development of a multilevel system of governance, such as that in the EU, requires different actors at different levels to assume different roles in the policy making process (see Chapter 2.3). Some studies of EU governance have shown that authority is distributed across varying levels of territorial governance. As a consequence of this, Conzelmann notes “there is a growing gap between ‘government’ in the Weberian sense of formal state structures endowed with legitimate and unchallenged authority over a territorially defined society, and ‘governance’ in the sense of the production of collective goods” (1998: 8). The author maintains that European-level policy should not be considered an “external restraint”, but should be considered part of domestic policy (1998: 14). This signifies a remarkable paradigm shift in terms of EU governance, which, as shown above, tended to focus solely upon the EU as an international concern.

A successful implementation of multilevel governance would need to treat all actors in the policy making process as ‘partners’, focusing upon the key importance of the role of actors at lower geographic levels in the system: this would logically imply a closer interaction between all different levels of government, and an engagement of all actors in a revised and improved governance mechanism. The Committee of the Regions’ own *White Paper*, drafted in 2009, provides an in depth outline of the different roles of the various partners in the European governance matrix (Committee of the Regions 2009a). This includes treating the European institutions as having coordinating roles, but working together with local and regional authorities as well as national parliaments and governments to facilitate the drawing up and implementation of policies at the European level.

One of the most cited examples of multilevel governance in the EU has been in terms of regional development and structural fund policies (Conzelmann, 1998; Perkmann, 1999). Conzelmann describes the “European system of multi-level governance” (1998: 9) through analysis of European Regional Development Fund and concludes that: “trends point to a decreasing possibility of unilateral control over domestic policies in the context of multi-level governance” (1998: 11). Perkmann shows that interactions have occurred in territorial cooperation between cross-border regions in the EU due to European Structural Fund allocations, and that multilevel governance has helped these networks and sub-networks emerge (Perkmann 1999: 665). The creation of the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)<sup>5</sup>, which, as a legal entity, has approached the goal of ensuring interaction between local authorities without the need to refer to national agreements to be made prior to regional interactions.

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<sup>5</sup> More information can be found at [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/funds/gect/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funds/gect/index_en.htm)

Regional development within the EU is a crucial aspect of fostering extension of competences at the EU level and modes of governance have emerged to facilitate this, which have primarily revolved around the creation of networks organised vertically and horizontally, including the EGTC mentioned above (see e.g. Dai 2003). The regional, or multilevel, dimension of the Information Society provides an interesting example of understanding the role of EU institutions in gaining competencies at the local and regional levels in Europe (Alabau, 1997). Linking the Commission's White Paper on Governance to the regional dimension of the Information Society, Xiudian Dai has stated: "the European Commission's vigorous search for 'good governance' is also likely to recruit more policy actors from the sub-national level in the years to come" (Dai, 2003).<sup>6</sup> This implies that transnational governance, through use of European Structural Funds, European Regional Development Fund, and RTD funding, is becoming a far more important aspect of the governance matrix in the EU. European issues are more and more highly discussed at the regional level; regional political agendas are being shaped by EU decisions, and regional and local actors are influencing EU policy making in a complex interaction that also involves nationally-oriented actors, as well as those in 'Brussels', 'Strasbourg' and 'Luxembourg'. They are carrying out such activity through coordinated and non-coordinated use of networks, which is described below.

Subsidiarity is a concept that has been enshrined in the European Union's treaties<sup>7</sup>. It is the organising principle that intends to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen. In this context, the importance of local and regional government cannot be understated, as this level would provide the central and most important point of contact for citizens concerning politics and policy making.

#### *2.4.2. Accountability and Feedback*

Encouraging debate at grass-roots level is seen as one necessary requirement of a step towards a Europe based upon network governance: but this is only one half of the story. When debates are centred upon specific issues, the people involved at policy level must be willing and able to provide responses to interested bodies. This is undoubtedly made an easier task through the Internet's applications. But as the case of Iperbole<sup>8</sup> in Bologna shows (Hubert and

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<sup>6</sup> Substantiating Dai's claim of a new mode of 'transnational' governance is research from Clarysse and Muldur, which focuses on the impact of RTD policy at regional level. Although RTD policy is separate from Regional and Structural Funding, there are obvious connections between the two. This research claims that the EU's RTD policies do indeed boost a regions' technology diffusion and therefore, according to the authors, promote economic growth (Clarysse, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Art. 5 TEU

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.comune.bologna.it/>.

Caremier 2000), where an online system for personal interaction between citizens and public administration officials was established, this can also provide an administration with an insurmountable number of requests for support, leaving messages and requests unanswered and further undermining the notion that this innovation is a forward step. This, in one sense can be aided through reference to a better series of Frequently Asked Questions for interested persons to reference, development of archived mailing lists or creation of ‘two-way guest books’, which are public message boards, hosted on the Internet, where individuals from both the general public as well as the public administration can post requests for information and responses to those requests. As Schmidtke notes regarding the city of Berlin: “often the potentially interactive communication systems are utilized in a one-way manner...There are simply no institutionalised ways of communication which, for instance, would involve the administrative staff.” (Schmidtke, 1998: 64-5). This is in stark contrast to the small town of Parthenay in France, where: “The Mayor, convinced that before introducing new technologies an organizational change should take place, and not the reverse, decided to reorganise the municipal administration” (Herve-Van Driessche, 2001).

Thus it can be seen that responsiveness to requests for information is more than simply providing the ability to post an email to a standard mailbox. To take advantage of the essence of responsiveness, feedback is required and there is no simple technological fix for this.

#### *2.4.3. Openness and Transparency*

The creation of a community ‘memory’ is a central part of the process of enhancing democratic governance. To this end, dissemination of information that is publicly available is a crucial attribute of any information system. Whilst, of course, it is not possible to ensure that interested parties read (and absorb) all information available, it is necessary to ensure that information is as easily available as possible to promote transparency. The Internet provides users with the possibility to retrieve this community memory at will. This ‘memory’ can be organised in many different ways. An early example of this would be the Belgian Government’s Expedition Europe website.<sup>9</sup> This was targeted at 17 to 25 year olds living in the European Union, in contrast to the former website established by the European Commission to facilitate discussions concerning the Future of the European Union: Futurum.<sup>10</sup> Although the subject matter of the two sites was similar, the approach was different, encouraging a different sector of society to become involved in the debate. This is an example of providing different information channels, made easier through the Internet. The ability to

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.expeditioneurope.be>

<sup>10</sup> <http://europa.eu.int/futurum>

use different channels to enable full dissemination of information to different actors in society will also allow interested persons to provide commentary on issues of interest to their interest groups through debates as envisaged above in the previous sections. Other examples concerned with openness and transparency that have a more regional focus are provided in Part III of this study.

Policy-making in Europe impacts upon the entire European social fabric. As new actors get more involved and aware of specific policies, due to greater coverage in the media, and more specialised channels for dissemination to specific interest groups, there is a necessity to ensure that the general approach to policy-making does not become something carried out behind closed doors, and closed off from any specific group of potentially interested parties. The European Commission attempts to ensure that openness is a key driving factor in its policy-making strategies, but it cannot do this alone, given the large number of citizens that need to be reached.

One of the biggest challenges in terms of openness is the degree of attention given by European institutions to the lobbyist industry. A commitment to provide an open environment to facilitate agenda-setting and other elements of the policy cycle require a completely open system to be established, but also, by necessity, require pragmatic solutions to engaging citizens and interest groups to be made. There is a fine line between ‘co-opting’ interest groups into the policy-making sphere, and thus giving the impression of openness, whilst also not being able to engage groups who are not already fully aware of how the policy-making process is developed.

#### *2.4.4. Coherence and effectiveness*

For citizens to be part of the political process, there is a clear and distinct need to ensure that all elements of the institutions maintain a certain level of coherence. Without this coherence, confusion reigns. Participation as a goal in itself needs to be an ‘institution-wide’ phenomenon, as has been proposed by the European Commission, to an extent, in its policy on the minimum standards of consultation.

Furthermore, for participation to be developed as a coherent element of policies and the policy-making process, efforts into understanding how to make the process more efficient need to be developed.

#### *2.4.5. Coordination as a Mode of Governance*

The recognition of the impossibility of EU governance with and by an EU government has emerged in literature, and has resulted in discussions that consider the role of the EU institutions as coordination mechanisms. This has been the focus of the discussions on ‘new governance’ in the EU. Considering the role of coordination as a governance mechanism marks a dramatic shift in understanding how governance takes place. Here, the focus is no longer on democratic or institutional governance per se, but stands outside of these traditional understandings. Essentially, coordination is used when a Europe-wide approach is seen as necessary by all parties involved, but where intergovernmental bargaining does not or cannot produce efficient and legitimate results and where the creation of supranational activity is not politically feasible: in other words, when use of one a traditional mode of governance, in the EU, notably the Community Method, is considered unusable.

Coordination is a ‘soft’ method of European policy making (Ahonen 2001) that originally came to the fore in academic literature when applied to economic and employment issues (Hodson & Maher 2001). In this understanding, the European Commission is a coordinating body that acts within a multi-layered and polycentric EU polity (Natalicchi 2001). When coordination is considered a mode of governance, this necessarily requires a shift in the desired output of the EU institutions. Coordinating does not inevitably require legislating, and therefore opens up political participation to a broader audience. It also requires a shift in the understanding of the way in which that output is achieved (Dunsire, 1993). Instead of decisions and regulations, coordination as a mode of governance promotes convergence (and not always harmonisation), transfer, and information sharing. Héritier shows how informal forms of governance can be exercised in three ways to achieve greater institutionalism:

- exchange of information, naming and shaming, and monitoring
- network building, and;
- spontaneous, decentralised coordination. (Héritier, 2001)

In each of these areas, consequences emerge for the issue of democracy, and particularly the issue of mobilisation: information sharing can be most vital, particularly on a European scale, where the means and the possibilities for good practices to be disseminated are most large; loosely-organised networks are capable of motivating citizens and promoting action, and Europe provides a good landscape for possibilities for decentralised cooperation and coordination activities.



Coordination is a softer means of governing, which can work in areas where there are a number of actors with diverse needs and requirements. The network becomes far more important as a reference point for information, implementation, and monitoring. Coordination can also be seen as a far more technical activity rather than a political one; acting as a coordinating body on a certain issue requires the other actors to act politically and not the coordinator. In one sense, the Commission can be seen to be taking a much more ‘technocratic role’ than even before. This could be seen as recognition that politics should be left to the national politicians, or it could also be seen as recognition that the nature of politics in general is changing.

Open coordination has been used primarily in economic and employment policy, where “European policy-makers preferred [to use] methods without binding force” (Ahonen 2001: 6). In the European Commission’s *White Paper on Governance*, and reinforced in subsequent commentaries, such as that from the Committee of the Regions (2009), it is claimed that the OMC should be used in conjunction with the Community Method, where it acts to ‘reinforce’ or ‘complement’ activity. It has, post Lisbon I, also been heavily criticised for its failure to get Member States to actually deliver commitments for implementation of agreed reforms (Zeitlin 2008). Indeed, the Committee of the Regions itself, in its *White Paper on Multilevel Governance*, highlights the fact that the Open Method of Coordination has not “provided the expected value and has not proven satisfactory for local and regional authorities”, due to issues of inclusion (Committee of the Regions, 2009).

Although, *prima facie*, the Open Method of Coordination provides an easy way out of debates concerning how decisions can be passed through the European policy-making sphere, there are many issues that need to be raised.<sup>11</sup> Challenges lie for the promotion of democratic activity in this field, as it can be seen as a field where technocracy, and the rule of experts can be given free rein, if not held in check by specific controls. In the European Commission, this is done by, for example, a set of specific guidelines for consultation, which must be followed on topics with high political priority (European Commission 2002c).

OMC attempts to deal with the issue of democratic governance by firmly placing the democratic onus on EU Member States and focusing on decentralisation and building of networks (see, a.o. Rosa 2005): by its open nature, it is not an enforced mechanism, but one based on the softer aspects of

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<sup>11</sup> See some of the results of work carried out by the Committee of the Regions concerning this topic under the auspices of the Ateliers on Multilevel Governance. See notably, Adam Cygan, ‘The Legal and Political Instruments of MLG’ [http://www.cor.europa.eu/COR\\_cms/ui/ViewDocument.aspx?siteid=default&contentID=4ed0f406-7fda-4e7e-bfd1-4bb2651cd309](http://www.cor.europa.eu/COR_cms/ui/ViewDocument.aspx?siteid=default&contentID=4ed0f406-7fda-4e7e-bfd1-4bb2651cd309).

governing. Likewise, it addresses the concerns present in discussions on institutional governance by recognising that the EU's institutions should accept the mediating role in a network. However, it opens up a whole range of other questions, first of all relating to the fact that it appears to bypass the traditional community method.

#### *2.4.6. Networked governance*

*The Rise of the Network Society* (Castells, 1996), part one of a massive work by Professor Manuel Castells, expands upon this development of governance issues; Castells refers to a wholesale change in patterns of authority in the international arena, and these patterns of authority are important in terms of governance. As Castells would testify, the network has become a central model and process in decision-making procedures. Concepts of communication and control have been altered by the networked approach to governance, which, in part, is due to information and communications technologies such as the Internet (e.g. Powell, 1991). Networks, material or immaterial, play a central role in this model of governance. Governance takes place at multiple levels, such as the local, regional, national and international and is apparent between multiple actors, such as governments, civil society organisations, individuals and private concerns. At the European level, network governance is the most logical model to start to consider as useful for our understanding how European governance works.

The use of networks as an analytical tool to describe EU governance relies upon a middle-range approach to understanding how the EU polity is created. This builds upon work drawn primarily from the field of Public Administration to show that policies in the EU are created across vertical and horizontal lines. In a similar fashion to the multilevel governance theory, authority is distributed across varying territorial levels, from the sub-national to the European. The networks that create EU policy are composed of more than governmental actors alone, as in multilevel governance approaches to the EU. Policy networks are “useful because they give actors access to information and resources that they could not otherwise obtain and they facilitate policy making by reinforcing norms” (Rosamond 2000: 124). The impact of communications technologies on this mode of governance is explicit. Winn (Winn, 1998) talks of a ‘technological network approach’ apparent in EU governance, and claims:

given the growth in high-tech and computer-based technology individuals and groups are increasingly able to access the EU's agenda in a non-hierarchical fashion via use of Internet, fax, modem, and electronic mail...Politics is therefore becoming less hierarchical, more

diverse, and organised into porous ever changing networks (Winn 1998: 124).

In the network governance model, the role taken by the European Union would be that of an ‘activator’ and not of an imposer of regulation upon citizens and organisations oblivious to the reasons for such actions (Eising and Kohler Koch 1999: 6). However, in this study, reform of the European Union is not the central aim, and neither is it a stated goal, which is to draw benefits from the existing system as it currently stands. The principal goal of a discussion on networked-based models of governance is to show and encourage Local and Regional Authorities to engage with citizens on topics of European relevance and importance, by making use of networks to facilitate information sharing, communication, and interaction between themselves and citizens.

However, the multilevel and the networked approaches to governance described in this way do not adequately lead to a greater understanding of how, or why, the EU is able to increase its remit in an ever-growing number of policy areas: it appears to be more an attempt to ossify the nature of EU governance, which is a fluid process (Rosamond 2000: 124). It also leaves many questions unasked regarding democratic governance in the EU (Olsson, 2003). At the same time these theories focus upon internal developments in the EU and do not attempt to explain the increasing role of the EU outside its borders. Similarly, critique is made of the role of networks in formulating and carrying out EU policy by Beate Kohler-Koch (Kohler-Koch, 2002), whose research showed that although networks might carry out EU policies, the ideas motivating the networks were not solely, and sometimes not at all, ‘European’.

Although this study focuses on different territorial levels and in particular at the regional and local levels, it is crucial to note that other demarcations exist when discussing participation and legitimacy on a European scale. These issues of interest can sometimes be far more emotive and engaging than a politics based on territory, as engagement by certain groups in environmental or development politics bear witness.

In order for these to have any impact, however, traditional institutions, which still wield decision-making power, must shift their understandings of effective and interactive policy making. Responsiveness (interacting with citizens and other organisations) and dissemination - or actually communicating the work carried out by the institutions, is a central element in achieving a collaborative environment.

## **2.5. Conclusions**

Chapter 1 highlighted areas of concern in the current relationships between governed and governors, and reinforced the need for a more comprehensive overview of how to understand democratic legitimacy in the European Union and its Member States.

Having briefly examined several different understandings of the importance and relevance of governance – and not just governments, to democratic legitimacy, Chapter 2 also introduced a series of terms and concepts that have elaborated upon how and who participates in decision-making structures in the European Union. This included the importance of the role of the media in agenda-setting.

In the following chapters, the study will paint an overview of the different political environments in the EU Member States, by looking at various aspects that provide the infrastructure to enable participation in each of these countries. We start by painting a comparative overview of similarities and striking differences between countries, which will be of interest to those considering how to promote engagement and discourse at a European level, and continue the study by looking specifically at all 27 EU Member States and various aspects of the democratic situation.

## **Part II: Country sheets**

### **3. Overview of approaches to participation across the EU**

The country sheets that comprise the major part of this study follow this brief introduction.

The data contained within them is collated from various sources, all of which are identified in the reference list to be found at the end of the study. For the purposes of legibility, in many cases, the direct reference to each individual piece of data has been removed.

Some striking trends can be seen within these country sheets, which have focused upon the traditional mechanisms of governance and democratic practice in the countries.

Several graphs (Figures 3-2 and 3-3) on the following pages reveal that, in fact, turnout in European elections is dependent upon several factors, and is not just a 'lost cause'. Simply from looking at the data, and examining the 'predominant discussions' during election times, these reasons appear to include: the discussion of the European issues at stake during the election period, the effect of national political debates, and (in the case of the UK), whether local elections were held on the same day or not. Noticeably, although a general decrease in turnout for European elections may be seen, there is certainly no consistency amongst and between countries. The graphs also show that, across time, declines in interest and involvement in voting mechanisms are not solely EU-related phenomena: national elections are, overall, also undergoing a decline in turnout. And if one removes the countries where voting is considered compulsory (even if not voting is not sanctioned), then there is a relatively consistent picture across the EU of how countries vote. Perhaps of note is the lack of turnout from new Member States in the EU. Rules for voting for citizens of a country, and for most EU citizens are fairly harmonised. In general, citizens have to be 18 years old before they can vote. Austria recently changed their voting law to encourage younger people to get involved in politics: there, individuals can now vote at the age of 16.

An attempt was also made to highlight each Member States' position on three different rankings: the Happy Planet, Digital Access, and Media Freedom Indices. Each of these is used to highlight a different aspect of democratic life: the Happy Planet Index to show how the country and its citizens deal with the environmental impact of the collective's lifestyles, Digital Access Index to highlight whether ICT infrastructure and use is of a sufficiently high level to enable citizens to use ICTs to engage in information usage, and Media Freedom Ranking to show the degree of freedom of the press and other media in the

country. Interestingly enough, apart from the highest ranking countries (notably Denmark, Finland), there appears to be no direct correlation between one index and another.

A very crude analysis of the leading parties in the national elections, portrayed in Figure 3-1 also shows that there has been a very slight shift in leading political parties towards more right-wing ones, which is also in line with European Parliament election results, particularly with reference to the 2009 election. This shows that, despite calls that citizens are apathetic to the ‘colour’ of the political parties in control of their governments, there have been shifts in control of governments in recent elections. Therefore, it is possible to attribute a certain level of activity in changing political allegiances to general populations in European countries, even if there are also other reasons for this, such as low turnout amongst certain citizens more likely to vote for a particular political ‘ideology’.

The data from the country sheets show a remarkable variation in rights and obligations concerning referenda at the national, regional, and local levels. In some countries, referenda can be called by citizens themselves, in others, the referenda must be called by federal or national government. Also, usage of the outcomes of referenda are different according to country, and sometimes even according to municipality, where rules may be different concerning the local authority’s obligations to be bound to the results of a referenda or not. There appears to be no general concept of what and how a referendum should be dealt with across Europe.

Regarding representation, Figure 3-4 plots the ratio of citizens per elected representative in each EU Member State against the number of representatives in the country’s elected (or second) chamber. This highlights the rather logical observation that, in larger countries, representatives have to represent more citizens than in smaller ones. However, it also shows that (with the exception of The Netherlands and Belgium), in most instances, representatives that represent larger numbers of citizens also have to deal with more representatives. Hence, the process of representation in national politics becomes more problematic the larger the country gets. Hence, the creation of a federal structure, as in Germany, or the development of a devolutionary process that is, for example, slowly emerging in the UK.

Figure 3-1 'Colour' of leading party/coalition in last three national elections

|    |      |      |      |
|----|------|------|------|
| AT | 2008 | 2006 | 2002 |
| BE | 2007 | 2003 | 1999 |
| CZ | 2007 | 2002 | 1998 |
| DK | 2007 | 2005 | 2001 |
| DE | 2005 | 2002 | 1998 |
| EE | 2007 | 2003 | 1999 |
| EL | 2007 | 2004 | 2000 |
| ES | 2008 | 2004 | 2000 |
| FR | 2007 | 2002 | 1997 |
| IE | 2007 | 2002 | 1997 |
| IT | 2008 | 2006 | 2001 |
| CY | 2006 | 2001 | 1996 |
| LV | 2006 | 2002 | 1998 |
| LT | 2008 | 2004 | 2000 |
| LU | 2004 | 1999 | 1994 |
| HU | 2006 | 2002 | 1998 |
| MT | 2008 | 2003 | 1998 |
| NL | 2006 | 2003 | 2002 |
| PL | 2007 | 2005 | 2001 |
| PT | 2005 | 2002 | 1999 |
| SI | 2008 | 2004 | 2000 |
| SK | 2006 | 2002 | 1998 |
| FI | 2007 | 2003 | 1999 |
| SE | 2006 | 2002 | 1998 |
| UK | 2005 | 2001 | 1997 |
| RO | 2008 | 2004 | 2000 |
| BU | 2005 | 2001 | 1997 |

*Colour code:*

Blue – right-leaning parties

Red – left-leaning parties

Orange – governments controlled by centrist parties

Pink – governments controlled by coalitions of right and left-leaning parties.

The allocation of party 'colour' is based upon basic information gathered from political party websites, and articles in the popular press at the times of the election.



Figure 3-2 Trends in EP election turnout in EU27 (%) for the last four EP election cycles

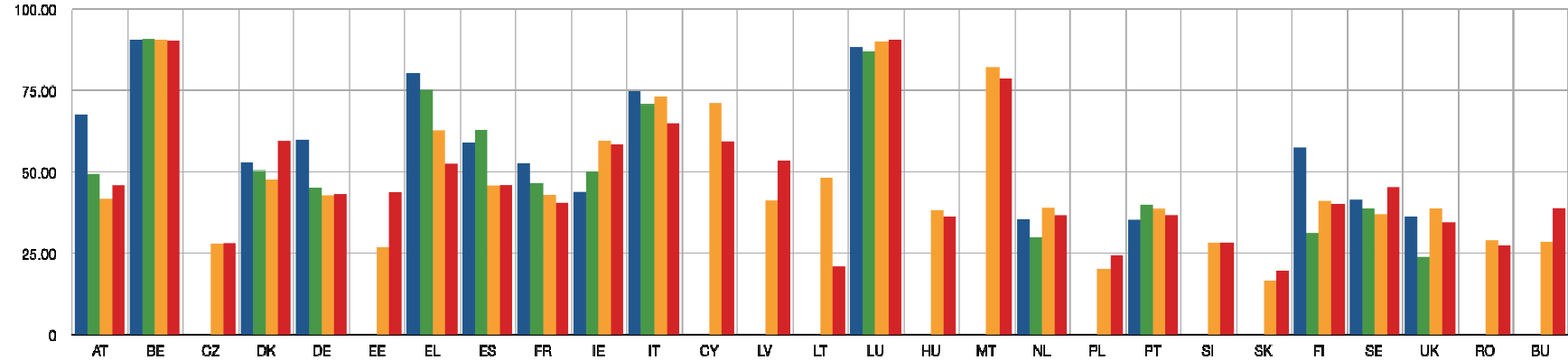


Figure 3-3 Trends in National election turnout in EU27 (%) for the last four EP election cycles (no data for last cycle)

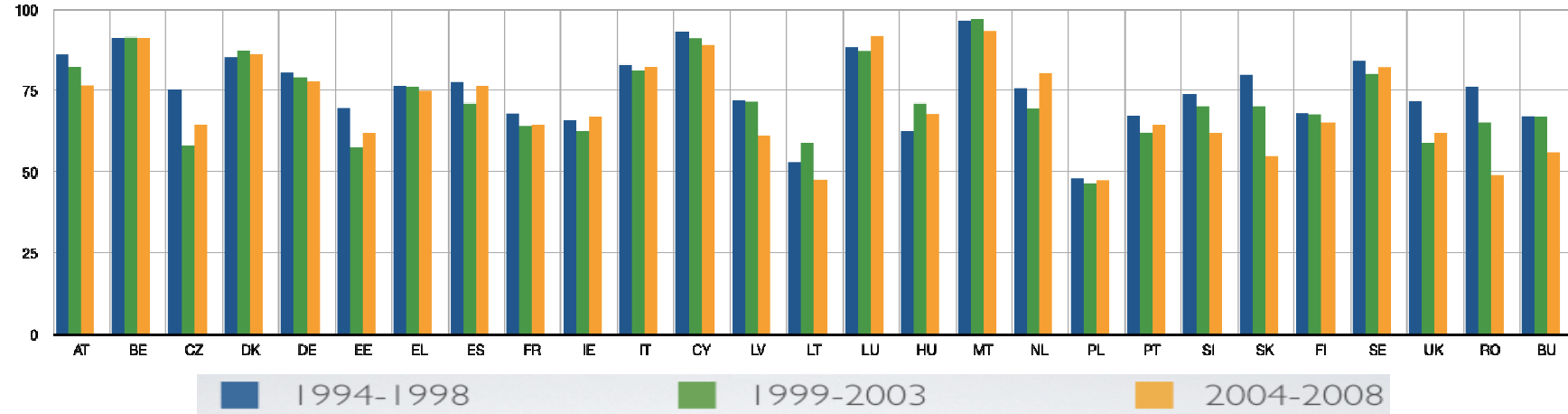
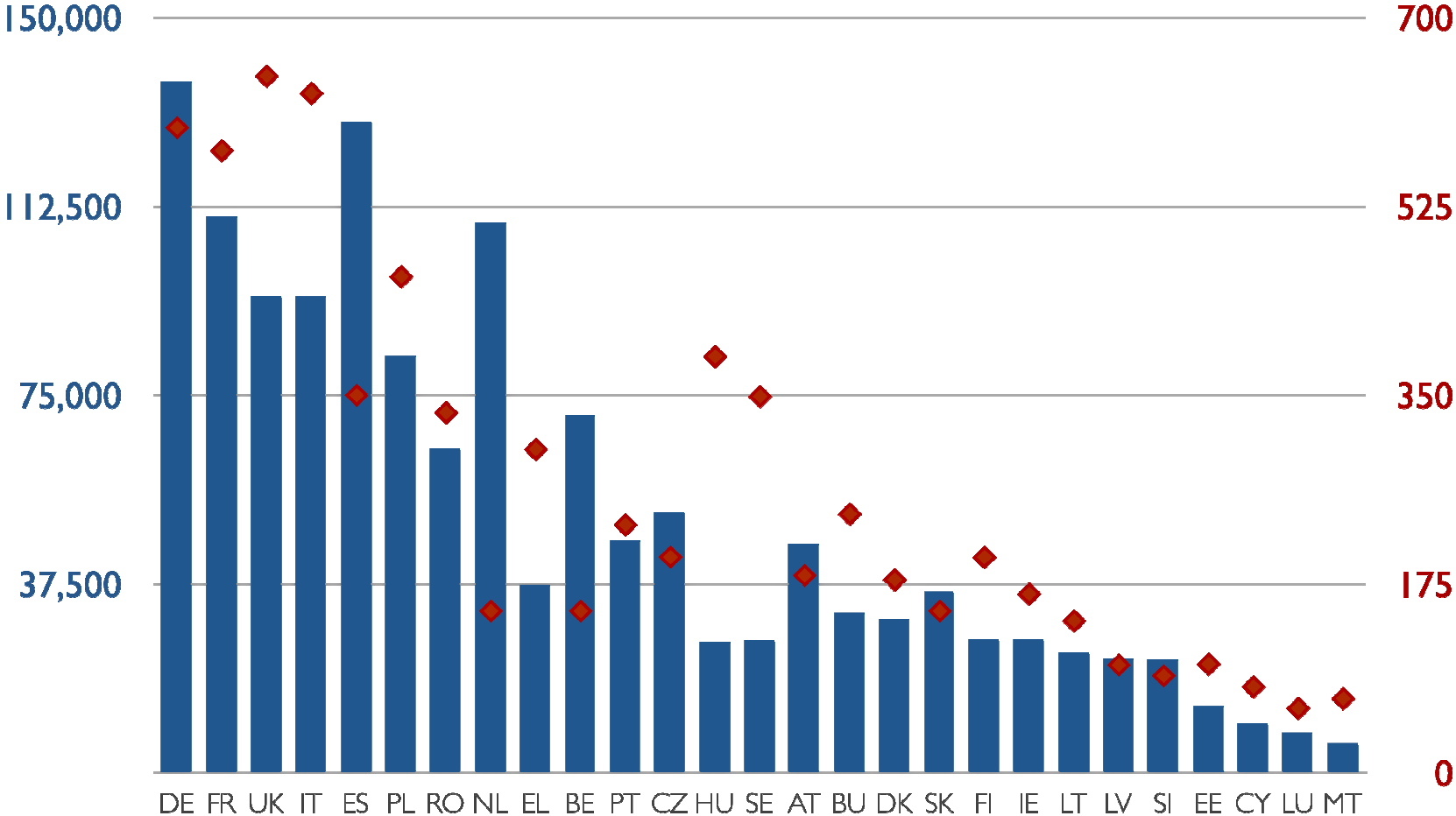


Figure 3-4 Citizens per representative plotted against total number of representatives (in second or elected chamber)



## 4. Country Sheets

### 4.1. Austria

*Universal suffrage since 1918<sup>12</sup>*

*Leading party coalition: CL Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the CR conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP).*

*Opposition: far right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), far right Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) and the Greens - The Green Alternative (GRÜNE).<sup>13</sup>*

*Leading party last 3 elections: (2006-2008) CL SPÖ & CR ÖVP, (2002-2006) CR ÖVP & R FPÖ, (1999-2002) CR ÖVP & R FPÖ.*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses   | Voting system   | No. seats  |      |
|--|--|---|--|------|
| Bicameral Federal Assembly (Bundesversammlung)<br>5 year terms   | National Council (Nationalrat)   | directly elected members, closed party lists, proportional representation with preferential vote Three-stage process - in regional and provincial constituencies and in a final nationwide process. The Nat. Council has greater legislative power than the Fed. Council. Minimum threshold of votes for a party to win seats 4%. | 183  |      |
|  | Federal Council (Bundesrat)  | Seats are appointed by legislatures. Proportional representation. Council has only limited veto powers over legislation passed by the national council.   | 62   |      |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n  |      |
| 9 independent federal states, or Länder direct elections   | 43 electoral constituencies direct elections   | 8.331.900 (jan 2008)<br>3rd country: 9.95% (2007)<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population (2004) 13%) most from Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey, Bosnia & Herzegovina.  | Approx 1 representative per 26.500 and 1 senator per 73.400 citizens |      |
| Voting mechanism   |  | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents   |      |
| Citizens overseas, and those unable to attend voting booth for health reasons can vote by post.  |  | 1 day. Opening hours can be adjusted to the needs of local population with a degree of flexibility. By law, the last stations have to close at 6 p.m. (European parliamentary elections 10 p.m.)  | No data  |      |
| Voter requirements   |  |   |  |      |
| <i>European</i>  | <i>National</i>  | <i>Regional</i>   | <i>Local</i>   |      |
| Age 16. All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents.  | Age 16. Austrian citizens, including naturalized.  | Austrian citizens of at least 16 years, and EU citizens who are residents can vote in elections on the local level.   |  |      |
| National Referenda   | Prominent issues <sup>14</sup>   | Electoral turnout   |  |      |
| 2 types possible. 2 binding referenda have been held. National Council or a majority of the representatives (with some exceptions) can initiate. No quorum required. National Opinion Polls (consultative referenda) are possible, at initiative of resolved by the National Council or by a majority of the representatives. None has yet been held. Referendum petitioning is also possible when 100.000 voters petition for a referendum, the Council must hold a debate in parliament, but not compulsory to hold a referendum. 1994 EU membership (constitutionally required) – 82,4 % turnout – 66,6% voted in favour of joining<br>1978 nuclear power – 50.5% voted against nuclear power plant | 2008 - health reforms and European Policy.   | EU  | National   |      |
|  | 2006 - business-friendly tax cuts, inequalities among the population, youth unemployment and | 1994 (1995)   | 2002   | 1994 |
|  | expulsion of foreigners, anti-immigration.   | 67,7%   | 1999   | 2000 |
|  | 2002 - immigration and asylum seekers.   | 49,4%   | 2006   | 2000 |
| Regional/ local referenda  |  |   |  |      |
|  |  | 2004  | 2008   |      |
|  |  | 42,4%   | 78,8%  |      |
|  |  |   | 73,2%  |      |
|  |  |   | 73,2%  |      |

<sup>12</sup> In 1920 Austria's federal constitution was adopted, and reinstated in 1945. The State Treaty of 1955 made Austria fully sovereign and neutral. (The Austrian Parliament; Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior Department)

<sup>13</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. Austria.

Regional and municipal consultative referenda are possible in some regions at the request of a specified number of municipalities. The law of each province specifies the prerequisites. At the provincial level, bills are usually passed by the regional Parliament, and at local level, municipal council decisions. The effect of a referendum depends on the law of the province (Suspensive or abrogative). Municipal boundary changes can for example be the subject of a referendum.

| Women in Parliament   | Representation of non-EU citizens  |
|---|--|
| 28.4% in National Council and<br>24.6% in Federal Council<br>1/9 governors<br>approx. 31% in regional councils<br>(regional assemblies)<br>26% regional executives<br>28% in EP | Non-EU citizens cannot vote in public elections. The system varies between cities. In general, the regions do not consult with migrant associations, but with general organisations active in integration. National government does not consult them on policies that most affect their lives. Unfavourable implementation policies offer migrant associations funding or support only at the local level and under state criteria not imposed on other associations |
| Rankings  |  |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>   | <i>Digital access</i>  |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> out of EU27, 61 <sup>st</sup> out of 178  | 6 <sup>th</sup> out of 27  |
|   | <i>Media freedom</i>   |
|   | 15 <sup>th</sup> out of 27   |

<sup>14</sup> Prominent issues have been determined through an analysis of various newspaper databases for terms in local and international press in the period around the election, and in addition has been – in many cases – validated by a national of that particular country.

## 4.2. Belgium

Universal suffrage since 1948<sup>15</sup>

Leading party coalition: the right wing Christian Democratic and Flemish (CD&V) - New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), along with the CR Movement for Reform (MR), CL Socialist Party - Flemish (SP), CR Liberal Party-Flemish (Open VLD), and the CL Humanist Democratic Centre (CDH)<sup>16</sup>

Opposition: CL the Flemish Socialist Party-Spirit - (SPA-Spirit) and CL Socialist Party (PS),

Leading party previous 2 elections: (2003-2007) CR VLD, CL PS, CL SPA-Spirit and CR MR. (1999-2003) CR VLD, CR MR, CL SP, CL PS, CL Agalev + Ecolo

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses   | Voting system   |  | No. seats     |  |
|--|--|---|--|---------------|--|
| Bicameral  | House of Representatives                       | Directly elected, proportional, closed party list system with preferential vote. Compulsory voting  |  | 150           |  |
| 4year term   | Senate   | Minimum threshold of votes for a party to win seats<br>40 (25 Dutch-speaking and 15 French-speaking) directly elected w. proportional representation, 21 appointed by Communities (10 from Flemish, 10 from French & 1 from German-speaking community) & 10 co-opted senators (6 Dutch-speaking and 4 French-speaking). There are also senators by right - members of the royal family. |  | 71            |  |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities                             | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n  |               |  |
| 3 regions, 3 communities and 10 provinces.   | 589 communes directly elected, mayor appointed | 10,666,900<br>3rd country (2006): 2.7%<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population (2004) 11.7%) most from Morocco, Turkey, Democratic Republic of the Congo.  | Approx 1 Representative per 71.113 and 1 senator per 150,238 citizens. |               |  |
| Voting mechanism   |  | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents   |               |  |
| Electronic voting is possible in most regions. Proxy voting possible.  |  | 08.00 – 15.00   |  |               |  |
| Voter requirements   |  |   |  |               |  |
| European   | National                                       | Regional  | Local  |               |  |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents.  | Age 18, citizenship                            | Age 18, citizenship   | Age 18, 3 <sup>rd</sup> country and EU nationals may vote              |               |  |
| National Referenda   |  | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout  |               |  |
| There is no constitutional or even legislative basis for a referendum. Consultative referendum is in theory possible, but only one has been held so far, at the initiative of the parliament. Voting was compulsory.   |  | 2007 – increased autonomy of regions, Flemish independence, economic liberalisation   | 1994<br>90.7%  | 1999<br>91.0% | Regional/<br>Local<br>1994<br>N/A                      |
|  |  | 2003 – economic issues (e.g. tax cuts), employment, ending immigration, zero tolerance on crime   | 1999<br>91.0%  | 2003<br>91.6% | 1999<br>94,17%<br>90,36%                               |
| 1950, a referendum on the return of King Leopold III, turnout 92.9% (57.68 % for the return).  |  | 1999 - dioxin-in-food crisis, employment, public debt.  | 2004<br>90.8%  | 2007<br>91.1% | 2004<br>89,99%<br>93,79%<br>89,51%<br>83,58%<br>88,95% |
|  |  |   |  |               |  |
| Regional/ local referenda  |  |   |  |               |  |
| Referenda are not possible at province or regional level. Non binding, non compulsory referenda may be held at municipal levels, as a result of a law implemented in 1995. Participation quorum was set at 40% of the electorate, but has since been lowered to 10-20%. 10% of the municipal population must sign a petition. There have been consultative municipal referenda held, yet, not very many. |  |   |  |               |  |
| Women in Parliament  |  | Representation of non-EU citizens   |  |               |  |

<sup>15</sup> RoSa, Rol en Samenleving vzw. 2008. Vlaamse politica's in cijfers, Nr. 56. Brussels

<sup>16</sup> In 2007, the Belgian government could not form a coalition and had a 196 day period without a government.

35.3% in lower house  
38.0% in upper house  
30% regional assembly  
29% regional executives  
33% in EP

Non-EU citizens who are residents of at least five years can vote in local elections, under certain conditions, but cannot stand as candidates or vote in regional elections. National and Flemish non-EU citizens' consultative bodies are structurally consulted, while similar bodies are only consulted ad hoc in Brussels and Antwerp. In most, representatives are not freely elected, but selected by the state.

**Rankings**

*Happy Planet Index*  
14th of EU27, 78 of 178

*Digital access*  
8th out of 27

*Media freedom*  
3rd out of 27

### 4.3. Bulgaria

*Universal suffrage since: 1944*

*Leading party coalition: Bulgarian Socialist Party (CB) (L), National Movement for Stability and Progress, Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms.*

*Opposition: Movement of Rights and Freedom (MRF) (R), National Union Attack (FR), Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB) (R).*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: SND (2001-2005), UDF (1997-2001)*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses   | Voting system   |   | No. seats                  |                             |
|--|--|---|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Unicameral   | National Assembly (Narodno Sabranie)   | President is directly elected for a five-year term. Parliament members are elected on a proportional basis in 31 constituencies, for four-year terms with a 4% party threshold. |   | 240                        |                             |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n                                       |                            |                             |
| 28 regions administered by regional governor appointed by the government.  | 262 municipalities responsible for schools, social services, water, waste etc.. Council members elected for four year terms. | 7.300.000 (2008)<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 1,3% (Foreign-born as part of the population ?%) most from Turkey and Russia   | Approx 1 parliament member per 31.800 citizens.           |                            |                             |
| Voting mechanism   | Opening hours  |   | Non-nat.l EU residents                                    |                            |                             |
| No postal or advance voting. Few parliamentary discussions on e-voting, but no activities.   | Polls are open for one day from 6 am. to 7 pm.   |   | Not in Eurostat   |                            |                             |
| Voter requirements   |  |   |   |                            |                             |
| <i>European</i>  | <i>National</i>  | <i>Regional</i>   | <i>Local</i>  |                            |                             |
| age 18, all citizens of EU who are residents. And who have permanently resided for at least the last three months in BU or another EU Member-State   | age: 18 years, citizenship, disqualifications: imprisonment, judicial interdiction   | age 18, citizenship, non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand   | age 18, citizenship, non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand |                            |                             |
| National Referenda   | Prominent issues   |   | Electoral turnout   |                            |                             |
| Only binding referenda can be held. It is the role of the National Assembly to resolve on the holding of a national referendum. The president schedules the referendum. The voting population can also initiate a referendum by collecting 300.000 signatures. If the number reaches 600.000 the referendum becomes legally binding No national referenda have been held in recent years.<br>2009: Local referendum on allowing Russian Oil company to build pipeline through local territory. Turnout: 60,0%; Outcome: 98% against. |  |   | <i>EU</i>   | <i>National</i>            | <i>Regional/ Local</i>      |
|  |  |   | 2007: 28,6%   | 1997: 58,9%<br>2001: 67,0% | 1999: 51%<br>2003: 33%; 39% |
|  |  |   |   | 2005: 55,8%                | 2007: 50%; 48%              |
| Regional/ local referenda  |  |   |   |                            |                             |
| Only binding referenda can be held. 50% turnout required to make legally binding. Referenda are constitutionally required for establishing borders of a municipality.  |  |   |   |                            |                             |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens  |   |   |                            |                             |
| EP: 44%<br>National: 21,7%<br>Local: 20%   | <i>No information available</i>  |   |   |                            |                             |
| Rankings   |  |   |   |                            |                             |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>  | <i>Digital access</i>  |   | <i>Media freedom</i>                                      |                            |                             |
| 25 <sup>th</sup> of EU27, 145 <sup>th</sup> of 178   | 26 <sup>th</sup> of 27   |   | 26 <sup>th</sup> of 27                                    |                            |                             |

## 4.4. Cyprus

Universal suffrage since: 1960

Leading party coalition: Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) (L), Democratic Party (DIKO) (R), Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK) (SD), European Party (EK) (Eur.), Ecological and Environmental Movement (Gr.).

Opposition: Democratic Rally (DISY) (R)

Leading party previous 2 elections: Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) (L) (2001-2006), Democratic Rally (DISY) (R) (1996-2001)

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses   | Voting system  |   | No. seats   |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| Unicameral   | House of Representatives (Vouli Antiprosópon/Temsi Icliler Meclisi)  | The president as well as the parliament members is elected for a five-year term. 56 members are elected by the Greek-Cypriot community while 24 are elected by the Turkish-Cypriot community (these seats are currently vacant). Voting is compulsory in Cyprus. |   | 80  |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals   |   | Ratio seats : pop.n   |
| 6 regions. Governed by national government appointees.   | 33 cities and 85 towns. Governed by city or town councils consisting of directly elected members.  | 789.000<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 5,7%<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population 12,3%)<br>most from Russia, Sri Lanka and Philippines.   |   | Approx. 1 parliament member per 9.900 citizens                        |
| Voting mechanism   |  | Opening hours  |   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |
| No postal or advance voting. Implementation of e-voting is not considered or discussed.  |  | Polls are open for one day for 10 hours.   |   | Approx. 62.400  |
| Voter requirements   |  |  |   |   |
| European   | National   | Regional   | Local   |   |
| Age 18, all citizens of EU who are residents, and had their habitual residence in CY for at least six months immediately prior to the date of acquisition of voting rights | Age 18, citizenship, residence in the country for at least six months prior to the elections, citizens overseas cannot vote, disqualifications: insanity, imprisonment, disfranchisement by court decision   | Age 18, citizenship. Non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand  | Age 18, citizenship. Non-EU citizens country nationals cannot vote or stand |   |
| National Referenda   | Prominent issues   |  | Electoral turnout   |   |
| Parliament can call a referendum on a proposal by the Council of Ministers. Citizens cannot initiate a referendum.   | Union with Greece (1950), Settling the island dispute (2004). No EU accession referendum.  |  | <i>EU</i><br>2004:<br>71,2%   | <i>National</i><br>1996:<br>93,0%<br>2001:<br>91,0%<br>2006:<br>89,0% |
| 2004: Acceptance of the so-called "Annan plan" for settling the dispute on the island.   |  | No stats found<br>Voting compulsory  |   |   |
| Regional/ local referenda  |  |  |   |   |
| Constitutionally required to promote a community to a municipality. [no further information could be found]  |  |  |   |   |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens  |  |   |   |
| EP: 0% (0/6)<br>National: 14,3%<br>Local: 18,3%  | According to the Migration Policy Index, the political liberties of non-EU citizens in Cyprus meet best practice. However, they cannot vote in any elections, are not consulted by government, and receive no funding for their associations, making the general political participation rights of non-EU citizens quite poor. |  |   |   |
| Rankings   |  |  |   |   |
| Happy Planet Index   | Digital access   |  | Media freedom   |   |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> of EU27, 72 <sup>nd</sup> of 178   | 14 <sup>th</sup> of 27   |  | 17 <sup>th</sup> of 27  |   |



## 4.5. Czech Republic

*Universal suffrage since: 1918 (Czechoslovakia)*

*Leading party coalition: Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL), Green Party (SZ)*

*Opposition: Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) (1998-2002, 2002-2006)*

| Parliamentary structure   | Houses  | Voting system  |  | No. seats  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Bicameral legislature   | Chamber of Deputies (Poslanecká sněmovna)   | Members are elected for a four year term by proportional representation in 14 electoral regions. 5 % election threshold.                           |  | 200  |
|   | Senate (Senát)  | Members are elected for a six-year term by two-round runoff voting. Elected from 81 single-seat constituencies. One third renewed every even year. |  | 81   |
| No. regions   | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals   |  | Ratio seats : pop.n  |
| 14 administrative regions called Kraj   | 6249 municipalities. Direct elections.  | 10.381.100<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 1,7% (2006)<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population: 4,9%)<br>Most from Ukraine, Vietnam and Russia.     |  | Approx. 1 Chamber of Deputies member per 51.900 citizens and 1 Senate member per 128.200 citizens. |
| Voting mechanism  |   | Opening hours  |  | Non-nat.l EU residents   |
| Citizens living abroad can only vote in Chamber of Deputies election at voting stations in Czech missions and offices abroad. Absentee voting possible upon advance registration in municipality of residence. Postal- and e-voting not possible.   |   | Polling stations are open for two days in national, regional and EP elections while only open for one day in local elections.                      |  | 123.172 (2008)   |
| Voter requirements  |   |  |  |  |
| <i>European</i>   | <i>National</i>   | <i>Regional</i>  | <i>Local</i>   |  |
| Age 18, all citizens of EU who are residents. Citizens other than Czech Republic citizens must be registered as residents for at least 45 days.   | Age 18, citizenship, residence in the country at time of election, disqualifications: restricted freedom of movement for public health reasons, legal incapacity to vote.   | Age 18, citizenship. Non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand  | Age 18, citizenship. no non-EU citizens can vote or stand (constitutional laws permit non-nationals to vote, but the required national legislation or international agreements have not been adopted) reciprocity condition required |  |
| National Referenda  | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout  |  |  |
| Are constitutionally required upon transferring powers to international institutions or institutions.   | Accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union (2003)<br>Acceptance of American anti-missile base on Czech territory (local referenda, 2007)   | EU   | National   | Regional/<br>Local   |
|   |   |  | 1998<br>74,0%  | 2008 (Sep)<br>62%  |
|   |   |  | 2002<br>58,0%  | 2009 (Jan)<br>71%  |
|   |   | 2004<br>27,9%  | 2006<br>64,5%  | 2009 (Apr)<br>64%  |
| Regional/ local referenda   |   |  |  |  |
| Although not common, local referenda have been held. In total, 82 were held between 2000 and 2005. Czech law prohibits regional referenda. Local referenda can be initiated by citizens through signature collection (sufficient number depends on size of municipality) or by the local board through absolute majority. The results are binding if turnout exceeds 50% (except in case of referenda on municipal amalgamation or division, when 50% of registered voters must support the proposal) |   |  |  |  |
| Women in Parliament   | Representation of non-EU citizens   |  |  |  |
| Chamber of Deputies: 15,5%<br>Senate: 16%<br>Local: 22,7%<br>EP: 21%  | Non-EU citizens have limited political rights in the Czech Republic. According to the Migration Policy Index migrants' political liberties are limited, although the national government consults non-EU citizens in a structured way through their representatives in migrant associations. Regional and local governments only consult them on an ad hoc basis. Non-EU citizens cannot elect these representatives; they are appointed by the State to speak on their behalf. |  |  |  |
| Rankings  |   |  |  |  |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>   |   | <i>Digital access</i>  |  | <i>Media freedom</i>   |
| 21 <sup>th</sup> of EU27, 128 <sup>th</sup> of 179  |   | 18 <sup>th</sup> of 27   |  | 11 <sup>th</sup> of 27   |

## 4.6. Denmark

*Universal suffrage since 1915*

*Leading party coalition: Liberal Party (Venstre) and Conservative People's Party (Supported by: Danish People's Party (FR) and New Alliance (CR))*

*Opposition: Radical Left, Social Democratic Party and Socialist People's Party*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: Liberal Party (Venstre) and Conservative People's Party (2001-2005), (2005-2007), (2007-2009).*

| Parliamentary structure   | Houses   | Voting system  |   | No. seats             |
|---|--|--|---|-----------------------|
| Unicameral parliament<br>4 years  | Folketinget  | Directly elected. Proportional representation. 135 members elected by proportional majority in constituencies, 40 elected based proportion of party or list votes, The Faroe Islands and Greenland elect two members each. Party threshold: 2% |   | 179                   |
| No. regions   | No. municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals   | Ratio seats : pop.n   |                       |
| 5 electoral constituencies. Directly elected (limited policy domain: health, regional development and special education institutions)   | 98 electoral constituencies.<br>Directly elected   | 5,476,000 (2008)<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 3,6% (2006)<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population (2004) 6,3%) most from Turkey, Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina.   | Approx 1 parliament member per 30.600 citizens.   |                       |
| Voting mechanism  | Opening hours  | Non-nat.l EU residents   |   |                       |
| Postal voting possible from home (if disabled), nursing homes, jails, distantly located islands and in local government centres up until three weeks before the election if not able to vote on election day. Abroad voting possible.   | Polling stations are open one day between 9 am. and 8 pm (referenda and national, regional and local elections)  | 93.166 (2008)  |   |                       |
| Voter requirements  |  |  |   |                       |
| <i>European</i>   | <i>National</i>  | <i>Regional</i>  | <i>Local</i>  |                       |
| All citizens of EU Member States who are registered residents. Citizens of Greenland and Faroe Islands not allowed to vote.   | Danish citizenship, permanent residence in the realm (abroad working, studying, etc. permitted), 18 years of age (since 1978). Furthermore, a prospective voter must not have been declared legally incompetent. | Age 18, citizenship, non-nationals (EU and third-country nationals) can vote and residence stand.  | Age 18, citizenship, and non-nationals can vote and stand in local elections after 3 years of residence |                       |
| National Referenda  | Prominent issues   | Electoral turnout  |   |                       |
| Consultative or binding referenda. Only one consultative referendum has been held (1986). Binding referenda are constitutionally required in case of transfer of national sovereignty, signing of certain international treaties, changes to the constitution, changes to the voting age and if 1/3 of the parliament members demand a referendum on an approved law proposal (certain types of laws are exempt from this rule). Citizens cannot initiate a referendum. No quorum rule.<br>2000: Participation in the common currency (Euro) - 86,6% turnout - 46,1% (majority) voted against.<br>1993: Maastricht treaty suppl. with Edinburgh Agreement - 85,6% turnout - 48,6% (majority) voted for. | Solely on EU treaties since 1978: Single European Act (1986), Maastricht-treaty (1992), Maastricht Treaty suppl. with Edinburgh Agreement (1993), Amsterdam Treaty (1998), Common Currency - Euro (2000).        | <i>EU</i>  | <i>National</i>   | <i>Regional/Local</i> |
|   |  | 1994   | 2001  | 1997                  |
|   |  | 52,9%  | 87,1%   | 70,1%                 |
|   |  | 1999   | 2005  | 2001                  |
|   |  | 50,5%  | 84,4%   | 85,0%                 |
|   |  | 2004   | 2007  | 2005                  |
|   |  | 47,8%  | 86,6%   | L: 69,4%<br>R: 69,4%  |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Regional/ local referenda</b>  |   |  |
| Binding local referenda cannot be held without special statutory authority. |   |  |
| <b>Women in Parliament</b>  |   | <b>Representation of non-EU citizens</b> |
| National parliament: 37,4%  | Regardless of nationality, anyone who has been a legal resident for the past three years and is over the age of 18 has the right to vote and stand for local and regional elections, which are held every fourth year |  |
| Regional councils: 33,9%  |   |  |
| Local councils: 27,3%   |   |  |
| EP: 35,7%   |   |  |
| <b>Rankings</b>   |   |  |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>   | <i>Digital access</i>   | <i>Media freedom</i>                     |
| 3rd of EU27, 97 <sup>th</sup> of 178  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> out of 27   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> out of 27                |

## 4.7. Estonia

*Universal suffrage since: 1917*

*Leading party coalition: Estonian Reform Party (R), Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (R), Social Democratic Party (CL)*

*Opposition: Estonian Centre Party (CR), Estonian Greens (G), People's Union of Estonia (R)*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: Estonian Centre Party and Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (2003-2007), Centre Party (1999-2003)*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses  | Voting system   |   | No. seats              |
|--|---|---|---|------------------------|
| Unicameral   | Riigikogu   | Members elected for a 4 year period through a party list system of proportional representation.   |   | 101                    |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n   |                        |
| 15 regions (maakonaad). Solely for administrative purposes. No political autonomy.   | 47 towns, 207 rural municipalities.   | 1.340.415 (1/1-09)<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 31,3%<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population: ?) Most from Russia (25,6%), Ukraine (2%) and Belarus (1%).        | Approx. 1 Riigikogu member per 13.276 Estonian citizens                 |                        |
| Voting mechanism   |   | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |                        |
| First country in the World to make e-voting available to all voters in a national election (2007).   |   | Polling-stations are open one day from 9 am. to 8 pm. Advance-voting (hereunder e-voting) possible over a three-day period starting one week prior to the election. | 8.300 (2008)  |                        |
| Voter requirements   |   |   |   |                        |
| European   | National  | Regional  | Local   |                        |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents and 18 years of age.  | Estonian citizens. 18 years of age. Disqualifications: mental incompetence, court conviction, detention   | All permanent residents. Age 18.  | Non-EU citizens can vote in local elections, after 3 years of residence |                        |
| National Referenda   | Prominent issues  |   | Electoral turnout   |                        |
| The Riigikogu has the right to refer a bill or any issue to a binding referendum (however, national elections must be held if not passed). A referendum is constitutionally required to amend the constitution and to join a supranational organ. Consultative referenda can be held if ordered by ad-hoc law. | European Union Membership (2003). Adoption of independent constitution (1992). Restoration of the independent Republic of Estonia (1990).   |   | <i>EU</i>   | <i>National</i>        |
|  |   |   |   | <i>Regional/ Local</i> |
|  |   |   | 1999  | 1999                   |
|  |   |   | 57,0%   | 49,8%                  |
|  |   |   | 2003  | 2002                   |
|  |   |   | 58,0%   | 52,5%                  |
|  |   |   | 2004  | 2007                   |
|  |   |   | 26,9%   | 61,9%                  |
|  |   |   |   | 47,0%                  |
| Regional/ local referenda  |   |   |   |                        |
| Both binding and consultative local referenda can be held, but the option has only rarely been used by local governments and voter turnout has been low.   |   |   |   |                        |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens   |   |   |                        |
| National: 18,8%<br>Local: 28,4% (2002)<br>EP: 50%  | Only long-term residents can vote (but not stand) in municipal elections. According to the Migration Policy Index the country has slightly unfavourable political liberties for non-nationals, who are banned from joining political parties or forming any political association. However, the government consults associations of non-nationals on an ad hoc basis. |   |   |                        |
| Rankings   |   |   |   |                        |
| Happy Planet Index   | Digital access  |   | Media freedom   |                        |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> of EU27, 173 <sup>rd</sup> of 179   | 16 <sup>th</sup> of 27  |   | 8 <sup>th</sup> of 27   |                        |

## 4.8. Finland

*Universal suffrage since: 1906 (as part of Russian Empire. Independent in 1917)*

*Leading party coalition: Liberal “Centre Party” (KESK), Liberal-Conservative “National Coalition Party” (KOK), the green “Green League”, and the “Swedish People’s Party”*

*Opposition: Social Democratic Party (SD), Left Alliance (CL), Christian Democrats (CD), True Finns (Nat-cons.).*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: KESK (2003-2007), SPD (1999-2003)*

|  |   |   |   |  |                        |
|--|---|---|---|--|------------------------|
| <b>Parliamentary structure</b>   | <b>Houses</b>   | <b>Voting system</b>  |   | <b>No. seats</b>                                 |                        |
| Unicameral parliament  | Eduskunta   | Members are elected for four-year terms on the basis of proportional representation through open list multi-member districts.   |   | 200  |                        |
| <b>No. regions</b>   | <b>No. municipalities</b>   | <b>Pop.n non-EU nationals</b>   |   | <b>Ratio seats : pop.n</b>                       |                        |
| 6 administrative provinces (läänit). Administered by provincial boards of civil servants.  | 432 (kunta). Councils are elected by proportional representation once every four years.   | 5.300.500<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 1,4%<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population: 3,2%) most from Russia, Somalia, Serbia & Montenegro.  |   | Approx. 1 parliament member per 26.503 citizens. |                        |
| <b>Voting mechanism</b>  | <b>Opening hours</b>  |   | <b>Non-nat.l EU residents</b>   |  |                        |
| Advance voting possible and very popular. E-voting piloted in local elections in 2008.   | Polling stations are usually open for one day for approx. 12 hours. When conducting referenda, polling stations are open for two days if election falls on the same day as a national election. |   | Approx. 47.200  |  |                        |
| <b>Voter requirements</b>  |   |   |   |  |                        |
| <i>European</i>  | <i>National</i>   | <i>Regional</i>   | <i>Local</i>  |  |                        |
| Age 18. All citizens of EU who are residents   | Age: 18. Finnish citizenship required.  | -   | Age 18. Finnish citizenship. Non-EU citizens can participate in local elections after 2 years of residence. |  |                        |
| <b>National Referenda</b>  |   | <b>Prominent issues</b>   | <b>Electoral turnout</b>  |  |                        |
| Parliament is the only authority able to call a referendum. No constitutional requirements. Special law has to be passed for a referendum to be held. Only two consultative referenda have been held. There is no restriction on the list of matters that may be submitted to Referendum. 1994: Entry into the European Union, turnout: 74,0%, outcome: 56,9% voted in favour. |   | Entry into the European Union has been the only recent issue subject to national referendum in Finland. The only other referendum held in Finland was on prohibition of alcohol in 1930.  | <i>EU</i>   | <i>National</i>                                  | <i>Regional/ Local</i> |
|  |   |   | 1995: 57,6%   | 1999: 65,0%                                      | 2000: 55,9%            |
|  |   |   | 1999: 31,4%   | 2003: 75,0%                                      | 2004: 58,6%            |
|  |   |   | 2004: 41,1%   | 2007: 65,0%                                      | 2008: 61,2%            |
| <b>Regional/ local referenda</b>   |   |   |   |  |                        |
| Can only be held at the municipal level. Only consultative referenda are allowed. Provision for referendum is made solely at the legislative level.  |   |   |   |  |                        |
| <b>Women in Parliament</b>   |   | <b>Representation of non-EU citizens</b>  |   |  |                        |
| EP: 42,9%<br>Eduskunta: 41,5%<br>Local: 43,8%  |   | Finland’s favourable political participation policies include best practices on electoral rights and political liberties. Political participation is strongly supported by implementation policies to actively inform non-EU citizens of their political rights and offer funding and support to their organizations that participate in consultations. |   |  |                        |
| <b>Rankings</b>  |   |   |   |  |                        |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>  |   | <i>Digital access</i>   | <i>Media freedom</i>  |  |                        |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> of EU27, 123 <sup>rd</sup> of 178   |   | 4 <sup>th</sup> of 27   | 1 <sup>st</sup> of 27   |  |                        |

## 4.9. France

*Universal suffrage since 1944*

*Leading party coalition: CR Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)*

*Opposition: CL Socialist Party (SP), L Communist Party (PC), CR Presidential Majority (MAJ), L Left Radical, R Other Parties of the right, CL Greens)*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: (2002-2007) CR Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), (1997-2002) CL Socialist Party (PS)*

| Parliamentary structure   | Houses  | Voting system   |   | No. seats   |  |
|---|---|---|---|-------------|--|
| Bicameral <sup>17</sup>   | Assemblée nationale / National Assembly                       | Directly elected members. Single-Member Majoritarian Systems in two rounds. In order to be eligible for the second round, candidates must have obtained a number of votes equal to at least 12.5% of the total  |   | 577         |  |
| National Assembly 5 year term   | National Assembly   | in some cases, by-elections are held within the three months following vacation of the seat.  |   |             |  |
| Senate 6 year term  | Sénat / Senate  | Indirectly elected 331 by popularly chosen departmental electoral colleges. Mixed: The law on parity, which henceforth stipulates equality of candidatures between men and women on electoral lists. Two-round majority ballot in the departments that elect from one to three senators and in all overseas departments and collectivities. Proportional representation, with allocation of seats according to the highest average, without the possibility of voting for candidates of more than one party and with closed lists, in the departments that elect four or more senators. Voting is compulsory. |   | 343         |  |
| No. regions   | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n                               |             |  |
| Regions: 21 + Corsica and 4 overseas,   | 36.683  | 63.753.100  | Approx 1 'Assemblée nationale-Deputy' per         |             |  |
| Departments: 96 + 4 overseas  | Communes, directly elected councils elect mayors and adjuncts | 3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 3,8% (Foreign-born as part of the population 8,1%) most from Algeria, Morocco, Turkey.   | 110.491 and 1 'Sénateur' per 185.869 citizens.    |             |  |
| Two round list voting, indirectly   |   |   |   |             |  |
| Voting mechanism  | Opening hours   |   | Non-nat.l EU residents                            |             |  |
| Possibility of proxy voting and abroad voting   | Time of opening and closing of voting posts                   |   | According to eurostat                             |             |  |
| Voter requirements  |   |   |   |             |  |
| European  | National  | Regional  | Local   |             |  |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents.   | Age, 18 years, French citizenship                             | Age, 18 years, French citizenship   | Age, 18 years, French citizenship, or EU citizen. |             |  |
| National Referenda  |   | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout                                 |             |  |
| Exceptional procedure by which citizens are called to express their opinion directly. Types: (1) legislative or (2) constituent. Voting by "yes" or "no", binding if majority of votes are positive, not compulsory.  |   | 2007 – fiscal issues (especially VAT plans)   | EU  | National    | Regional/ Local  |
| National referenda held since 1958: 9   |   | 2002 – calling for clear majority voting, to avoid 'cohabitation' of governing parties  | 1994: 52,7%                                       | 1997: 67,9% |  |
|   |   | 1997- meeting EU targets, single Euro currency, reducing hold of far right parties.   | 1999: 46,8%                                       | 2002: 64%   | 1998:  |
|   |   |   | 2004: 43,1%                                       | 2007: 64,4% | 2004: 62,12 % (1 <sup>st</sup> round) and 65,68% (2 <sup>nd</sup> round) |
| 2005: Treaty for a European Constitution; turnout 69,37%; outcome: 45,33% (= Treaty not accepted)   |   |   |   |             |  |
| 1992: Treaty of Maastricht; turnout 69,70%; outcome: 51,04%   |   |   |   |             |  |
| Regional/ local referenda   |   |   |   |             |  |
| Local referenda may be held for all affairs of the communal authorities.  |   |   |   |             |  |
| Initiation: by the mayor; by at least a third of the members of the municipal council (communes of more than 3500 inhabitants); by at least 50% of the members of the municipal council (communes of less than 3500 inhabitants); by at least 1/5 <sup>th</sup> of the registered citizens of the commune. Binding if majority of votes are positive. |   |   |   |             |  |

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france\\_159/discovering-france\\_2005/france-from-to-z\\_1978/institutions-and-politics\\_1985/elections-in-france\\_5454/index.html](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france_159/discovering-france_2005/france-from-to-z_1978/institutions-and-politics_1985/elections-in-france_5454/index.html)

|  |   |                      |
|--|---|----------------------|
| <b>Women in Parliament</b>   | <b>Representation of non-EU citizens</b>  |                      |
| 18,2% in Assembly<br>21.9% in senate<br>38% regional executive<br>49% Regional assembly<br>44% in EP | 3rd country nationals cannot vote or stand in any elections, making electoral rights in FR very weak.<br>Nevertheless, 3rd country nationals can join political parties and form their own associations. The national government has no organised way of consulting migrants about policy decisions. The Council of Citizenship of the non-EU Parisians convenes structurally; other cities use more ad hoc methods. Local government often intervenes in the selection of its representatives. Formal policy to inform 3rd country nationals of their political rights is lacking. |                      |
| <b>Rankings</b>  |   |                      |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>  | <i>Digital access</i>   | <i>Media freedom</i> |
| 15 out of EU27, 129 out of 178   | 10th out of 27  | 17th out of 27       |

## 4.10. Germany

*Universal suffrage since: 1918*

*Leading party coalition: Social-democratic party (SPD), Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and Christian Social Union (CSU)*

*Opposition: The Left, The Green and Free Democratic Party (FDP)*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: SPD and The Green (1998-2002 and 2002-2005)*

| Parliamentary structure   | Houses  | Voting system  | No. seats  |
|---|---|--|--|
| Bicameral Federal Assembly  | Bundestag (National Council)  | Members elected directly for a four-year term. Voting system combines the “first-past-the-post” and proportional party representation systems in a mixed member proportional representation system. Nat. Council has greater legislative power than the Fed. Council | 612  |
|   | Bundesrat (Federal Council)   | Representation of the regions (Länder). Members are not elected - neither directly nor by state legislatures. Normally members of state cabinets can appoint and remove them.  | 69   |
| No. regions   | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals   | Ratio seats : pop.n  |
| 16 independent federal states, or Länder. Direct elections  | 12.141 municipalities, or 3 <sup>rd</sup> Gemeinden. Also other regional subdivisions.  | 4.612.420<br>country: 5,6% (Foreign-born as part of the population 12,9%) most from Turkey, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia.  | Approx 1 Bundestag member per 137.488 German citizens and 1 Bundesrat member per 1.191.562 citizens. |
| Voting mechanism  | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents   |  |
| Proxy voting possible. E-voting possible in some states. Germans permanently resident in EU can vote in all elections. Germans permanently resident outside EU can vote in national and EU Parliament elections only. Germans temporarily resident in non-EU countries can vote in all elections. | Polling stations are open for one day. Normally from 8 am. to 6 pm. but with regional and local variations..  | 2.515.508 (2008)   |  |
| Voter requirements  |   |  |  |
| European  | National  | Regional   | Local  |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents and 18 years of age.   | Age 18. German citizens.  | German citizens. 18 years of age. Resident in the region or community for at least three months (local and regional nuances).  | Resident in the region or community for at least three months (local and regional nuances).          |
| National Referenda  | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout  |  |
| Referenda only constitutionally required upon changes to administrative boundaries. None have been held since reunification in 1990.  | EU-referenda are in demand but have not been held. Regional and local issues have varied.   | EU<br>1994 60,0%<br>1999 45,2%<br>2004 43,0%   | National<br>1998 82,2%<br>2002 79,0%<br>2005 77,7%   |
|   |   |  | State (2008)<br>Lower Saxo-ny: 58,0%<br>Hamburg: 62,2%<br>Bavaria: 58,1%                             |
| Regional/ local referenda   |   |  |  |
| Roughly 200 local referenda are held each year. State referenda are legally binding. Quorum rules vary from state to state but normally binding decisions require 20-33% participation.   |   |  |  |
| Women in Parliament   | Representation of non-EU citizens   |  |  |
| National parliament: 31,8%<br>Regional: ?<br>EP: 33,3%  | Non-EU citizens enjoy great political liberties in that they are allowed to start associations and join political parties. On the other hand, electoral rights are low. Unlike in many other EU countries, non-EU citizens are not allowed to vote in city and local authority elections, but may be represented by the Foreigners’ Advisory Councils, which act as advisory boards for local politics. |  |  |
| Rankings  |   |  |  |
| Happy Planet Index  | Digital access  | Media freedom  |  |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> of EU27, 81 <sup>st</sup> of 178   | 9 <sup>th</sup> of 27   | 8 <sup>th</sup> of 27  |  |



## 4.11. Greece

*Universal suffrage since: 1952*

*Leading party coalition: New Democracy (NC) (CR)*

*Opposition: Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) (CL), Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) (L), Communist Party of Greece (KKE) (L),*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: New Democracy (ND) (CR) (2004-2007), Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) (CL) (2000-2004)*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses   | Voting system  |   |   | No. seats                       |
|--|--|--|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Unicameral   | National Parliament (Vouli ton Ellinon)  | Members elected on a proportional basis for four-year terms by a system of reinforced proportional representation. Voting is compulsory in Greece for all people aged between 18 and 70 who are within 200 kilometres from the district in which they must cast a vote on the day of the election. Threshold: 3% |   |   | 300                             |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals   |   | Ratio seats : pop.n                                   |                                 |
| 13 regions ruled by government appointed governor and prefecture representatives, 52 prefectures administered by councils where members are elected for four year terms.   | 900 municipalities and 133 villages. Both run by local councils where members are directly elected for a four-year term.   | 11.200.000<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 7,2% (Foreign-born as part of the population 10,3%)   |   | Approx. 1 parliament member per 34.400 citizens.      |                                 |
| Voting mechanism   |  | Opening hours  |   | Non-nat.l EU residents                                |                                 |
| No postal or advance voting. eVoting discussed in Parliament but not implemented.  |  | Polling stations are open for one day for 12 hours (7 am. to 7 pm.).   |   | Approx. 370.000                                       |                                 |
| Voter requirements   |  |  |   |   |                                 |
| European   | National   | Regional   | Local   |   |                                 |
| Age 18, all citizens of EU who are residents   | Age 18, citizenship, full possession of civil rights, disqualifications: persons disfranchised pursuant to legal prohibition or criminal conviction for offences defined in the common or military penal code, or persons who are wards of the court.  | Age 18, citizenship. Non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand  | Age 18, citizenship. Non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand |   |                                 |
| National Referenda   |  | Prominent issues   | Electoral turnout   |   |                                 |
| Binding referenda only. The President formally calls a referendum but the decision must be taken by a majority of members of Parliament on the proposal of the Government (on laws related to important social issues a 3/5 majority is required. Voting is compulsory. Last referendum held in 1974: Abolition of the monarchy and establishment of the republic. Turnout: 75,5%, Outcome: 69,2% voted in favour. |  | Abolition of the monarchy, republic, acceptance of constitution.   | EU<br>2004: 80,4%<br>1999: 75,3%<br>1994: 62,8%           | National<br>2000: 76,0%<br>2004: 75,6%<br>2007: 74,1% | Regional/<br>Local<br>2006: 72% |
| Regional/ local referenda  |  |  |   |   |                                 |
| The institution of local referendum was established in 2006. Local referenda can take place either upon the initiative of the municipal or communal council on important issues, for which the municipality or community is responsible, or following a popular initiative on issues explicitly provided for in the Code of Municipalities or Communities  |  |  |   |   |                                 |
| Women in Parliament  |  | Representation of non-EU citizens  |   |   |                                 |
| National: 14,7%<br>EP: 29%<br>Local: ?   | According to the Migration Policy index, Greece attains best practice on political liberties. Electoral rights, consultative bodies and implementation policies, however, are critically weak. Non-EU citizens can join political parties, but they cannot stand as candidates or vote in any elections. |  |   |   |                                 |
| Rankings   |  |  |   |   |                                 |
| Happy Planet Index   | Digital access   |  | Media freedom   |   |                                 |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> of EU27, 133 <sup>rd</sup> of 178   | 19 <sup>th</sup> of 27   |  | 24 <sup>th</sup> of 27                                    |   |                                 |

## 4.12. Hungary

*Universal suffrage since: 1918*

*Leading party coalition: Hungarian Socialist Party - MSzP (CL), Alliance of Free Democrats (CR) (exited the government in 2008).*

*Opposition: Hungarian Civic Union – Fidesz (CR), Christian Democratic People's Party (CD).*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: Hungarian Civic Union - Fidesz (CR) (1998-2002; 2002-2006)*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses   | Voting system   |   | No. seats  |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Unicameral parliamentary structure   | Orszaggyules   | Complex voting system: Single-seat constituencies on a first-past-the-post system, multi-seat constituencies on a proportional basis, and another group of deputies elected on a proportional basis on votes cast in the single-seat constituencies. Members are elected for a four-year term |   | 386  |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals  |   | Ratio seats : pop.n                              |
| 7 administrative regions responsible for regional development subdivided into 19 counties governed by county councils where members are elected on a proportional basis for a four-year term. Threshold: 4%.                                   | 3.168. Governed by councils with directly elected members. Voting system depends on size of municipality.  | 10.000.000<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 1,3% (Foreign-born as part of the population 3,2%) most from Romania, Ukraine and China.   |   | Approx. 1 parliament member per 26.000 citizens. |
| Voting mechanism   |  | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |  |
| No postal or advance voting. No e-voting activities have been held   |  | Polling stations are open for one day for 13 hours (6 am. to 7 pm.). Examples of longer opening hours due to Sabbath  | No data   |  |
| Voter requirements   |  |   |   |  |
| <i>European</i>  | <i>National</i>  | <i>Regional</i>   | <i>Local</i>  |  |
| Age 18, all citizens of EU who are residents   | Age: 18 years, citizenship, residence in HU at the time of election, disqualifications: insanity/mental illness, guardianship, holders of temporary entry permits, undocumented immigrants, persons barred from public affairs by court decision, imprisonment, institutional medical care pursuant to criminal procedure  | Age 18, citizens, non-nationals (EU nationals and third-country nationals) can vote in elections for regional or national representative bodies, but not stand  | Age 18, citizenship, non-EU citizens can vote in local elections once permanent residence permit or long-term residence status acquired<br>Cannot stand as candidates |  |
| National Referenda   |  | Prominent issues  |   | Electoral turnout                                |
| Both binding and consultative referenda can be held. Can be initiated by parliament (2/3 of the votes), by the president or by the population (200.000 signatures). Referendum only binding if ¼ of the voting population give the same answer |  | European Union membership, health fees, dual citizenship, independence, NATO membership, presidential elections.  |   | <i>EU</i> <i>National</i> <i>Regional/ Local</i> |
| 2008: Abolishment of health fees. (depending on question) voted in favour.   |  | Turnout: 50,5, Outcome: 82-84%  |   | 2004: 38,5%      1998: 56,3%      2002: 51,1%    |
| 2003: European Union membership. voted in favour.  |  | Turnout: 45,6%, Outcome: 83,8%  |   | -      2002: 71,0%      2006: 53,1%              |
|  |  |   |   | -      2006: 67,6%                               |
| Regional/ local referenda  |  |   |   |  |
| Generally unpopular but existing. Constitutionally required to decide territorial changes. Another popular issue is unwanted facilities on local territory. 50% of local voters must vote to make local referendum legally binding.            |  |   |   |  |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens  |   |   |  |
| EP: 38%<br>National: 11,1%<br>Local: 14,5%   | According to the Migration Policy index, non-EU citizens in Hungary have the most favourable electoral rights in the EU-10, since they can vote (but not stand) in local and regional elections. On the other hand, there is no national policy of information, no consultative body and no implementation measures in the form of public funding or support for immigrant associations at any level of government |   |   |  |
| Rankings   |  |   |   |  |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>  | <i>Digital access</i>  |   | <i>Media freedom</i>  |  |

## 4.13. Ireland

*Universal suffrage since 1918.18*

*Leading coalition: the C Fianna Fáil party, the CR Progressive Democrats and the Greens*

*Opposition: C Fine Gael and the L Labour Party.*

*Leading party last 3 elections: (2002- 2007) C Fianna Fáil and CR Progressive Democrats, (1997-2002) C Fianna Fáil and CR Progressive Democrats, (1992-1994) C Fianna Fáil and the L Labour Party (from 1994-1997 the CL Rainbow Coalition (Fine Gael, the Labour Party and the Democratic Left formed the coalition government, after prime minister's resignation).<sup>19</sup>*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses  | Voting system   | No. seats  |                 |
|--|---|---|--|-----------------|
| Bicameral Parliament (Oireachtas)  | House of representatives (Dáil Éireann)   | Directly elected members, proportional representation with a single transferable vote.  | 166  |                 |
| 5 years  | Senate (Seanad Éireann)   | indirectly elected (by panels of candidates and by universities) and appointed by the prime minister (49 and 11 respectively).  | 60   |                 |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n  |                 |
| 8 regional authorities and 2 regional assemblies. Not elected  | 29 county councils and 5 city councils. Divided into 80 town or borough councils  | 4.401.300<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 4.5% (Foreign-born as part of the population (2006) 10.1%). Most from UK, Northern Ireland, Poland, USA, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Nigeria, China | Approx 1 representative per 26.500 and 1 senator per 73.400 citizens |                 |
| Directly elected   |   |   |  |                 |
| Voting mechanism   | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |  |                 |
| Postal voting possible in some cases. citizens living abroad can in most cases not vote (some exceptions). people with disabilities, can vote at an alternative polling, be helped to vote at the polling, vote by post or vote at a hospital or nursing home.   | 1 day. In local elections, polling period must last at least 12 hours between 7.00 am and 10.30 pm. At national & EU elections, a duration of at least 12 hours between 8.00a.m.and 10.30p.m.   | No data   |  |                 |
| Voter requirements   |   |   |  |                 |
| European   | National  | Regional  | Local  |                 |
| EU nationals over 18 who are residents are permitted to vote. Citizens abroad are not entitled to vote   | age 18 years, Irish or British citizenship.   | Age 18 years. Irish citizenship not required. living in the local electoral area required.  |  |                 |
| National Referenda   | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout   |  |                 |
| 2 types of referenda. Constitutional and "ordinary" referenda. Both are binding. All constitutional amendments are submitted to a referendum, after the amendment has been approved by both houses. 29 constitutional referenda (21 accepted and 8 rejected) and no 'ordinary' referenda have been held.   | 2007- tax reforms, health care system and social services. 2002 - social services, e.g. taxes, health care, education, stricter criminal sentences. 1997 - taxes, crime, drugs, abortion, employment & Northern Ireland.  | EU  | National   | Regional/ Local |
|  |   | 1994  | 1997   | 1991            |
|  |   | 4%  | 65.9%  | 56%             |
|  |   | 1999  | 2002   | 1999            |
|  |   | 50.2%   | 62.3%  | 48.8%           |
|  |   | 2004  | 2007   | 2004            |
|  |   | 59.7%   | 67.0%  | 57.0%           |
| 1972 Accession to the European Communities. Turnout: 70.9% (for: 83.1%); 1987 Single European Act. Turnout: 44.1% (for:69.9%); 1992 Treaty on European Union. Turnout: 57.3% (for: 69.1%); 1998 Treaty of Amsterdam. Turnout: 56.2% (for: 61.7%); 2001 Treaty of Nice. Turnout: 34.8% (for: 46.1%); 2002 Treaty of Nice. Turnout: 49.5% (for: 62.9%); 2008 Treaty of Lisbon. Turnout 53.1% (for: 46.6%.) |   |   |  |                 |
| Regional/ local referenda  |   |   |  |                 |
| Sub national referenda are only held at municipality level   |   |   |  |                 |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens   |   |  |                 |
| 13.25% in the house of representatives   | Any legal resident can vote and stand for local election. Non-EU citizens can even vote in parliamentary elections if their country of origin reciprocates for Irish nationals (only UK citizens so far). Non-EU citizens can join political parties and form their own associations. There are ad hoc campaigns to inform residents of their political rights. However, the government does not consult migrants on national policies. |   |  |                 |
| 21.67% in Senate   |   |   |  |                 |
| 38.5% in EP  |   |   |  |                 |
| Rankings   |   |   |  |                 |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>  | <i>Digital access</i>   | <i>Media freedom</i>  |  |                 |

<sup>18</sup> In 1921, 26 counties separated from the UK, to become the Irish Free State, while 6 remained within the UK, namely, Northern Ireland. The Irish Constitution was enacted in 1937, and in 1949, Ireland gained complete independence, departing from the British Commonwealth and became the Republic of Ireland (Citizens Information. Constitution; The Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook. Ireland).

<sup>19</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. Ireland.

## 4.14. Italy

*Universal suffrage since 1945.<sup>20</sup>*

*Leading party coalition: The CR People of Freedom coalition (Pdl), led by Silvio Berlusconi.*

*Opposition: The CL Democratic party coalition (Pd).<sup>21</sup>*

*Leading party last 3 elections: (2006-2008) the CL Union coalition (most of the Pd parties), (2001-2006) the CR House of Freedom coalition (similar to Pdl), (1996-2001) CL Olive Tree alliance (similar to Pd).*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses  | Voting system   | No. seats   |
|--|---|---|---|
| Bicameral  | Chamber of Deputies   | Directly elected via proportionality and plurality. 75% filled from single-member districts by individual candidates who win the largest number of votes in each district. 25% go to candidates from party lists → proportional. Coalition with highest votes is given "bonus" seats to meet seat requirements. 12 members are elected representing Italian citizens overseas | 630 (from 26 constituencies)  |
| Elected every 5 years. Both enjoy equal power and both are directly elected. Revised electoral system since 2006   | Senate  | 315 directly elected, 7 appointed. Constituency for Italians abroad representing 4 geographical groups has 6 seats  | 322 (representing 20 regions)   |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n   |
| 20 (5 'special status' regions are (semi) autonomous due to ethnic or geographical considerations). Direct elections   | 110 Direct elections  | 59.619.300; 3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 4.2% Foreign-born as part of the population (2001) 2.5% Traditional ethnic minorities: Roma people, Slovenes & Tyroleans. Currently most from Albania and Morocco.   | Approx. 1 deputy: 95.000 citizens; 1 senator: 186.000 citizens.   |
| Voting mechanism   | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |   |
| Italians abroad are entitled to elect 12 deputies and 6 senators   | For the next EP elections, 15:00 to 22:00 on Saturday 6 June, and from 7:00 to 22:00 on Sunday 7 June   | No data   |   |
| Voter requirements   |   |   |   |
| European   | National  | Regional  | Local   |
| EU nationals over 18 who are residents   | House of deputies age is 18. For senate age is 25. Citizenship required.  | Age 18. citizenship two ballots 1 proportional 1 plurality.   | Age 18. EU nationals can vote and stand as a candidate.   |
| National Referenda   | Prominent issues  |   | Electoral turnout   |
| 2 types - abrogative referendum to repeal a law, and constitutional referendum. Both are binding. To date, 53 abrogative and 2 constitutional referenda have been held. To be legally binding, A quorum of participation of the majority of the electorate is required for abrogative referenda. Of 53 abrogative referenda, 18 failed due to threshold requirements. 500,000 signatories or five regional councils may request a referendum. Constitution also provides that 50,000 members of the electorate may jointly present a draft bill to parliament. | 2008 - economy (tax cuts), immigration, and foreign policy.<br>2006 - The economy and the presence of Italian troops in Iraq.<br>2000 - economy, tax cuts, unemployment and security.   |   | <i>EU</i> <i>National</i><br>1994      2000<br>74.8%    81.2%<br>1999      2006<br>70.8%    lower house<br>83.6%<br>senate 83.5%<br>2004      2008<br>73.1%    lower house<br>80.5%<br>senate 80.4% |
| Regional/ local referenda  |   |   |   |
| Regional referenda may be held and can be either consultative or binding. Local level referenda are always consultative. Requirements differ for initiating a referendum. There are no participation thresholds  |   |   |   |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens   |   |   |
| In lower house 21.27%<br>In senate 18.01%<br>In 2001<br>11% in regional assemblies<br>18% regional executives  | Non-EU citizens may join a political party, but cannot vote or stand as a party's candidate in local or regional elections. They can form their own associations, which elect representatives to national, regional and local consultative bodies. At national level, representatives appointed by state, and are only consulted ad hoc. Italians abroad are represented in parliament. |   |   |
| Rankings   |   |   |   |

<sup>20</sup> Italy became a parliamentary republic then, following a popular referendum, after having been a monarchy since its unification in 1870. Italy's current constitution was originally adopted in 1947 and became effective in 1948 (Legislationline. Election resources on the internet. Italy).

<sup>21</sup> Election Resources on the Internet: Elections to the Italian Parliament; Inter-Parliamentary Union. Italy.

| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>                                 | <i>Digital access</i>      | <i>Media freedom</i>       |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 11 <sup>th</sup> out of EU27, 66 <sup>th</sup> out of 178 | 11 <sup>th</sup> out of 27 | 25 <sup>th</sup> out of 27 |

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## 4.15. Latvia

Universal suffrage since: 1918

Leading party coalition: “People’s Party” (TP, cons.), “New Era” (JL, cons.), “Union of Greens and Farmers” (ZZS, green/agrarian), “For Fatherland and Freedom” (LNNK, nat. cons.), the “Civic Union”.

Opposition: Harmony Centre (SC, soc.), “Latvia’s First Party” (LPP/LC, cons./lib.),

For Human Rights in United Latvia (PCTVL, soc.), Social Democratic Worker’s Party (soc. dem.).

Leading party previous 2 elections: New Era (JL) (2002-2006), People’s Party (1998-2002)

| Parliamentary structure   | Houses  | Voting system   |   | No. seats                                    |                    |
|---|---|---|---|--|--------------------|
| Unicameral parliamentary system   | Saeima  | Proportional representation based on party lists. 5% vote threshold |   | 100  |                    |
| No. regions   | No. municipalities  | Pop.n   | non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n                          |                    |
| 5 regions subdivided into 26 districts. These are governed by district councils.  | 535. Governed by municipal councils. Members are elected for four year terms.   | 2.270.000   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 19,7% (Foreign-born as part of the population: 19,5%) Most stateless or from Russia and Belarus. | Approx 1 Saeima member per 22.700 citizens.  |                    |
| Voting mechanism  | Opening hours   |   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |  |                    |
| Around 50 polling stations open in other countries. No postal or advance voting. No e-voting activities implemented.  | Open one day from 7 am. to 10 pm.   |   | Approx. 8.000   |  |                    |
| Voter requirements  |   |   |   |  |                    |
| European  | National  | Regional  |   | Local  |                    |
| Age 18, all citizens of EU who are residents  | Age: 18. Citizenship required. Citizens overseas can vote. Disqualifications: to be serving court sentences in penitentiaries, legal incapacity, insanity/mental illness  | -   |   | Age 18. Non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand |                    |
| National Referenda  | Prominent issues  |   | Electoral turnout   |  |                    |
| The Saeima or one tenth of the electorate can call a referendum. Only binding referenda can be called. A referendum on accession to the European Union is specifically required by the constitution. The quorum is half the voters who participated in the last election. Constitutional amendments require a quorum of 50% of registered voters. | Pensions (1999, 2008), European Union Membership (2003), citizenship (1998), Preservation of the Soviet Union (1991), independence and democracy (1991).  |   | EU  | National                                     | Regional/<br>Local |
| 2003: European Union Membership, Turnout: 72,5% Outcome: 67,5% voted in favour.   |   |   | -   | 1998: 71,9%                                  | 2001: 62,0%        |
|   |   |   | -   | 2002: 71,5%                                  | 2005: 52,9%        |
|   |   |   | 2004: 41,2%   | 2006: 61,0%                                  | 2009: 52,0%        |
| Regional/ local referenda   |   |   |   |  |                    |
| Local or regional referenda are not allowed in Latvia   |   |   |   |  |                    |
| Women in Parliament   | Representation of non-EU citizens   |   |   |  |                    |
| EP: 22,2%<br>Saeima: 20,0%<br>Local: 45,6%  | Non-EU nationals cannot vote even in local elections. According to the Migration Policy Index, Latvia limits the rights of non-Latvian residents to form political associations or join political parties. The government does not consult with non-Latvians on policies affecting them at any level of government. |   |   |  |                    |
| Rankings  |   |   |   |  |                    |
| Happy Planet Index  | Digital access  |   | Media freedom   |  |                    |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> of EU27, 160 <sup>th</sup> of 178   | 25 <sup>th</sup> of 27  |   | 17 <sup>th</sup> of 27  |  |                    |

## 4.16. Lithuania

Universal suffrage since: 1922

Leading party coalition: Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) (R), National Revival Party (TPP) (C), Liberals Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (LRLS) (R), Liberal and Centre Union (LiRS) (R).

Opposition: Order and Justice (TT) (Nat./R), Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP) (SD), Labour Party (DP) (C), Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (AWPL) (min.), Lithuanian Peasant Popular Union (LVLS) (R), New Union – Social Liberals (NS) (CR).

Leading party previous 2 elections: Labour Party (DP) (CL) (2004-2008), Social Democratic coalition (CL) (2000-2004)

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses  | Voting system   |  | No. seats   |  |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| Unicameral   | Seimas  | Members are elected for a four year term based on a party- list system combining proportional and single constituencies. Threshold: 5% for parties, 7% for coalitions.  |  | 141   |  |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n  |   |  |
| 10 countries administered by a government-designated governor and a county council comprised of the mayors of the towns in the county  | 60. Run by a municipal council for which members are directly elected.  | 3.360.000<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 0,9%<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population: 4,8%) Most Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.  | Approx. 1 parliament member per 23.900 citizens.   |   |  |
| Voting mechanism   |   | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents   |   |  |
| No postal or advance voting. Parliamentary discussions held about e-voting but no implementation.  |   | Polls are open for one day for 13 hours (7 am. to 8 pm.).   | Approx. 2.600  |   |  |
| Voter requirements   |   |   |  |   |  |
| European   | National  | Regional  | Local  |   |  |
| Age 18, all citizens of EU who are residents   | Age 18 years, citizenship, disqualifications: incapability declared by a court of law   | -   | Age 18, citizenship, non-EU citizens can vote if permanent residence permit or long-term residence status acquired |   |  |
| National Referenda   |   | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout  |   |  |
| Nine referenda have been held since independence in 1990. Quorum for binding referendum is participation of 1/3 of registered voters. Can be initiated by 300.000 signatures and approval by ¼ of the Seima members. |   | Independence (1991), Restoration of the office of the Presidency (1992), Demand withdrawal of troops and economic compensation from Russia (1992), Approval of constitution (1992), Privatization issues (1994, 1996), Approval of amendments to the constitution (1996). | EU<br>2004: 48,2%  | National<br>2000: 59,0%<br>2004: 46,1%<br>2008: 48,6% | Regional/<br>Local<br>2002: 49,2%<br>2007: 36,5% |
| 1991: Demand independence from Soviet Union. Turnout: 84,74%, Outcome: 90,24% voted in favour.<br>2003: European Union membership. Turnout: 63,37%, Outcome: 89,95% in favour.                                       |   |   |  |   |  |
| Regional/ local referenda  |   |   |  |   |  |
| Local or regional referenda cannot be held. Municipalities can only conduct surveys.   |   |   |  |   |  |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens   |   |  |   |  |
| EP: 38,5%<br>National: 17,7%<br>Local: 15%   | Non-European citizens can vote in local elections after a residence permit or long-term status, of five years in the country has been acquired. Only Lithuanian nationals can form a political organization or join a political party. Non-EU citizens have no access to consultative bodies or implementation policies, which according to the Migration Policy Index are critical weaknesses for political participation. |   |  |   |  |
| Rankings   |   |   |  |   |  |
| Happy Planet Index   | Digital access  |   | Media freedom  |   |  |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> of EU27, 149 <sup>th</sup> of 178   | 24 <sup>th</sup> of 27  |   | 11 <sup>th</sup> of 27   |   |  |



## 4.17. Luxembourg

*Universal suffrage since 1919*

*Leading party coalition: CR Christian Social Party (PCS/CVS) along with CL Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP)*

*Opposition: R Democrat Party (PD/DP), CL Greens (DEI GRÉNG) & CL the Action Committee for Democracy and Justice (ADR)*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: (1999-2004) CR PCS/CSV & R DP/PD, (1994-1999) CR CSV/CSV & CL LSAP/POSL<sup>22</sup>*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses                              | Voting system   |          |  | No. seats       |                        |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|----------|--|-----------------|------------------------|
| Unicameral<br>5 year term (same day as EP elections)   | Chamber of Deputies                 | Directly elected, closed party list, proportional representation (Hagenbach-Bischoff method), with preferential vote or splitting a vote between different lists, (where votes may not exceed the number of Deputies to be elected in a district). Remaining seats go to parties with the highest average after the second count. |          |  | 60              |                        |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities                  | Pop.n non-EU nationals  |          | Ratio seats : pop.n  |                 |                        |
| 3 districts<br>12 cantons- not elected   | 116- directly elected every 6 years | 483,800<br>3rd country (2006): 5.9%<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population 33.1%) most from Serbia Montenegro, Bosnia, Cape Verde.  |          | Approx 1 'deputy per 8,063 citizens  |                 |                        |
| Voting mechanism   |                                     | Opening hours   |          | Non-nat.l EU residents   |                 |                        |
| External and postal voting possible  |                                     | Opening hours 1 day from 8.00 – 14.00   |          | No data  |                 |                        |
| Voter requirements   |                                     |   |          |  |                 |                        |
| European   |                                     | National  | Regional | Local  |                 |                        |
| Age 18, all LU citizens<br>Other EU nationals must have lived in LU, for at least 2 years.   |                                     | Age 18, citizenship   | N/A      | Age 18, citizenship. EU and non-EU citizens can vote after 5 years of residence. Non-EU citizens cannot stand as candidates, but EU citizens can a. 5 years. |                 |                        |
| National Referenda   |                                     | Prominent issues  |          | Electoral turnout  |                 |                        |
| Only consultative referendum possible. Only initiated by parliament. However, in the 2005 Act on referendum mentions 25000 signatures in support of referendum. So far 4 referenda have been held. Voting is compulsory. |                                     | 2004- employment, removing property tax, sustainable development, entrepreneurship, simplifying starting up companies<br>1999 - a controversial pensions reform plan, the need for change after 15 years of rule by the coalition,<br>1994 - welfare and the status of foreigners in the country                                  |          | <i>EU</i>  | <i>National</i> | <i>Regional/ Local</i> |
|  |                                     |   |          | 1994<br>88.5%  | 1994<br>88.3%   | 1993<br>N/A            |
| 1919 on maintenance of the dynasty under the Grand Duchess Marie-Adelaide (80% of votes are for Grand Duchess Charlotte)   |                                     | 1999  |          | 1999   | 1999            |                        |
| 1919 on economic union with France (73% of votes for)  |                                     | 87.3%   |          | 87.0%  | N/A             |                        |
| 1937 – on a law banning the 'communist party and others prone to violence' (50.67% voted against)  |                                     | 2004  |          | 2004   | 2005            |                        |
| 2005 on the European Constitution, turnout 90.44% (96.52% for)   |                                     | 90%   |          | 91.7%  | N/A             |                        |
| Regional/ local referenda  |                                     |   |          |  |                 |                        |
| Only municipal referenda possible, only consultative. Can be initiated by at least 1/5 voters in municipalities > 3000 inhabitants, and a 1/4 in other municipalities  |                                     |   |          |  |                 |                        |
| Women in Parliament  |                                     | Representation of non-EU citizens   |          |  |                 |                        |
| 23.3% in Chamber of Deputies<br>16.7% in EP  |                                     | Non-EU citizens who have lived in LU for 5 years can vote, but not stand, in local elections. They are consulted by the state in a structured way through freely-elected representatives. However, currently a reliance on ad hoc campaigns is dominant. <sup>23</sup>  |          |  |                 |                        |

<sup>22</sup> Inter Parliamentary Union, Luxembourg; Election Resources, Luxembourg (<http://electionresources.org/lu/>)

<sup>23</sup> According to a study on migration policies in Europe: MIPEX (the Migrant Integration Policy Index: Possibilities of Political Participation of Migrants, 2007): "By law, the national government and 95% of municipalities must consult their foreign residents in a structured way. Local and the national bodies are equally composed by foreigners and Luxembourgers. In any case the chair must be a Luxembourger: in the local body, a member of the municipal council, and in the national body, an officer of the Ministry of Family. Foreigners on



| Rankings                          |                       |                      |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>         | <i>Digital access</i> | <i>Media freedom</i> |
| 26th out of EU27, 74th out of 178 | 7th out of 27         | 5th out of 27        |

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local bodies are chosen by municipal council without election, on national level migrant organisations elect their representatives without state intervention. The transparency and effectiveness of these bodies has been questioned. Most local consultative bodies do not meet four times a year as required, but are not penalised by the national government. Indeed, the national government itself only rarely takes advice from its consultative body. Proposals and reforms to improve the legal framework have had little effect.”

## 4.18. Malta

Universal suffrage since: 1947<sup>24</sup>

Leading party coalition: CR Nationalist Party (PN)

Opposition: CL Malta Labour Party (MLP)

Leading party previous 2 elections: (2003-2008) CR PN, (1998-2003) CR PN

| Parliamentary structure   |   | Houses  | Voting system   |                        | No. seats    |
|---|---|---|---|------------------------|--------------|
| Unicameral  | House of representatives (Il-Kamra Tad-Deputati)  | 65 directly voted, Proportional: Single-transferable-vote (STV) (Hagenbach-Bischoff quotient). Preference is stated among the candidates in an electoral district regardless of candidates' political affiliation. Surplus votes are proportionately given to remaining candidates. "Bonus seats" may be allocated to a party to secure a parliamentary majority. |   |                        | 69           |
| 5 year term   |   |   |   |                        |              |
| No. regions   | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n   |                        |              |
| 3, administrative territorial entities.   | 68 Local Councils (54 in Malta & 14 in Gozo). Directly elected every 3 years-staggered  | 410,300<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country (2006): 1% most from Australia, Canada, USA.   | Approx 1 'representative per 5,946 citizens.  |                        |              |
| Voting mechanism  |   | Opening hours   |   | Non-nat.l EU residents |              |
| Proxy voting possible, e.g. for disabled and elderly in retirement homes  |   | From 7.00 - 22.00   |   | No data                |              |
| Voter requirements  |   |   |   |                        |              |
| European  | National  | Regional  | Local   |                        |              |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents.   | Age 18, citizenship, residence in the country   | N/A   | Age 18, citizenship, (and EU nationals). Non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand (constit. laws permit non-nationals to vote, but required legislation or agreements have not been adopted - reciprocity condition required) |                        |              |
| National Referenda  |   | Prominent issues  |   | Electoral turnout      |              |
| Optional and mandatory referendum possible, abrogative or suspensive. Binding and consultative. Initiated by parliament. Quorum of at least 50% of electorate required.   |   | 2008 – lowering income tax, employment, economic growth   |   | EU                     | National     |
|   |   | 2003- lowering income tax for some sectors, EU accession, negative campaigning  |   | 1994                   | 1998         |
|   |   | 1998 – EU membership  |   | N/A                    | 95.4%        |
| 1870 on eligibility of ecclesiastics in the Council of Government turnout 29.5% (96% for)   |   |   |   | 1999                   | 2003         |
| 1956 on integration with UK, turnout 59.1% (75% for)  |   |   |   | N/A                    | 95.4%        |
| 1964 on the constitution, turnout 79.7% (54.5 for)  |   |   |   |                        | 2003 - 88%   |
| 2003 on EU accession, turnout 90.9% (53.6% for)   |   |   |   |                        | 2004 - 82%   |
|   |   |   |   | 2004                   | 2008         |
|   |   |   |   | 82.4%                  | 93.3%        |
|   |   |   |   |                        | 2006 - 68.7% |
|   |   |   |   |                        | 2007 - 68%   |
|   |   |   |   |                        | 2008 - 85.9% |
| Regional/ local referenda   |   |   |   |                        |              |
| Mandatory referendum possible, consultative referendum are held at municipal level on municipal regulations. When 10% of the electorate demands a referendum, one must be held. Quorum of 50% participation is required. Only 1 has been held so far: 1972 on Gozo to remain different from Malta, turnout 1.2% (77% for) |   |   |   |                        |              |
| Women in Parliament   |   | Representation of non-EU citizens   |   |                        |              |
| 8.7% in house of reps<br>0% in EP   | Political rights for non-EU citizens are very limited. There are no official consultative bodies with migrant associations, but the national government does some limited consultations with representatives of associations working with non-European citizens. These associations cannot get public funding at any level of government. |   |   |                        |              |
| Rankings  |   |   |   |                        |              |
| Happy Planet Index  | Digital access  |   | Media freedom   |                        |              |
| 4th out of EU27, 40th out of 178  | 17th out of 27  |   | 14th out of 27  |                        |              |

<sup>24</sup> Malta attained independence in 1964.

## 4.19. The Netherlands

*Universal suffrage since 1919*

*Leading party coalition: CR Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), CL Labour Party (PvdA) and CL Christian Union.*

*Opposition: CL Socialist Party (SP), R People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), CR Party for Freedom (GW/PvdV), L Green Left and C Democrats 66 (D66)*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: (2003-2006) CR CDA, R VV and C D&&, (2002-2003) CR CDA, R VVD & CR Pim Fortuyn List (LPF)*

| Parliamentary structure   |   | Houses   | Voting system  | No. seats  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Bicameral   | House of Representatives  | Directly elected, closed party, proportional representation. Seats are distributed at national level among different lists or groups of lists which have obtained at least 0.67% of the nationwide vote. Remaining seats are then allotted according to the d'Hondt method.  | 150  |  |
| 4 year term   | Senate  | Indirectly elected by the 12 Provincial Councils. Proportional party-list system, with seats proportionately filled as for members of the Second Chamber. Delegates from the Provincial Councils make up the membership of the Upper House.  | 75   |  |
| No. regions   | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals   | Ratio seats : pop.n  |  |
| 12  | 443   | 16,508,081<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country (2006): 2.89%<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population (2004) 10.6%)<br>most from Turkey, Morocco, USA.  | Approx 1 representative per 109.369 and 1 senator per 218.739 citizens.            |  |
| Voting mechanism  |   | Opening hours  | Non-nat.l EU residents   |  |
| Postal voting possible. In 2004, Dutch voters living abroad could cast their vote for the European Parliament via the internet. In 2006, the same experiment was conducted during the Dutch Parliamentary elections. At present, these experiments are being evaluated. In 2006, elections were electronically conducted  |   | Until 21.00  | No data  |  |
| Voter requirements  |   |  |  |  |
| European  | National  | Regional   | Local  |  |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents  | All citizens of EU MS who are Age 18, citizenship registered residents  | age 18, citizenship. Non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand  | age 18, citizenship, non-EU citizens can vote and stand after 5 years of residence |  |
| National Referenda  | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout  |  |  |
| Only consultative referenda can be held. The basis is a temporary general law on referendum was valid from 2002-2004. For every referendum to be held, a specific law must be passed. Only 1 referendum has been held. They can be initiated by government. Agenda initiatives can be introduced by gathering 40,000 signatures. Then the proposal must be considered by the House of Representatives.  | 2006- economic reforms and immigration<br>2003 - reduction of bureaucracy, crime, immigration, tax reforms and increasing low pay, EU expansion, NATO, war in Iraq, and environment | EU<br>1994<br>35.6%<br>1999<br>30.0%   | National<br>2002<br>79.0%<br>2003<br>80.0%   | Regional/<br>Local<br>199945,6%(reg)<br>199859,5%(loc)<br>200347,6%(reg)<br>200258%(loc) |
| 2005 on European Constitution   | turnout   | 2004<br>39.1%  | 2006<br>80.4%  | 200746,40%(reg)<br>200658,6%(loc)  |
| 63,3% (61,1% against)   |   |  |  |  |
| Regional/ local referenda   |   |  |  |  |
| There is no current legal provision for local referenda, but consultative referenda have been organised, for example on traffic-free town centres and closing-times for cafés and restaurants, changes of boundaries etc. under the temporary law on referendum 2002-2004, there is a provision on provincial and municipal referenda, and the rejection of a text requires by 30% of registered voters |   |  |  |  |
| Women in Parliament   |   | Representation of non-EU citizens  |  |  |
| 41.3% in house of representatives<br>34.7% in senate<br>34% in regional assemblies<br>28% regional executives<br>44.4% in EP  |   | Non-EU citizens can vote and stand for local (but not regional) elections after five years of uninterrupted legal residence. All foreign residents can form associations and join political parties. At national level, a structural and freely elected consultation body exists. Consultation at other levels is rather ad hoc. |  |  |
| Rankings  |   |  |  |  |
| Happy Planet Index  | Digital access  | Media freedom  |  |  |
| 6th out of EU27, 70th out of 178  | 3rd out of 27   | 6th out of 27  |  |  |

## 4.20. Poland

*Universal suffrage since 1919*

*Leading party coalition: The conservative/liberal Christian democratic, “Civic Platform” (PO) and the agrarian Christian democratic “Polish People’s Party” (PSL) (CR)*

*Opposition: Christian democratic, “Law and Justice” (PiS), the social democratic, “Left and Democrats” (LID) and the case-based non-ideological “German Minority” (CL)*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: PiS (2005-2007), SLD and UP (today both members of the LiD coalition) (2001-2005)*

| Parliamentary structure   | Houses  | Voting system  | No. seats  |                                 |
|---|---|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Bicameral. When in joint session the two chambers form the National Assembly.   | Sejm  | Directly elected by proportional representation. Non-ethnic-minority parties must gain at least 5% of the national vote to enter the lower house.            | 460  |                                 |
|   | Senat   | Members are elected for four year terms in 40 multi-seat constituencies. Bloc voting method where several candidates are elected from each electorate apply. | 100  |                                 |
| No. regions   | No.municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals   | Ratio seats : pop.n  |                                 |
| 16 administrative provinces (Voivodeships) subdivided into 373 districts (Powiaty). Both governed by elected councils.  | 2.836.<br>Administered by a municipal council. Members are elected for four-year terms  | 38.115.600<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 1,8% (2006)<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population 1,6%, 2004) most from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.             | Approx 1 Sejm member per 82.600 and 1 Senat member per 381.156 citizens. |                                 |
| Voting mechanism  | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents   |  |                                 |
| No postal voting or advance voting. E-voting not implemented.   |   | Approx. 25.000   |  |                                 |
| Voter requirements  |   |  |  |                                 |
| <i>European</i>   | <i>National</i>   | <i>Regional</i>  | <i>Local</i>   |                                 |
| Age 18. All citizens of EU who are residents  | Age: 18. Citizenship required. Disqualifications: mental deficiency, deprivation of civil or electoral rights by court ruling   | Age 18. Citizenship required. Non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand   | Age 18. Citizenship required. Non-EU citizens cannot vote or stand       |                                 |
| National Referenda  | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout  |  |                                 |
| If turnout is more than 50% the referendum is binding. Referenda can be initiated by the Sejm or the President with Senat approval. Both methods require absolute majority by parliament chamber. Four referenda have been held since 1989.         | Entry into the European Union, constitutional issues, use of public property and other issues.  | <i>EU</i>  | <i>National</i>  | <i>Regional/ Local</i>          |
|   |   | -  | 2001<br>46,3%  | 2002 (voivode primary)<br>44,2% |
| 2003: Entry into the European Union, turnout: 58,9%, outcome: 77,5% voted in favour.<br>1997: Approval of current constitution, turnout: 43%, outcome: 57% voted in favour.   |   | -  | 2005<br>40,6%  | 2002 (voivode run-off)<br>35,0% |
|   |   | 2004<br>20,4%  | 2007<br>53,9%  | 2006<br>(all levels)<br>45,8%   |
| Regional/ local referenda   |   |  |  |                                 |
| Can be held to decide matters concerning their community, including the dismissal of an organ of local self-government established by direct election. The principles of and procedures for conducting a local referendum are specified by statute. |   |  |  |                                 |
| Women in Parliament   | Representation of non-EU citizens   |  |  |                                 |
| Sejm: 20,2%<br>Senat: 13,0%<br>EP: 14,8%<br>Voivodships: 14,44%<br>Municipal: 18,9%   | Non-EU citizens can join political parties, but cannot stand as candidates for their parties or vote in any public elections. They can also form associations, but such organizations do not have access to specific state funding and are not consulted by the government. |  |  |                                 |
| Rankings  |   |  |  |                                 |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>   | <i>Digital access</i>   | <i>Media freedom</i>   |  |                                 |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> of EU27, 114 <sup>th</sup> of 178  | 23 <sup>rd</sup> of 27  | 23 <sup>rd</sup> of 27   |  |                                 |

## 4.21. Portugal

*Universal suffrage since: 1976*

*Leading party coalition: Socialist Party (PS) (SD)*

*Opposition: Social Democratic Party (PSD) (CR), Democratic Social Centre (EPP) (CR).*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: Social Democratic Party (PSD) (CR) (2002-2005), Socialist Party (PS) (SD) (1999-2002).*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses   | Voting system   |  |  | No. seats  |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| Unicameral   | Assembly of the Republic   | Members are directly elected for four-year terms through a system of proportional representation. Closed party list system.                       |  |  | 230  |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities   | Pop.n   | non-EU   | nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n                              |
| 5 administrative regions governed by an assembly consisting of municipal representatives and a committee appointed by the assembly. Hereunder 18 districts governed by municipal representatives and government appointed bodies.  | 308 subdivided into 4000 parishes. The parishes each have a municipal council. The municipalities both have a legislative and executive body.  | 10.600.000  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 1,8%  | (Foreign-born as part of the population 6,8%) most from Brazil, Ukraine, Cap Verde | Approx. 1 parliament member per 46.100 citizens. |
| Voting mechanism   | Opening hours  |   |  | Non-nat.l  | EU residents                                     |
| Postal voting implemented. No advance voting possible. Portugal has implemented and used e-voting on a number of occasions.  | Polls are open for one day for 11 hours. 12 in island communities.   |   |  | Approx. 116.000  |  |
| Voter requirements   |  |   |  |  |  |
| European   | National   | Regional  | Local  |  |  |
| Age 18, all citizens of EU who are residents   | Age 18, citizenship (citizens with dual nationality can still vote). Disqualifications: persons declared legally incompetent serving a sentence imposed by a court of law, mentally ill persons, persons deprived of their political rights by virtue of a judicial or court order.  | Age 18, citizenship, some non-nationals (EU nationals and non-EU nationals) can vote in elections for regional or national representative bodies. | Age 18, citizenship, some non-EU citizens can vote after 2-3 years of residence. Reciprocity condition required. |  |  |
| National Referenda   |  | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout  |  |  |
| A constitutional paragraph specifically requires all regionalization issues to be subject to referendum. Either president and parliament or president and government have to agree on calling a referendum. A request for referendum can be submitted to parliament by 75.000 voters. Constitutional issues cannot be subject to referendum. A 50% turnout is required to make referendum binding. Portugal has held 4 referenda (1933, two in 1998, 2007) |  | Abortion (1998, 2007), regionalisation (1998), constitutional issues (1933).  | <i>EU</i>  | <i>National</i>  | <i>Regional/ Local</i>                           |
| 2007: Allowance of abortion. Turnout: 43,6% (too low to make result binding). Outcome: 59,2% voted in favour.  |  |   | 1994: 35,5%  | 1999: 62,0%  | 2001: 60,1%                                      |
|  |  |   | 1999: 40,0%  | 2002: 62,0%  | 2005: 39,1% (mun.)                               |
|  |  |   | 2004: 38,7%  | 2005: 64,3%  |  |
| Regional/ local referenda  |  |   |  |  |  |
| Regional referenda can be held in the Azores and Madera autonomous regions. Elsewhere, only municipal referenda can be held.   |  |   |  |  |  |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens  |   |  |  |  |
| National: 28,3%<br>EP: 25,0%<br>Local: 11,5%   | The Migration Policy Index categorizes Portugal as being among the top scorers in regards to possibility of political participation of immigrants. Although voting in local elections is constricted to immigrants from specific foreign countries, immigrants have well-established consultative bodies, receive state funding for associations and enjoy wide political liberties. |   |  |  |  |
| Rankings   |  |   |  |  |  |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>  |  | <i>Digital access</i>   |  | <i>Media freedom</i>   |  |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> of EU27, 136 <sup>th</sup> of 178   |  | 20 <sup>th</sup> of 27  |  | 8 <sup>th</sup> of 27  |  |



| Regional/ local referenda  |  |                      |
|--|--|----------------------|
| Optional referenda possible at regional and local levels, on issues of local public interest |  |                      |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens  |                      |
| 11.4% in chamber of deputies   | Non-EU citizens do not have possibility of voting or standing for elections. |                      |
| 5.8% in Senate   |  |                      |
| 12% in regional Assemblies   |  |                      |
| 28.6% in EP  |  |                      |
| Rankings   |  |                      |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>  | <i>Digital access</i>  | <i>Media freedom</i> |
| 17th out of EU27, 120th out of 178   | 27th out of 27   | 27th out of 27       |

## 4.23. Slovakia

*Universal suffrage since: 1918 (Czechoslovakia)*

*Leading party coalition: Direction: Social Democracy (Smer) (SD), Slovak National Party (SNS) (FR), People's Party - Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LS-HZDS) (FR).*

*Opposition: Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ-DS) (CD), Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) (CD), Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK-MKP) (CD/min.).*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), SMK-MKP (1998-2002), SDKÚ-DS, KDH, MKP (2002-2006)*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses  | Voting system   |   | No. seats   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Single-chamber parliament  | National Council of the Slovak Republic   | Members are directly elected for a four-year term on a proportional basis. Threshold: 5% for parties and 7% for party coalitions of two or three parties, 10% for party coalitions of four or more parties. |   | 150   |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities  | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n   |   |
| 8 regions run by board of members directly elected for a four-year term.   | 2.887.  | 5.400.000   | Approx. 1 lower house member per 36.000 and   |   |
| Regional chairman (župan) directly elected in a run-off system.  | Administered by municipal councils, the members of which are elected for four-year terms. Mayor directly elected in a first past the post system.   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 0,2% (Foreign-born as part of the population most from Ukraine, Russia, Vietnam  | 3,9%  | approx. 1 upper house member per 600.000 citizens.  |
| Voting mechanism   | Opening hours   |   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |   |
| Postal and advance voting possible. eVoting has been tested but not implemented.   | Polls are normally open one day for 15 hours on election days, although open for two days on referenda.   |   | Approx. 26.000  |   |
| Voter requirements   |   |   |   |   |
| European   | National  | Regional  | Local   |   |
| Age 18, all citizens of EU who are residents. SK citizens who are resident outside of the EU have the right to vote, if they are in SK on the day of the election.   | Age 18, citizenship, citizens overseas can vote under certain conditions, disqualifications: imprisonment, legal incapacity, limitation on personal freedom for health purposes   | Age 18, citizenship. non-nationals (EU nationals and non-EU nationals) can vote in elections for regional or national representative bodies if acquired long term residents                                 | Age 18, citizenship, non-EU citizens can vote and stand if permanent residence permit or long-term residence status |   |
| National Referenda   | Prominent issues  |   | Electoral turnout   |   |
| Both facultative and obligatory referenda can be held. The facultative referendum may be held when proposed by at least 350,000 citizens presented in the form of petition, or when it is agreed on by the Parliament. A turnout of 50% is required to make a national referendum binding. Multiple referenda (1994, 1998, 2000, 2004) have been ruled invalid due to low turnout. 2003: Accession into the European Union. Turnout: 52%. Outcome: 93,7 % in favour. | Dissolving sitting government, EU accession, NATO accession, deployment of nuclear weapons and military bases on Slovak territory.  |   | EU<br>2004: 16,7%<br>-  | National<br>1998: 84,2%<br>2002: 70,0%<br>2006: 54,7%   |
|  |   |   |   | Regional/<br>Local<br>2001 (reg.): 22%<br>2005 (reg.): 18% (prim.), 11% (run-off)<br>2006 (mun.): 47,7% |
| Regional/ local referenda  |   |   |   |   |
| Constitutionally required upon establishment, division or abolition of municipalities. Upon establishment or abolition of local charges, taxes and allowances or upon the presentation of a petition signed by at least 20% of eligible voters in a municipality. Local referenda can be held to recall mayors. In order for a local referendum to become legally binding 50% of local voters or more must turn out.   |   |   |   |   |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens   |   |   |   |
| National: 19,3%<br>EP: 36%<br>Local: 18,5%   | According to the Migration Policy Index, the right to political participation of immigrants in Slovakia is very limited. Immigrants are granted no rights to create or join political parties or movements. However, non-European citizens can vote and stand in local elections if they have permanent residence status. |   |   |   |
| Rankings   |   |   |   |   |
| Happy Planet Index   |   | Digital access  |   | Media freedom   |



## 4.24. Slovenia

*Universal suffrage since 1945.*<sup>28</sup>

*Leading coalition: the CL Social Democrats (SD), CL Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), CL For Real-New Politics (ZARES) (a group that split from LDS) and the C Democratic Pensioners' Party (DeSUS).*

*Opposition: the CR conservative Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), the CR Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and the L Slovenian National Party (SNS).*

Leading party last 3 elections: (2004-2008) the CR SDS and its partner, the CR New Slovenia Christian People's Party (NSi), (2000-2004): CL LDS, SD and C DeSUS, (1996-2000): CL LDS w. coalition.<sup>29</sup>

| Parliamentary structure   | Houses  | Voting system   |   | No. seats       |                        |
|---|---|---|---|-----------------|------------------------|
| Bicameral<br>Elections every 4 years, the national council serves 5 year terms  | National assembly   | Directly elected, proportional representation: threshold of 4% for 88 members (in 8 electoral units). Party list or individual with preferential vote.<br>Simple majority preferential vote for the two Deputies representing the 2 minority groups Hungarian and Italian (separately elected). |   | 90              |                        |
|   | National Council  | Indirectly elected by interest groups. The Constitution does not accord equal powers to both chambers.  |   | 40              |                        |
| No. regions   | No.municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n   |                 |                        |
| 0   | 210 (increasing steadily from 147 in 1994).<br>Direct election.   | 2,039,399 (2008)<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: (2006) 2.3%<br>Foreign-born as part of the population (2004) 10.9% from FYROM, and Albania   | Approx 1 assembly member per 22.600 and 1 council per 51.000 citizens.  |                 |                        |
| Voting mechanism  |   | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |                 |                        |
| Voting by post<br>Allowed before Election Day.  |   | 1 day. Voting takes place from 7.00 to 19.00. EP elections are held on a Sunday or other holiday.   | N/a   |                 |                        |
| Voter requirements  |   |   |   |                 |                        |
| European  | National  | Regional  | Local   |                 |                        |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents.   | Age; 18 (16, if employed) and Slovene citizenship   | Age 18 (16, if employed) and citizenship.   | Non-EU citizens who are long-term residents (have lived in Slovenia for min. 5 years) can vote, but not stand, in local elections |                 |                        |
| National Referenda  |   | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout   |                 |                        |
| >9 national referenda. Several types of referenda: Constitutional referendum, a preliminary legislative (ante legem), a subsequent legislative (post legem), and a consultative referendum. Both consultative and binding referenda are valid if a majority of those voters voted in favour of the same option, provided that over 50% of voters cast votes. Referendum can be initiated by 40.000 eligible voters call for it, or the National Assembly may call on. |   | 2008 - taxes housing and border issues with Croatia.<br>2004 - economic growth, education, research, health care and environment. Also, minorities' rights.<br>2000 - privatisation, EU membership negotiations, healthcare and social security.  | <i>EU</i>   | <i>National</i> | <i>Regional/ Local</i> |
|   |   |   | 1994  | 2000            | 1998                   |
|   |   |   | N/A   | 69.9%           | 57.5%                  |
|   |   |   | 1999  | 2004            | 2002                   |
|   |   |   | N/A   | 60.6%           | 72.1%                  |
|   |   |   | 2004  | 2008            | 2006                   |
|   |   |   | 28.2%   | 63,1%           | 58.2%                  |
| Regional/ local referenda   |   |   |   |                 |                        |
| Consultative municipal referenda are held regarding boundaries of municipalities (Creation/merger/abolition of sub-national authorities).   |   |   |   |                 |                        |
| Women in Parliament   | Representation of non-EU citizens   |   |   |                 |                        |
| 13.3% in assembly<br>2.5% in council<br>Xx in municipalities<br>42.9% in EP   | Long-term residents can vote, but not stand, in local elections. Non-EU citizens cannot form political associations or participate in political parties as anything more than honorary members. National and local governments do not have consultative bodies to consult migrants on policies that affect their lives. |   |   |                 |                        |
| Rankings  |   |   |   |                 |                        |
| Happy Planet Index  | Digital access  |   | Media freedom   |                 |                        |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> out of 27, 79 <sup>th</sup> out of 178  | 12th out of 27  |   | 21 <sup>st</sup> out of 27  |                 |                        |

<sup>28</sup> The first democratic elections took place in Slovenia in 1990. Following a plebiscite, it declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and became a Democratic Republic. The same year Slovenia's new Constitution was adopted. slovenia.si. History; Government Communication office.

<sup>29</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. Slovenia

## 4.25. Spain

Universal suffrage since 1931 (Revoked during Franco era (1939-1975) and recovered since 1977 and in the new Spanish Constitution).

Leading party coalition: The CL Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)

Opposition: CR People's Party (PP), Catalan Party (Convergència I Unió), Bask Party (EAJ-PNV), L Catalan cartel (Esquerra Republicana-Izquierda Unida-Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds),

Leading party previous 2 elections: (2004-2008): CL PSOE, (2000-2004): CR People's Party (PP).

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses   | Voting system   |   | No. seats   |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Bicameral<br>(Las Cortes<br>Generales)<br>4 year term  | Senate (Senado)  | Mixed system: 208 directly elected Senators, simple majority vote. Lists compiled at provincial level. 56 indirectly elected Senators, elected by the legislative assemblies of the Autonomous Communities, according to their own rules of procedure, on proportional basis. |   | 264   |
|  | Congress of Deputies (Congreso de los Diputados)                           | Mixed: Directly elected 350, multi-member constituencies, blocked party lists and the d'Hondt system of proportional representation; each voter chooses one list of those made available in the constituency (province). Single-member constituencies, simple majority vote.  |   | 350   |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals  |   | Ratio seats : pop.n   |
| 19 autonomous administrations, of which 17 communities and 2 cities appointed representatives  | 52 Provinces (Provincias), and 8114 elected representatives                | 45,283,300<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: 7.2%<br>(Foreign-born as part of the population 8.6%)  |   | Approx 1 Deputy per 129,000 and 1 Senator per 172,000 citizens.                 |
| Voting mechanism   |  | Opening hours   |   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |
| Possibility of proxy voting, abroad voting, e-voting etc.  |  |   |   | According to Eurostat   |
| Voter requirements   |  |   |   |   |
| European   | National   | Regional  | Local   |   |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents   | - age 18<br>- Spanish citizenship<br>- full possession of political rights |   | age 18, citizenship, some 3rd country nationals (currently only Norway) can vote due to reciprocity condition, but cannot stand as candidates |   |
| National Referenda   |  | Prominent issues  |   | Electoral turnout   |
| There are three kinds of referendum at the national level in Spain.  |  | 2008 – economy, inflation and immigration (a former town councillor of the Basque region was killed 2 days before elections)  |   | <i>Regional/ Local</i>  |
| Type 1: For amendments to certain parts of the Spanish Constitution, a referendum is mandatory.  |  | 2004- terrorism, the battle against ETA (Basque separatist group), coloured by the bombings 4 days before polling   |   | <i>EU</i><br>1994<br>59,14%   |
| Type 2: For the rest of the Constitution, parliament can decide to call a referendum in the event of a reform proposal, but it is not mandatory. |  |   |   | <i>National</i><br>2008<br>Congress<br>Deputies:<br>73,85%<br>Senate:<br>74,49% |
| Type 3: Finally, the Prime Minister can call a non-binding referendum if approved by Parliament.   |  |   |   | 1999<br>63,05%  |
| 4 referenda held (15/12/1976, 6/12/1978, 12/03/1986, 20/02/2005)<br>quorum   |  |   |   | 2004<br>Congress<br>Deputies:<br>75,66%<br>Senate:<br>75,75%                    |
| 2005: European constitution Approval, type 3, Approved: 76,96%, participation 41,77%   |  | 2004<br>45,14%  |   | 2000<br>Congress<br>Deputies:<br>68,71%<br>Senate:<br>68,83%                    |
| 1986: Permanence of Spain in the NATO ,type , approved: 53;09%, participation 59,42%   |  |   |   | 1999<br>(national total)<br>67,67%  |
| 1978: ratification of the Spanish constitution, type , approved: 88,54%, participation 67,11%  |  |   |   | 67,67%  |
| 1976: law on national political reform, type , approved 94,45%, participation 77,72%   |  |   |   |   |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens  |   |   |   |

36,3% in lower house,  
30% in upper house  
Regional  
33.3% in EP

The Spanish constitution allows third-country nationals to vote and stand in local elections on the basis of reciprocity (currently, there is only a bilateral agreement in place with Norway). Representatives selected and appointed by the State are systematically consulted through bodies such as the national Forum for Social Integration of Immigrants. These migrant organisations can get public funding, but are required to meet special criteria.

Rankings

*Happy Planet Index*

9 out of EU27, 87 out of 178

*Digital access*

15th out of 27

*Media freedom*

21st out of 27

## 4.26. Sweden

Universal suffrage since 1919.

Leading coalition: The CR alliance of the Moderate Party, Liberal Party, Centre Party and Christian Democrats  
Opposition; the CL Social Democratic Party (SAP)

Leading party last 3 elections: (2002-2006): CL SAP w. support of the L Left party (VP) and the Green party (Mpg), (1998-2002): CL SAP w. support of the Left (VP) and the C/CL Green party (Mpg), (1994-1998): CL SAP.<sup>30</sup>

| Parliamentary structure   | Houses   | Voting system  | No. seats  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Constitutional monarchy, unicameral since 1971<br>4 year term, elections for all levels the same day  | Riksdagen  | Directly elected, proportional for 310 seats, closed-party list system with preferential vote. Remaining seats are based on nationwide votes. Minimum threshold of votes to win seats 4%                                 | 349  |
| No. regions   | No. municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals   | Ratio seats : pop.n  |
| 18 county councils and 2 regions direct election  | 290 direct election  | 9,253,675 (nov 2008)<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country: (2006) 2.9%<br>Foreign-born / pop. (2004) 12.2% from Iraq, Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey   | Approx 1 representative per 26.500 citizens  |
| Voting mechanism  | Opening hours  | Non-nat.1 EU residents   |  |
| citizens overseas can vote under certain conditions, e.g. Swedes living abroad are included in the electoral roll if they have emigrated within the last ten years or if they have applied to the Swedish Tax Agency not later than 30 days before election. Advance voting and via messenger is allowed          | 1 day. Opening hours may vary, but are usually from 8.00 to 20.00 (21.00 for EP elections). EP elections are held on Sundays   | N/a  |  |
| Voter requirements  |  |  |  |
| European  | National   | Regional   | Local  |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered resident in Sweden may vote  | Age 18, and citizenship  | holdingCitizens of EU Member States, Norway and Iceland registered residents, 18 years and older. Non-Swedish citizens from other countries must have been registered as resident for more than three consecutive years. |  |
| National Referenda  | Prominent issues   | Electoral turnout  |  |
| 2 types of referendum: consultative or binding. Only consultative referenda have been held to date, in total 6. The decision to hold a non-statutory referendum is usually taken by an elected assembly such as the parliament. But it can happen with the demand of a certain number of citizens.                | 2006 - NATO, the welfare system, employment, security, youth and elderly<br>2002- immigration, the future of the large public sector, taxes for welfare vs. rightist tax cuts, privatisation and deregulation.<br>1998 - domestic issues, welfare, employment. | <i>EU</i><br>1994<br>(1995)<br>41,6%<br><br>1999<br>38,8%<br><br>2004<br>37,9%   | <i>National</i><br>1998<br>81,4%<br><br>2002<br>80,1%<br><br>2006<br>82,0%                               |
| 1922 prohibition – turnout 55,1% (51% against)<br>1955 right hand driving – turnout 53.2% (82.9% against)<br>1957 pension funds – turnout 72,4% (3 options)<br>1980 nuclear power – turnout 75.6% (3 options)<br>1994 EU membership – turnout 83,3% (52.3% for)<br>2003 the euro – turnout 82,6% (against 55.9%). |  |  | <i>Regional/ Local</i><br>1998<br>78,1% / 78,6%<br><br>2002<br>77,5% / 77,9<br><br>2006<br>78,8% / 79,4% |
| Regional/ local referenda   |  |  |  |

<sup>30</sup> Inter-Parliamentary union. Sweden; IFES Election Guide. Sweden; The Social Democratic Party; Sveriges Riksdag.

Local referenda are always consultative. They can be instigated by a municipal or county council. If at least 5% of voters demand, the council is obliged to consider holding a referendum. It may restrict a referendum to a certain part of the municipality or county. Between 2003-2006, 26 municipalities held at least 1 referendum. Municipal boundary changes, and local planning can for example be the subject of a referendum.

| Women in Parliament                    | Representation of non-EU citizens   |
|--|---|
| 47.28% in Riksdagen                    | Any individual legally resident for three years can vote in regional and local elections and stand for local elections. They can join political parties and form their own associations, which can receive public funding or support at all levels of government. The state actively informs migrants of these rights. Migrant associations can be freely elected to consultative bodies at all levels of governance.<br>In parliament, 5% seats are held by people born outside of Sweden, 1% by people born in Sweden with both parents born abroad, and 6% of Swedish born with one parent not born in Sweden. |
| 42,3% at municipal level               |   |
| 47,6% at the county and regional level |   |
| 57.9% in EP                            |   |

| Rankings                                    | Digital access | Media freedom             |
|---|----------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>                   |                |                           |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> out of EU27, 119 out of 178 | 1 out of 27    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 27 |

## 4.27. United Kingdom

*Universal suffrage since 1928*

*Leading party: Labour Party.*

*Opposition: Conservative and Unionist Party, Liberal Democrats*

*Leading party previous 2 elections: (1997-2001) Labour Party, (2001-2005) Labour Party.*

| Parliamentary structure  | Houses   | Voting system   | No. seats   |                 |               |
|--|--|---|---|-----------------|---------------|
| Bicameral  | House of Commons   | Directly elected, first/furthest past the post electoral system. Each parliamentarian represents a constituency.  | 646   |                 |               |
| Maximum 5 year term  | House of Lords   |   | Formerly hereditary positions, changed in 1999 to be appointed (unelected). 738                           |                 |               |
| No. regions  | No. municipalities   | Pop.n non-EU nationals  | Ratio seats : pop.n   |                 |               |
| 8 unelected regional assemblies  | 468 + c.10,000 parish, town and community councils.  | 60.975 million (mid-2007)<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> country (estimate 2008): 2.382 million   | Approx 1 representative in Commons per 95 thousand; 1 Lord per 84 thousand citizens.                      |                 |               |
| Voting mechanism   |  | Opening hours   | Non-nat.l EU residents  |                 |               |
| Postal and proxy voting possible.  |  | 07.00 – 22.00   | 1.672 million   |                 |               |
| Voter requirements   |  |   |   |                 |               |
| <i>European</i>  | <i>National</i>  | <i>Regional</i>   | <i>Local</i>  |                 |               |
| All citizens of EU MS who are registered residents   | Age 18, citizenship of UK, Ireland, or certain commonwealth country citizens   | Same as local. EU citizens can stand for election   | age 18, citizenship, non-EU citizens have same rights as EU citizens after 5 years of residence in the UK |                 |               |
| National Referenda   |  | Prominent issues  | Electoral turnout   |                 |               |
| Only consultative referenda can be held. The UK's Electoral Commission was given oversight of Referenda in the UK in 2000. In 1975 there was a UK-wide referendum on remaining in the European Community. All other referenda have concerned regional or national (i.e. Welsh, Scottish) devolution. |  | 2001- Europe (the euro), economic management, and reform of public services. 1997 – education and health; economic management, and – to a lesser degree, European issues (for floating voters, not a prominent issue) | <i>Regional/</i>  |                 |               |
|  |  |   | <i>EU</i>   | <i>National</i> | <i>Local</i>  |
|  |  |   | 1994<br>36.4%   | 1997<br>71.6%   | 1994<br>42.5% |
|  |  |   | 1999<br>24.0%   | 2001<br>59.0%   | 1998<br>28.2% |
|  |  |   | 2004<br>38.9%   | 22005<br>61.8%  | 2007<br>40.9% |
| Regional/ local referenda  |  |   |   |                 |               |
| The Local Government Act of 1972 allows non-binding local referenda.   |  |   |   |                 |               |
| Women in Parliament  | Representation of non-EU citizens  |   |   |                 |               |
| 19.3% in Commons<br>20.1% in Lords<br>27.8% in local<br>24.4% in EP  | Non-EU citizens can vote and stand for local and regional elections after five years of uninterrupted legal (long-term) residence. |   |   |                 |               |
| Rankings   |  |   |   |                 |               |
| <i>Happy Planet Index</i>  | <i>Digital access</i>  |   | <i>Media freedom</i>  |                 |               |
| 18th out of EU27, 108th out of 178   | 5th/ 27  |   | 25th /195   |                 |               |

## **Part III: Possible options for increasing participation**

## 5. Actor map

There are a whole range of different actors that play decisive roles in communicating the European Union, and the policy areas covered by the EU, to its citizens. These range from the traditional actors of governments, public administrations (and civil servants), the European institutions themselves, to third-sector groups (or civil society organisations), and the media.

In increasing democratic legitimacy of the EU and the policies it pursues, the media can play an incisive role in helping create the agenda in public spaces. Agenda setting has been used, along with framing and priming, to explain opinion formation as a cognitive process. Agenda setting works through making topics salient, by stimulating and priming citizens with criteria that people use to make judgments, and framing – or placing in a particular context – specific ideas about (aspects of) an issue or event. For the policy makers and journalists, the concept of agenda setting raises important questions of responsibility for creation and dissemination of news. The labels that journalists apply to events can have an important influence on whether the public pays attention to the issues connected with the event. The agenda-setting hypothesis has been one of the dominant concepts in communication theory since the early 1970s and it is important because it suggests a way that the mass media can have an impact on society that is an alternative to attitude change. Furthermore, there are indications that the impact could be a significant one. The media are shaping people's views of the major issues facing society and that the issues emphasized in the media may not be the ones that are dominant in reality. The media are also heavily nationally oriented in their current configurations, although information and communication technologies such as the Internet are working to dissolve these national boundaries.

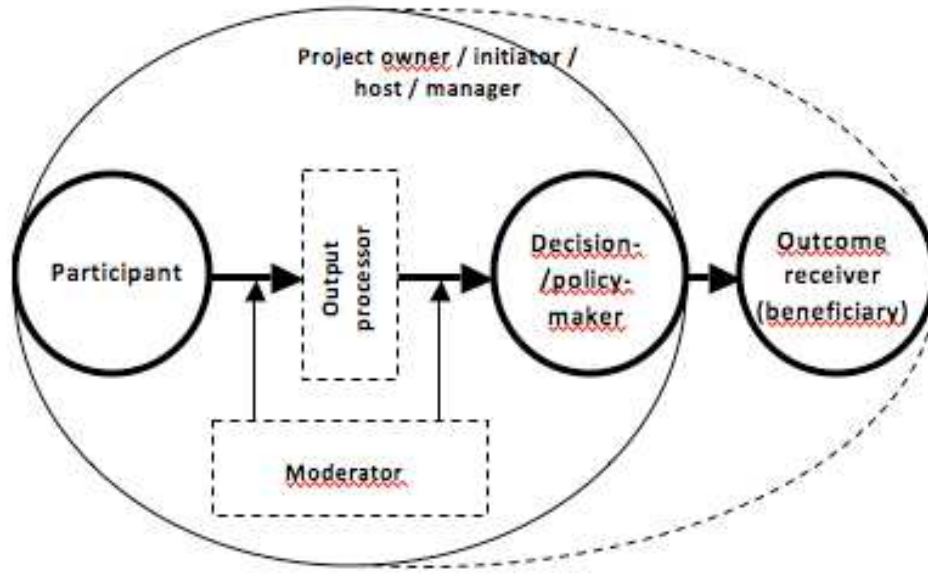
For policy-makers and journalists, the concept of agenda setting then raises important questions of responsibility. The labels that journalists apply to events can have an important influence on whether the public pays attention to the issues connected with the event. If the press typically does not cover significant happenings in proportion to their importance- as studies suggest- this means there are probably crucial news stories waiting to be covered. While for policymakers, journalists and civil society organisations agenda setting suggests the importance of framing an event in the right way in order to catch the public's attention.

There are six main types of role that a stakeholder can take in the process of political participation. These are the following:



1. *Participant* is a stakeholder who provides input to the participation process. This role is not allocated only to citizens or citizen groups but also to elected representatives or to governmental officers. They constitute the target audience for the project.
2. *Project owner/ initiator* is the stakeholder who initiates and is responsible for the participation process. The initiator of such a process may be a governmental or parliamentary actor or a political party. It is also possible for a civil society organisation or a group of citizens to initiate a process, often taking advantage of processes and tools commercially (or non-commercially) available. Sometimes the roles of owner and initiator are separated. The 'host' and 'manager' of the initiative may also be distinct in rare cases.
3. *Decision maker* is the stakeholder who is responsible for incorporating the results of the participation process into policy.
4. *Moderator/facilitator* is the stakeholder who performs a variety of functions during the participation process to assist other users of the system, including: surveillance, facilitation, organisation, referral, and summarisation. In eParticipation processes moderators can be either government or societal entities (e.g. civil servants or volunteer citizens).
5. *Output processor* is the stakeholder tasked with processing raw outputs for the needs of decision makers. In some civil society-led eParticipation initiatives this role might be redundant.
6. *Outcome receiver* is the stakeholder(s) who should benefit from the outcomes resulting from the participation process. In most cases outcome receivers will be particular stakeholders who, for example, benefit from a better policy or service design. It will often be a much broader group than the actual participants, but outcome receivers must nevertheless be a definable group or constituency, as distinct from 'society in general'.

Figure 5-1 Stakeholder roles



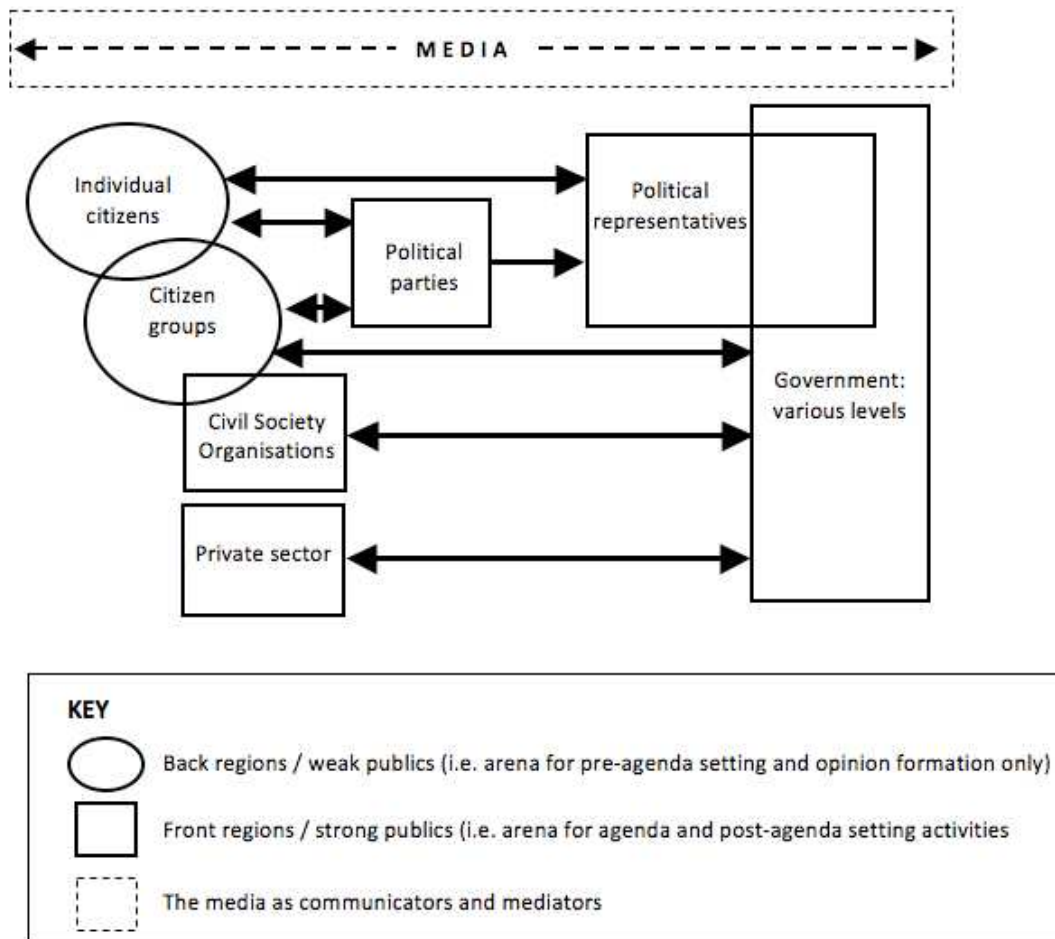
It is equally important to conceptualise the relationships between the above actors, recognising that participation involves a relationship-building process, through which meaningful forms of participation are established (because relationships structure the 'whole' in which the participant is playing a 'part' (Schwartz 1984)). Relationship-building has the following dimensions:

- Vertical relationships (power inequalities)
- Horizontal relationships
- Roles played (e.g. citizen-representative; client-public servant; customer-agency; reciprocal relationships within a community setting)
- Sustainability of relationships
- Emergence of new relationships
- Transferral of relationships to other arenas

Public participation is normally associated with some form of political deliberation or decision-making, often related to the formulation of policy. Civil society initiatives emanating from the ground up may not be captured in their complexity if we attempt to assess their meaning only in relation to the policy lifecycle. Civic activism is an agenda-setting process (because it enables groups and individuals to voice and promote their opinions and needs within the public sphere), but it also carries other important meanings (in the cultural realm, for example). It typically involves activities such as lobbying, protesting and petitioning, through which vertical communication between citizens and representatives or authorities takes place. These activities represent the 'public face' of social movements. However, we would also wish to capture social movements' internal life – what Melucci (1989) described as their 'hidden

networks' – to the extent that these are reproduced through participation processes. Movements make political demands, but they also often respond to “the everyday affective and communicative needs of the participants in the network” (Melucci 1996: 115). In fact the motivation to act politically in contemporary societies seems to be increasingly bound up with a desire “not only to have one’s worldly interests and visions triumph but equally to obtain cognitive reassurances about one’s identity” (Pinson 2003: 53). This sort of activity is not apolitical, but could be conceived of as a pre-agenda-setting phase of the policy lifecycle: the cultural undercurrents from which political agendas may or may not emerge. We use the terms ‘front region’ and ‘back region’ to differentiate between these two aspects of participation.

Figure 5-2 Actor Map



A broad distinction can be drawn between the general public and ‘insider’ stakeholders, insofar as engagement with the general public tends to bring values to the forefront, whereas engaging with insider stakeholders (typically within ‘strong publics’<sup>31</sup>) tends to bring their particular knowledge and interests to the forefront (Creasy et al 2007: 23). Correspondingly any evaluation should consider the possibility that different types of benefit can accrue to a number of different types of stakeholder<sup>32</sup>, such as:

- individual citizens
- elected representatives
- government bodies
- other public sector partners
- political parties
- NGOs
- citizen groups
- the academic and research community
- business and industry
- mass communication media.

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<sup>31</sup> The key distinction between strong publics and weak or general publics is that whereas the latter are arenas for opinion formation only, the former are also arenas where decision-making occurs (Eriksen & Fossum 2002: 405).

<sup>32</sup> This classification is a development of the one proposed by DEMO-net, see Tambouris (ed.) 2007: 10.

## **6. Designing engagement and participation initiatives**

Engagement and participation initiatives do not take place in a vacuum. They are, and must be seen to be, grounded in the wider sweep of societal changes taking place at local, regional, national, European and indeed global levels. First and foremost, therefore, such initiatives must have the overall goal of providing mechanisms which enable citizens to successfully understand, debate and influence these changes. More often than not, the changes which citizens most readily recognise, and take most interest in, are those which are close at hand in their everyday life, community or workplace. Issues which are local, concrete, specific and familiar, and which present themselves as a clear set of alternative choices about the future, do command strong interest from citizens. European issues, if presented as such, generally do not generate much interest.

Five overarching design rules follow from this. First, in engaging with such issues, most citizens are not interested in the participation mechanisms available, but just in the ability to have their say and to influence the outcome. This means that mechanisms must be as simple, easy to use and as straightforward as possible. The mechanisms, however, must be visible and fully transparent, or at least open to inspection upon request, in order ensure fairness and accountability and to build trust.

Second, in relation to the European project, the engagement mechanism will typically need to start with concrete local issues which then employ a natural widening process. One way to do this is by using topic hooks which link both to other issues in their locality (for example through a debate about budgetary implications) as well as to the wider European context (for example by showing that concerted large scale action may help address local challenges).

Third, from the European perspective, the design of participative initiatives needs to employ mechanisms which both aggregate and disaggregate. Aggregating citizens' major concerns – that are inevitably local in nature, yet which nevertheless have European relevance – is important if European decision-makers are to take account of the needs and wishes of ordinary people. This must be intelligent enough to retain diversity whilst focusing on the common themes. The corollary of this is to disaggregate European policies down to their local and regional relevance. This must take account of local difference, so that what is presented is not a general one-size-fits-all but a nuanced set of supports to local and regional stakeholders which reflect the specific characteristics and needs of their locality.

Fourth, designers themselves must be explicit about the overall objectives of the initiative and how the components of the mechanism relate to them. This will include verification that the proposed logic of intervention (i.e. the rationale of how the mechanism will achieve the result intended) is reasonably strong, as well as to promote a common understanding of the aims of the intervention and uncover potential tensions with other actors' aims. For example, if an online debate and online polling are to be used, what is the rationale for this in terms of how precisely it will work and what is the likelihood of success, perhaps by referring to evidence from similar initiatives.

Fifth, it is important to design processes and assess their impact based on as full an understanding as possible of the relevant external factors that may act as drivers or barriers. This involves asking questions like: how well does the initiative fit into its environment, and how well does the intervention logic actively embed the project into its environment?

More specific design principles are discussed in the following.

A major design problem is that most people do not particularly want to know about 'politics', 'democracy' or even 'participation'. However, they do care about many specific issues and they do want to be able to express their views about them as well as find out information. In order to promote participation, therefore, it is absolutely essential that the process is designed to maximise this as much as possible. For example, the branding, publicity and all participative elements must be incredibly engaging. (Involve, 2008) This is critical because, if the goal is to maximise the number of people, the process used must be extremely interesting and engaging. Many large engagement processes struggle to engage sufficient people. Participant feedback often show that processes can feel too worthy or bureaucratic and therefore not necessarily an enjoyable way for citizens to spend their ever more limited free time. Those processes which have engaged millions have either been extremely easy or extremely appealing.

However, many initiatives have also been oppositional and failed to support the finding of solutions to political issues. If processes are to be developed which are focussed on building solutions, they will be very hard to develop. Making a petition, for example, is simple and quick to execute, but will not stimulate deliberation. Manners of stimulating engagement must therefore be extremely engaging. Also, if there are any barriers to entry the incentives to overcome these must be significant (Involve, 2008).

The overall process and outcomes must be highly transparent and open. Most success seems to come when the expectations of participants are outlined from the beginning, including the purpose, the means, the processing of input, and the

outcomes. Thus, objectives need to be clear from the outset, and, in particular, the participants themselves need to understand in a transparent way the procedure they need to use, otherwise their interest in participating will rapidly diminish. It is also important to make it clear who is accountable for what, and how redress is to be handled and who should act on the outcomes. In this way trust in the system can be increased. However, transparency and openness, although default positions, must take account of the need to protect the identity of vulnerable individuals in sensitive situations, or to assist 'whistle-blowers'. Similarly, it may sometimes be necessary to enable civil servants or politicians to examine policy alternatives in private before deciding which ones to support, as long as their arguments, rationale and interests are then made fully transparent.

Participation must be seen as a fundamental right in a democracy which contributes to better policies and greater societal stability, and can be a safety valve for ordinary people in their everyday lives. However, for the latter to happen, it is essential that participation efforts are acknowledged, that feedback is given where appropriate, and that evidence is provided on the impact of people's participation, even if this did not fundamentally change anything, although the reasons for this must be clear and transparent. Recognition is required and must be open and communicated, so that a participative culture is created and maintained.

Tools and procedures should be developed and made available to minimise problems of shouting, abuse and trivialisation in participation initiatives. These can occur, for example in online activity where it is relatively easier for individuals to be anonymous, and given that the Internet is a highly effective tool both for organising and propagandising single issues. It is thus important to provide incentives and tools for citizens or their intermediaries, including civil servants, to accurately and fairly frame the debate, so that it balances simplicity and leverage, on the one hand, with nuance and the need to compromise with other issues on the other. It is important to avoid 'false polarisation', which often happens when single issue supporters do not listen to each other, but instead focus much more on genuine disagreement which recognises complexity and trade-off. However, intelligent and balanced framing does not (nor should not) mean 'spin' which promotes the EU policy line, as it will also be open about alternatives and contradictory evidence. Any debate framing should thus remain neutral otherwise credibility will rapidly be lost.

Much greater understanding is required regarding which activities and levels of participation need which kinds of mechanisms and which channels. It is clear that successful participation initiatives do not usually use one channel, whether this be public meetings, workshops, online debate, etc., but rather a judicious

selection of two or more. There is a need to match the habits and trends of citizen engagement with the channels available. At present, many participation efforts are mostly supply-centric but this needs to be changed to much greater citizen-centric approaches. Some forms of electronic participation also require privacy-enhancing tools, not just to protect identity, but also to guarantee a space 'outside power' where alternative discourses can surface and flourish (e.g. minorities and vulnerable groups, individuals who would not traditionally participate in the political process).

Pay close attention to the quality of the participatory environment, given that participation is also a social experience in which dialogue itself can be a highly rewarding process in its own right, bringing intrinsic as well as instrumental benefits to participants.

In order to enhance citizen participation, content quality and presentation is important. Relevant and easy to use background information should underpin the main engagement channels and be presented in a factual, focused and simple manner. Legislative proposals, policies and other documents are often presented in technical or legal jargon. To overcome this, for example, an agency could publish a summary recapping the main points clearly laying out how citizens can be affected and how the policy or legislative piece addresses a certain problem.

Feedback processing and visibility should be prioritised. For example, European Commission processes that engender and attempt to stimulate participation, such as interactive policy making and consultations, should report in a more detailed manner on how the feedback acquired was taken into account across the legislative procedure. A report on the main findings and main concerns would help generate new knowledge. Similarly, deliberation-oriented initiatives, underpinned by the use of new social media (such as EUTube, Debate Europe, etc.) could summarise and underline the salient issues and concerns to citizens. This would serve a European Commission that is intent upon listening to European citizens, as well as help to build the motivation of citizens to participate in the process.

Enable opinions to be expressed on the outcomes. Every citizen who participates in debate or consultation should be given an opportunity to express their opinion on the final outcomes and options recommended. For example, if deliberation kits or online games are used as part of the process, citizens participating should, by right, be able to express a final opinion as part of the wider process. Voting, polling and petitioning must not be disconnected, isolated processes. According to Involve (2008) this is important because it:



forces each person to become an active participant and think through how they wish to express their opinions

ensures that the initiators of the process know what each person thinks through the data created, and what the level of consensus or disagreement actually is

increases participant satisfaction and ownership as many enjoy the process of participation and feel a subsequent sense of ownership and interest in the final results

facilitates connection to wider processes – it is clear that when this does not exist the process remains disconnected and has less appeal to participants, and also provides less value for the overall process.

There are also a number of success criteria for citizen engagement:

- Be clear about the purpose and what you expect participation to do (and not do)
- Focus on real participation needs at the outset of the process
- Ensure complete process transparency, which helps build confidence
- High level (political) backing can be critical
- Use words and language people understand, and not just ‘coded’ information. For example, there may be cases where, in order to involve stakeholders in policy-making, providing policy drafts may not be enough but instead such drafts should be explained or commented in terms simpler than those used in European law
- Listen as well as ask or tell
- Let people express their anger and frustration
- Timing – get participants involved early in the policy lifecycle.
- Provide feedback on inputs, show how it is used so the citizen does not feel that their input is simply disappearing into a black hole
- If citizen participation does not affect the outcome, explain why
- If inputs are ignored, cynicism breeds
- Before start, decide how to collect input, how to analyse it, how to use it
- Make this clear to participants
- Directly address the needs and interests of participants, and involve them in articulating this
- Use careful, independent, trustworthy moderation, with transparent guidelines
- Clearer, transparent, rules-based discourse and accountability may be more important than any particular mechanism to increase participation
- Different tools and processes (like polling, voting, consultation, petitioning) if part of the same policy process must not be disconnected
- Make engagement irresistible

- Must take citizen inputs very seriously (whether they are asked to give them or give them anyway), show how they are used, etc. A rationale needs to be provided for the final outcome or decision which specifically addresses participant inputs
- Always be wary of the engagement divide (i.e. we know that generally the most educated, articulate, politically savvy people participate most more than others), so do not assume that every view or need is captured
- Evaluate – including asking the participants!

## **7. Good practice in issue-based, local and regional initiatives**

The cases that are presented in this chapter of the study are all based on desk research and field trips carried out in the months of March, April and May 2009. These examples are collected as 'good practice' but actually present more of a snapshot of a few cities/regions in EU Member States, and their participation practices. In some cases, participation is heavily engrained in the working processes of local authorities, and in others, it is an inconvenient burden, seen as necessary for the politicians if they want to get elected in the following voting cycle.

Several different aspects of the cases presented below are worthy of a synthesis, which is carried out as part of the recommendations in chapters 8.3 and 8.4.

## **7.1. Top down / government initiatives**

### *7.1.1. Neighbourhood centres in Iasi, Romania*

#### PROJECT DURATION

Ongoing since 2006.

#### OBJECTIVES

One of the main objectives of the neighbourhood centres is to promote local democracy and decentralise services in the community. The centres also serve as a place for dialogue with the citizens.

Thus there are 2 aspects of these neighbourhood centres:

- to make it easier and more efficient for citizens to conduct their ordinary business, which they would normally have to do in the city hall. This includes receiving information on rights and obligations, applying for building permission, applying for social assistance, and receiving tax report assistance;
- to be a venue for stimulating citizen participation and for promoting citizens' interests.

#### INITIATORS

Iasi City Hall. The neighbourhood centres were started as a part of a twin city project. Iasi has a French twin city close to Lille, Villeneuve D'ascq, which has similar characteristics. It is a student city with approximately the same population size. There has been a positive experience with the neighbourhood centres in Villeneuve D'ascq, and Iasi wanted to benefit and build upon the twin city's experiences. The City hall implements the project following Villeneuve D'ascq's model.

#### TARGET GROUP

All citizens of Iasi. In 2006, the first three neighbourhood centres were opened, each located at the border of several neighbourhoods, servicing citizens of these neighbourhoods. Today, five neighbourhood centres are up and running, and there should be seven of them by 2012. The seven centres are strategically placed, so they will cover all of Iasi's 16 neighbourhoods. By 2012, the plan is to have also a functioning consultative council in each centre.

#### BACKGROUND

The first aspect of the neighbourhood centres is fully running, and citizens from the neighbourhood do use the centres for their service needs.

There are two issues that needed to be taken into consideration when adapting the centres to the needs of Iasi. Firstly, there is a lower level of participation in Iasi compared to Villeneuve D'ascq, and different methods to attract citizens are desired. Secondly, in each centre there are consultative councils of the neighbourhoods. There were some problems encountered when discussing the role of the consultancy groups of the centres with the local council. The local council in Iasi was unwilling to give the consultative councils any decision making powers, and therefore it was challenging to identify the importance of these centre councils. The compromise made was that these consultative councils (made up of volunteers and interest groups) are only advisers and councillors for the people, and they can make recommendations to the City hall.

#### INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

Thus far, two one-year projects have been started with the neighbourhood centres and civil society.

In two of the neighbourhoods, volunteers were engaged, 15 in one and nine in the other. The volunteers spoke with the neighbourhood citizens and prioritised the tasks to be done in the areas. The volunteers had weekly contact with the neighbourhood centres, and the centres then reported the volunteers' suggestions back to the city hall. Volunteers were also specifically contacted for public debates.

In 2008, the City hall of Iasi designed a strategic development plan for the city until 2020. A Dutch consultancy was responsible for constructing the plan. The neighbourhood centres were used to gather input for the strategic plan. For the preparation of the strategic plan, the neighbourhood centres and the volunteers were used to create a dialogue with a broader group of citizens. Focus group meetings were held with SMEs, cultural institutions, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders, and finally, questionnaires distributed. Over 150 ideas and suggestions were collected, and out of these, after grouping and prioritising, 10 strategic points were put into the plan.

Once published, the strategic plan was distributed in the centres, and interested citizens can go and receive a copy.

Figure 7-1 Iasi Neighbourhood centres

#### Functions of the neighbourhood centres

- Informing citizens about the services of the Municipality;
- Providing administrative assistance;
- Assisting people to resolve problems within the jurisdiction of the City Council and Local Council;
- Direct citizens to the institutions and organizations when issues fall outside the jurisdiction of the City Hall;
- Ensuring free access to information of public interest;
- Ensuring transparency decisions in accordance with the Law 52/2003;
- Applying the Law 27/2002 on the resolution of petitions and complaints;
- Management of telephone calls and speedy resolution of problems of citizens;
- Organization of public debates in community centres, with participation of elected officials and representatives of the district (District Councils);
- Management and monitoring of proposals that emerge from neighbourhood meetings;
- Distribution and handling of questionnaires from citizens about the services of the municipality.

The centres are much used for involving citizens in decisions regarding events. The city holds an annual festival, held for the past 17 years. In 2007, the centres organised citizen meetings where they gave input with regards to the design of the festival's logo, and made the suggestion to move the festival activities more into the neighbourhoods. This consultation led to a change of the programme in 2008, where the cultural activities were for the first time spread over the city.

#### EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The neighbourhood centres are assessed 3 times a year via questionnaires distributed to the centres and City hall for client satisfaction. It is clear that for the administrative part, people are going to the centres rather than to the city hall, and the amount of people visiting the centres increases each trimester. Currently, the five neighbourhood centres are performing about 75% of the tasks they are set out to do.

This model of neighbourhood centres is the first in Romania. It received a national award in 2008 and has now spread to cities in the South, Centre and West of the country.

The neighbourhood centres focus mainly on issues that affect the neighbourhoods, and apart from the consultation on the city development strategy, the issues up for discussion relate to cultural, recreational and sport

activities. Once there is greater experience with the centres, there will be staff exchange between the French centres and the Romanian ones. If this proves to be successful, Iasi will introduce this model to its other twin cities in Greece and Italy. The first focus is to develop active citizens in our community. Later on European issues and European participation may become more relevant.

#### CONCLUSION

It is too early to determine the success of the Iasi neighbourhood centres, especially with regards to their role of engaging citizen participation. The lack of influence that the neighbourhood councils are given makes volunteer participation less attractive. However, this is a beginning step, and if the centres succeed in calling for greater authority, they might be able to influence local decisions further. The direct communication with citizens and the volunteer groups is an improvement and a change from a very different system.

This is an interesting example of how twin cities work together. Romania, as recently a member of the EU, shows interest in building relationships and learning from other regions in the EU.

#### *7.1.2. Ask Bristol and the Legese project, Bristol, UK*

##### TIME PERIOD

The Ask Bristol website was launched in 2005 and is an ongoing long term website. The Legese project started in January 2007, and was an 18 month project that helped in developing further the Ask Bristol website. The online instruments and applications developed during the project period are still in use.

##### OBJECTIVES

Ask Bristol is an e-democracy tool that aims at using new technologies to engage local citizens in democratic participation and to consult with them on local issues. The Legese project is a project closely linked with Ask Bristol, which aims to involve residents in the local implementation of European policies and to translate the European 'jargon' into a relevant and local language. It also aims at enabling better integration of e-democracy activities, creating the opportunity to link e-petitions, webcasting and online forums. Legese's initial focus is climate change, but the instruments in use on the Ask Bristol primarily address local issues.

##### INITIATORS

Bristol city council. Ask Bristol is initially funded by the Local eDemocracy National Project, whereas the Legese project is funded by the European e-Participate programme. Ask Bristol is a long-term project, but Legese is an 18-month pilot. The Legese partners are: National Microelectronics Applications Centre Ltd, Ireland (Project Manager, Coordinator, evolution from eParticipate eParticipation project), Public-I Group Ltd, England (Technology Platform

service Provider & Evaluator), Software602, Czech Republic (XML Forms engine & development), Mairie D'Elancourt, France (User Organisation/Field Trials) and Vysocina Regional Authority, Czech Republic (User Org/Field Trials).<sup>33</sup>

#### TARGET GROUP

The citizens of Bristol, a UK city with a population of around 400.000. Also, with the instrument development the target is to spread good practices around the UK and Europe.

Anyone interested can register as a member online, watch and provide feedback, but a special emphasis of these projects is to reach communities whose views might otherwise be overlooked, such as youth.<sup>34</sup>

#### BACKGROUND

Bristol City Council received funding to identify and develop a video logging application for consultation. Additional funding was received to develop the various participation projects, and in the end, all the applications were collected together on one website: [www.askbristol.com](http://www.askbristol.com). Thus the pilot projects have led to this interactive web tool that is still being updated and improved.

#### INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

The ask Bristol website has 4 main elements, in addition to the Legese project that uses the same technology but has a European focus, and is now in a pilot phase regarding the issue of climate change.

The 4 elements are: the viewfinder, consultation finder, e-petitions and webcasting.

#### **Legese**

The webcast, e-petitions and the viewfinder were developed as a part of the EU's e-participate project Legese. During the Bristol Legese project the webcasting was further developed, allowing people to watch the deliberations of Bristol City Council's Climate Change Select Committee live on the Internet and give feedback. These meetings focused on how the city should tackle climate change. Legese explores the issue of climate change by integrating webcasting with Viewfinder discussions and related e-petitions. The main focus has been on local issues thus far, even in terms of the climate change issue, but the aim is to further use these instruments at European level.<sup>35</sup> As stated on the Legese website:

*“As a web-based service, LEGESE will complement and enhance at a regional level the European Parliament's own EPLive webcasting service and EPTV web*

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.legese.org/About/Partners.aspx>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Council-Democracy/Consultations/ask-bristol-e-panel.en>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Council-Democracy/Consultations/e-democracy.en>



television channel, and provide future potential functional and citizen-centred e-participation enhancements to those services”<sup>36</sup>

## Viewfinder

The viewfinder is an online forum with multimedia discussion forums. The viewfinder allows citizens to put forward their ideas and opinions about local issues via their mobile phones or digital cameras, and by writing comments on the website. In that way, they can engage in a dialogue, both with other citizens and with local decision makers. The council introduces topics by posting discussion threads on issues such as traffic noise pollution, public transport options, asks people’s opinion on the controversial Banksy exhibition in the Bristol museum, and asks, ‘what would encourage you to walk more?’ At one point, the discussion is closed, and a ‘wrap up’ made of all comments, along with the council’s feedback and response. The idea is to make it interesting and easy for citizens to express their opinions, using media such as video, and to collect the opinions of citizens in one place. By using video, the communication process can in a way become more human and expressive than via written means.<sup>37</sup>

## Consultation finder

The consultation finder is an online database on future, current and past consultations. The finder makes it easy for citizens to know about the issues that the council is discussing and seeking public opinion for. A list is provided of issues under discussion, along with explanatory texts. Citizens are then encouraged to fill out an online survey, or people can directly contact the person responsible for the specific consultation. The consultation finder is directly linked with the viewfinder, and some of the topics for discussion overlap.

| Open Consultations  |             | Closed Consultations   |             |
|---|-------------|--|-------------|
| Title   | Date Ends   | Title  | Date Closed |
| <a href="#">Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Needs Survey</a>          | 17 Aug 2009 | <a href="#">Issues and Options for Waste</a>                           | 23 Mar 2007 |
| <a href="#">Traffic Noise Pollution</a>   | 31 Dec 2009 | <a href="#">Parks and Green Spaces Strategy</a>                        | 28 Sep 2007 |
| <a href="#">Hate Crime Strategy 2009-14</a>   | 24 Jul 2009 | <a href="#">Waste And Recycling Advisory Group</a>                     | 30 Aug 2007 |
| <a href="#">Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey</a>                           | 11 Jul 2009 | <a href="#">Domestic Violence Abuse Strategy</a>                       | 15 Feb 2008 |
| <a href="#">Your views on the development plan for Bristol</a>                              | 17 Jul 2009 | <a href="#">Bristol's Sex Work Strategy 2008-2011</a>                  | 30 Jan 2009 |
| <a href="#">Webcasting</a>  | 30 Jun 2009 | <a href="#">Walking and Cycling proposal St Werburghs to Lockleaze</a> | 25 Apr 2008 |
| <a href="#">Horfield Parking Restriction review (between Muller Road and Wessex Avenue)</a> | 6 Jul 2009  | <a href="#">Evaluation of stakeholder consultation methods</a>         | 5 Dec 2008  |
|   |             | <a href="#">Rights of Way</a>  | 18 Jan 2007 |

Figure 7-2 Ask Bristol's consultation finder

## E-petitions

E-petitioning was introduced in Bristol in September 2004 as a pilot within the Local eDemocracy National Project.

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.legese.org/About/Project\\_overview.aspx](http://www.legese.org/About/Project_overview.aspx)

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Council-Democracy/Consultations/ask-bristol-e-panel.en>

This service provided by the Bristol council allows citizens to submit their own petitions online, thereby potentially reaching a wider audience. The person posting a petition provides background information and can upload documents and photos to support the issue. In addition, each e-petition also has its own discussion forum where people can state their opinions on the topic. The online petition may be combined with a paper petition, and once signatures have been collected, both can be submitted to the council.

**Figure 7-3 Online e-petitions from Ask Bristol**

**Live Petitions**

| Petition  | Petitioner       | Closing Date | Signatures |
|---|------------------|--------------|------------|
| <a href="#">Reduce the speed limit to 20mph where people live and work</a>            | Stephen Kinsella | 30 Apr 2010  | 343        |
| <a href="#">New Bristol cyclepath across M32 motorway</a>                             | Paul Grimshaw    | 31 Oct 2009  | 334        |
| <a href="#">A public transport hub at Temple Meads</a>                                | Peter Goodwin    | 29 Oct 2009  | 254        |
| <a href="#">No billboards on Stokes Croft</a>   | Jon Rogers       | 05 Aug 2009  | 71         |
| <a href="#">No Heathrow Expansion - Electrify mainline London to Bristol instead.</a> | Jon Rogers       | 31 Jul 2010  | 44         |
| <a href="#">Save the Bristol Travel Shop</a>  | Mark Bradshaw    | 30 Jun 2009  | 38         |
| <a href="#">Let All Bristol Decide</a>  | Terry Cook       | 05 May 2010  | 31         |
| <a href="#">Direct democracy</a>  | darren guy       | 01 Jul 2009  | 30         |
| <a href="#">No to Amalgamation of Henleaze Infant and Junior Schools</a>              | liz radford      | 30 Aug 2009  | 21         |
| <a href="#">Petition to remove billboards on Mina Rd.</a>                             | Bernard Stricker | 29 Aug 2009  | 16         |
| <a href="#">No More Noisy Leaf Blower at Blaise, Use a Rake!</a>                      | Hannah Farthing  | 01 Aug 2009  | 13         |
| <a href="#">Save Summerhill infant and primary from amalgamation</a>                  | caroline         | 01 Jul 2009  | 5          |

**Webcasting**

In order to allow broader access to council and committee meetings, and to increase accountability of the council, a range of the council meetings are filmed and cast online. Citizens can then watch a webcast of meetings that they consider important live, or at a time that suits them.

**Figure 7-4 Webcasts on Ask Bristol**

**Popular webcasts from the archive**

- [Exposed! Climate Change in Britain's Backyard - The Debate](#) (12 Nov 2007)
- [Development Control \(North\) Committee - Memorial Stadium debate](#) (2 April 2008)
- [State of the City debate 2008 and Full Council](#) (2 Dec 2008)
- [E-democracy Day - democracy in action or mob rule?](#) (31 Oct 2007)
- [Full Council - Annual Meeting \(includes cabinet elections\)](#) (13 May 2008)
- [Our Corporate Plan 2008-2011- what it means for you](#) (24 July 2008)
- [Who is the Council anyway?](#) (14 Oct 2008)

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The Legese project is still in a pilot phase, and is being re-adjusted and modified based on the assessments and tests. According to a news release on the ask Bristol website from April 2008, use of the website is increasing with time. A webcast of a committee meeting on revised planning application for the Memorial Stadium was watched by 894 viewers live, with thousands of people watching the meeting recording at a later point. In March 2008, 2,555 viewers watched the council's webcasts.<sup>38</sup> Since the website went live in 2005 and until the autumn of 2007, over 1600 people had registered as users on [www.askbristol.com](http://www.askbristol.com), and nearly 30,000 signatures had been collected for the various e-petitions. Additionally, it is estimated that many more use the website, for gathering information, without posting their own comments, so called 'lurkers'. The e-petitions have seen some direct results in decision-making. For example, in a petition on plastic recycling, people were asking for kerbside collection of plastics. Although implementing kerbside collection was considered too expensive, the issue was brought to the attention of the council and collection points have been increased from 9 to 39.<sup>39</sup>

CONCLUSION

As the website has been in development since 2005, it is hard to tell how it will grow in use or develop. The use of the viewfinder was less than expected. People have not been using the technology to post their own video responses, but have rather given written responses to state their opinions.

The future plan of the Bristol City Council is to integrate the tools and techniques further and to improve partnership with other public services in Bristol.

Although use of the website has not been as expected, there is a regular increase in hits on the website. An important issue to consider is what Bristol city council does with the input of its citizens. It is of essence that the City council takes the comments, and suggestions of the website's visitors into the council meetings, and that it gives direct feedback on decisions. The City council does respond,

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/press-releases/2008/apr/more-people-choose-to-watch-council-meetings-online.en>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Council-Democracy/Consultations/e-petitions---further-information.en>

give feedback and takes into consideration the comments made on the website. With time, and with enhanced trust in the value of posting a comment and using the tools available, the instrument could become a valuable instrument for strengthening participation.

### *7.1.3. Avoiding traffic platform, Wienerwald, Austria*

#### TIME PERIOD

1999-2002 – pilot project in the municipality of Langenlois; 2002/2003-2006/2007: regional project for Wienerwald.

#### OBJECTIVES

To address climate change by reducing CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions of private transport and to increasing non-motorised traffic and public transport at local level through strategic awareness-raising activities and citizen participation. The goal was to achieve a reduction of transport-related emissions by 5 to 8%, or a decrease of at least 10% of all car transport in the participating municipalities.

#### INITIATORS

The Province of Lower Austria financed and led the project. The department of General Transport issues (RU7) carried responsibility for the project management. The non-profit association “Re-development of cities and villages in Lower Austria”<sup>40</sup> provided support and regional mentoring and Praschl – motivation and mobility research<sup>41</sup> was assigned with project coordination and support in development of campaigns. Herry-Consult<sup>42</sup> monitored and evaluated the project.

#### TARGET GROUP

Car owners in the Wienerwald region and the 27 local municipalities, mainly rural areas.

#### BACKGROUND

Wienerwald region is a largely rural area in the province of Lower Austria, the largest province in Austria. Lower Austria contains of 21 political districts with a total of 573 municipalities and a population of around 1.6 million. The capital of this province is St. Poelten with a population of about 50.000.<sup>43</sup>

To address CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport, every provincial state in Austria has developed a regional transport plan (Landesverkehrskonzept). In 1997, the regional government of the province of Lower Austria started actions to reduce

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.dorf-stadterneuerung.at>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.vsicher.at>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.herry.at>

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/statistiken/regionales/regionale\\_gliederungen/bundeslaender/index.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/regionales/regionale_gliederungen/bundeslaender/index.html)

traffic<sup>44</sup> pollution and to support non-motorised and public transport at regional and local levels. This led to the elaboration of the traffic-saving plan (Verkehrsparen). Within the concept, a broad scope of activities for participation and integration of citizens in political strategies for transport and mobility were set. The traffic-saving concept is a framework for awareness raising and promoting change in the mobility behaviour in the region. In order to test its effectiveness, a first field trial was set up in the municipality of Langenlois in 1998/99. The pilot ended in 2002 and due to the success of the project, the concept was extended to the Wienerwald region, and became known as 'Verkehrsparen Wienerwald' or Traffic-saving Wienerwald (VKSG 2003).

The Traffic-saving concept is strongly related to several projects in mobility and transport as well as for sustainability and climate saving. One of these within a European context is the climate alliance, an aggregation of European cities and villages that engage in global climate-saving strategies. The province of Lower Austria joined this alliance in 1993, and the climate alliance was also one of the partners for the Traffic-saving concept. Since 2007, the Wienerwald region is a focus region for the climate alliance in Lower Austria. The Traffic-saving initiative is also related to Austria's policies for climate and sustainability at Federal level. The Austrian green paper for sustainable development of 2001, which was further elaborated to the Austrian strategy for sustainability in 2002, inter alia contains guidelines for sustainable mobility management and strategic measurements for traffic reduction. These policies also stress the importance of awareness-raising and participative approaches for increasing the acceptance of environmental friendly transport and a change in mobility behaviour.

#### INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS:

The basic assumption of the initiative is that positive effects for climate and environment can be achieved by a smooth change in mobility behaviour. Although possible savings of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions may be relatively small in several areas, the overall reduction can be significant. For instance, about 35% of car rides in Lower Austria are less than 3 km in distance. By changing the transport mode of these short distances to less polluting vehicles (e.g. bicycles or public transport) considerable impact would be achieved. A positive spill-over effect to the avoidance of car use for small distances would be a vitalisation of city centres and a stimulus for local business. The Traffic-saving concept is based on four main principles:

- focus on awareness-raising
- strategy of small steps
- stimulation of local business

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.klimabuendnis.org>

- creation of a lasting impact

Hence, addressing these specified goals, the project mainly concentrated on actions for triggering a long-term change in mobility behaviour of citizens rather than technological improvements or infrastructure measures.

The Traffic-saving campaign in Wienerwald region was set up in combination with local measurements, and 26 municipalities took part. The campaign was a demand-oriented, with focus on awareness raising. The broad range of measures ranged from classical advertising such as posters, banners, newspaper ads, flyers, folders, lotteries, etc. to short demonstrations aimed at influencing car drivers to forego their vehicles when possible, i.e. for short distances. As an incentive, a limited edition of Wienerwald bicycles was sold in bike-shops at special prices, subsidised by municipalities and the government of Lower Austria. This proved quite successful and was continued until 2007. Several municipalities combined their campaigns with extending their transport infrastructure to facilitate more sustainable transport. For instance, by making or improving bikeways and guiding systems e.g. by adding km and time information on signs. Time information for short distances is relevant, as it gives a clearer idea of the distances and helps people decide whether it is necessary to use a car or not.

The media played an important role for the initiative. Co-operation with local media (regional newspapers, radio stations) helped reach a broader audience and increased awareness of the initiative. A website was created, mainly intended as service point for municipalities and less as participative instrument for citizens. Limited resources prevented the development of an interactive citizen oriented website.

For active integration of interested citizens, the project combined a mixture of different instruments for participation such as round tables, town hall meetings, workshops, and idea contests. Some municipalities organised special meetings so-called biker-breakfasts ('Radlerfrühstück') for interested citizens and local authorities to enable exchange of views on the initiative with focus on cycling. Participants would get a free breakfast and were able to discuss different topics regarding local measures for improving traffic infrastructure for bicycles (suggestions for bicycle routes etc).

#### EVALUATION AND RESULTS:

The initiative had several positive impacts on whole region. An evaluation concluded that the project was successful a success for all involved parties. Acceptance among the population was relatively high. This is not at least due to the high political engagement and support of municipalities as well as the regional government for the whole initiative.

The project evaluation included a household-survey measuring the citizens' mobility behaviour on workdays before (2003) and after (2006) the initiative. The evaluation showed a clear-cut change in behaviour. Measures for increasing the use of public transport were less successful than expected. Actions for promoting bicycle use were, however, more effective. The share of car traffic decreased in the participating municipalities from 52% to 48%. Changes in transport means had a trend towards cycling. Inhabitants drove 48 kilometres more on a workday with their bikes in 2006 than in 2003. In CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, this means a reduction of 64,000 car-kilometres per workday and 16 million car-km per year, or a cut of 2,717 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions per year in the region.

More than 90% of the citizens questioned about the project considered it “very good” or “good”. Two-thirds of the population asked, described the project as a benefit for the region's image. Evaluation of the media effectiveness showed the high relevance of regional newspapers. The deployment of radio ads was also effective, but much more when broadcasted on a regional level than on small local radio stations.

Stakeholders mentioned that the level of awareness on sustainable transport was definitely enhanced. There was a visible shift in attitudes of citizens and local authorities, which has made further actions for sustainable transport initiatives feasible. Therefore, the Traffic saving initiative can be seen as an important step towards further actions in these areas.

Critical success factors of the initiative according to those interviewed include:

- The high political engagement at local level in municipalities and at provincial level through the administration of Lower Austria was an important motor and enabler for the whole project.
- A well-structured organisation of the project with clear competence and responsibilities especially in public administration is crucial for planning and coordinating effective instruments and measures.
- For a coordinated deployment of the instruments it helps to have precast but still flexible instruments that can be adjusted to the demands of the participating communities.
- Instruments with a perceivable benefit for citizens (e.g. schedules for public transport, improved bike ways) strongly contribute to the success of the initiative.
- Actions and measurements have to be consequently set in order to sustain credibility.
- Co-operation with local media, local newspaper, etc. are highly important to bring the project to the public and keep the topic active.



- To achieve and keep a high regional identification with the project and its topic is key factor as individual engagement depends on this identification.

To bring the concept to a broader audience, the Traffic saving initiative was proposed for different best practice awards. In 1999, the pilot project for traffic saving in the municipality Langenlois won the national mobility award, organised by the Austrian Traffic Club (VCÖ) and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. In 2000, the OECD selected the project as best practice for Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) and the project was also among the winners of the Local Agenda 21 contest ‘Lebenträume – Aktionsräume im 21. Jahrhundert’ (life dreams – action spaces in the 21. century).<sup>45</sup> The regional initiative in the Wienerwald region also won the mobility award in 2006.<sup>46</sup> In 2007, the initiative was nominated for the climate star.<sup>47</sup>

Due to the success of the traffic-saving concept in the region, further actions were taken to promote the project. A handbook for municipalities as a guideline has been published by the public administration of Lower Austria in order to share the concept and give practical advice.

Currently, the province of Lower Austria runs the initiative “Radland” Lower Austria in order to raise awareness for traffic saving in the context of biking in the whole province.<sup>48</sup> At federal level, the traffic-saving concept was integrated into the ‘klima.aktiv:mobil’<sup>49</sup> project as a measurement for regional mobility management. In this programme, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management offers support for regions and municipalities in mobility management concerning climate friendly transport solutions.

## CONCLUSIONS

The positive effects and the further consideration of the traffic-saving initiative indicate it as a suitable approach at local and regional levels. In general, this case gives some relevant information for citizen mobilisation and participation and the related importance of local level starting point. The initiative’s areas (sustainability, environment, transport and mobility) require local measures, and mobility is an issue that concerns most individuals, particularly in rural areas.

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<sup>45</sup> <http://www.vspar.at/LLMassnahmen.htm>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.vspar.at/vww/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=159>

<sup>47</sup> [www.climate-star.org](http://www.climate-star.org)

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.radland.at>

<sup>49</sup> climate.active:mobile, <http://www.klimaaktiv.at>



Awareness-raising in combination with infrastructural changes to influence change in transport behaviour with consequent but not rigorous measurements seems to be a practical way to achieve sustainable results with positive long-term effects. A mixture of different instruments is necessary to reach a broader audience. The media thereby is a significant factor and especially local newspapers, as these reach most households. The instruments should be detailed but still flexible for adapting them to the different demands of local communities. On this basis, putting forward a discourse with the active integration of citizens can be alleviated, and participative elements (e.g. town hall meetings, workshops, etc.) can be deployed more easily. However, a high regional identification among all relevant parties is by all means crucial for the subject of the participation.

Looking at innovative approaches to facilitate participation, the analysis showed some interesting aspects. Regarding the Internet as suitable instrument for participation, if more resources had been made available for maintenance, the implemented platform for the initiative might have played a more important role than it actually did. But even if this would have been the case, the web could only be one instrument among others. The most important factor was the direct contact with citizens and between citizens and local authorities. One crucial aspect in order to accomplish this are clear structures on all administrative levels. There seem to be a certain need for a stronger institutionalisation to ease dealing with participation in different areas. In the issue of the initiative – transport and mobility – stakeholders mentioned the demand for local and regional mobility centrals with institutionalised roles and competences for these issues to alleviate project management and co-ordination for project partners as well as for citizens. These centrals should act as institutionalised contact point and pivot for all issues in the context of mobility and transport. This could be relevant for participation in general as participation requires linkage to political processes, which is especially important at local level, where the citizens are closer to the authorities. Stakeholders mentioned that similar centrals could also be helpful for other issues in order to institutionalise participation and give citizens more options for participation.

Although the case has obvious relevance for Europe and European strategies for sustainability and climate change, the European context itself was not a major part of the project. According to those interviewed, when taking local actions on mobility and transport, bringing the European context into the participation process is not of primary interest for the participants and would raise the complexity of the process and cause more of a burden. Demonstrating a European context and announcing the traffic-saving initiative at European level was also a goal of the project. However, according to stakeholders, it was quite difficult to establish a connection in this case. The project was submitted to the

European LIFE-programme<sup>50</sup>, which supports projects for environment and nature conservation throughout the EU. Although it has been accepted, it was not funded because it was not among the first 20 projects. Stakeholders said working out the proposal was challenging, resource costly and overall was a deflating experience. Stakeholders mentioned that similar to the demand for clearer structures at regional level, a stronger institutionalisation would be useful at European level. This would be one important aspect to lighten burdens in project management and there would be more possibilities to share local approaches for participation at European level.

#### *7.1.4. Bazar Vest, Aarhus, Denmark*

##### TIME PERIOD

1996 until the present day

##### OBJECTIVES

Development of an 'oriental bazaar' to provide a shopping centre in a deprived area of the city of Aarhus

##### TARGET GROUP

Immigrants in the city of Aarhus

##### BACKGROUND

The area of Brabrand lies on the west side of Aarhus, the second largest city in Denmark. The area is mostly known for the concrete housing projects which was build during the 1960s. They were originally build to house middleclass families, but have developed into one of the most burdened areas of the city, concerning both unemployment and crime. There is a high concentration of immigrants in the area and the theme of integration and especially unsuccessful immigration is tied to the area. In 1996 the contractor Olav de Linde started a renovation of a closed kettle factory in the middle of the Brabrand area. Olav de Linde had an idea of creating an oriental bazaar in the old buildings of the kettle factory. Besides being a shopping area the bazaar was envisioned as a social experiment which could strengthen the integration of the people living in the Brabrand area. The idea was supported by the city of Aarhus, but no financial contribution was made to the project. In order to support the idea the city rented space for workshops and teaching as a part of an already existing effort to further the integration in the area.<sup>51</sup>

##### RESULTS

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<sup>50</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.aakb.bib.dk/lokhist/aarhleks/r00441.htm>

The bazaar did not have a lot of success in the beginning. It turned out that it was hard to rent out shop areas to the immigrants, who were not interested in the project, the number of customers was also low and the bazaar soon proved to be extremely vulnerable to the general stereotyped portrayal of the area and immigrants in general. The gangs of young immigrants roaming the area influenced the number of visitors from other areas of the city to the new bazaar, which had serious financial troubles quite early on.<sup>52</sup> Instead of being a medium for integration the bazaar seemed to turn into a shopping area for immigrants without much appeal to the rest of the city. The project was not financially feasible, and the private company Olav de Linde decided to bear the deficit because the city council was unable to support the project financially.

As the citizens in Arhus got used to the idea of the bazaar and more people got familiar with the many new food items available at the bazaar the times changed for the bazaar. By 2002 the project was more than financially viable. By 2003 ideas of expanding the existing bazaar developed and in 2007 de Linde invested the money needed for an expansion of the existing bazaar also adding a community centre and restaurants to the premises. As one member of the local council said of the participatory process in Aarhus: “Among the general public in Aarhus vest there is not a big focus on political participation, although this is also changing slowly and people are starting to understand that change is dependent on participation, Bazaar vest also plays a part here.”

Today Bazaar Vest works as a private employment- and integration-project without any financial backing from public funds. It also works as a place where local politicians can engage with citizens. In the words of one interviewee: “Some politicians have found out that a good way of creating participation among the public is by tapping into the local already established networks. Here the bazaar can work as a place where politicians and the public can meet.” The bazaar employs more than 400 people, who rent shop areas in the greater bazaar, the majority of them being immigrants. The bazaar serves to more than 20,000 customers every week. De Linde has started a bazaar project, modeled after Bazaar Vest, in Odense and there is also a bazaar under way in Copenhagen.<sup>53</sup>

#### *7.1.5. Skanderborg Highway, Denmark*

##### TIME PERIOD

1990 until the present day

##### TARGET GROUP

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.aakb.bib.dk/lokhist/aarhleks/r00441.htm>

<sup>53</sup> [http://www.bazarfyn.dk/lpaper\\_brochure.aspx?ID=673&ShowIpaper=19](http://www.bazarfyn.dk/lpaper_brochure.aspx?ID=673&ShowIpaper=19)

Residents of the area surrounding the space between the Danish cities of Herning and Aarhus, particularly in the city of Silkeborg.

#### INITIATORS

The original plans were developed by the Danish Road Directorate, and protests led by citizens in the affected area.

#### BACKGROUND

In the beginning of 1990 a majority in the Danish Parliament voted in favour of the construction of a new highway connecting the two cities Herning and Aarhus. The Danish Road Directorate started the process of drawing up the most suitable route. The part of the route which would be crossing the city of Silkeborg was here a major issue. Silkeborg is situated in the middle of the wildlife sanctuary 'Gudenådal' which is home to several endangered species and besides that, the region is a treasured recreative area for both hiking and canoeing. Several routes going through and around the city of Silkeborg and the surrounding areas were drawn up. In 1991 a number of complaints against the road in general, and in particular the part of the road going through 'Gudenådal' were raised. The public was very active and signatures were collected, public meetings were held and several groups opposing the highway formed<sup>54</sup>.

In January of 1993 the parliament agreed on the route going north of the city, but with a change of government later the same month the newly elected government chose to take the part of the route crossing the Silkeborg area out of the agreement in order to have the Road Directorate make new studies and assessments concerning the direction of the route.<sup>55</sup>

#### INSTRUMENTS AND PROCESS

Several different routes were again drawn up ending with two final proposals - one going directly through the city of Silkeborg and past 'Silkeborg Lake' and one going north of the city, directly through the protected areas of 'Gudenådal'. None of the routes were desirable for politicians as they were both costly and complicated, besides that they met harsh criticism from the citizens of Silkeborg. The Danish Society for Nature Conservation also got involved in the ordeal, and threatened to submit lawsuits and take the case all the way to the EU Court of Justice. Environmental Impact Assessments were undertaken by the Road Directorate in order to evaluate how the new road would distress the environment. The Road Directorate finally again, as they did in 1993, recommended the route going north of the city, but both routes were

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.dr.dk/Undervisning/Plank/Lokalsager/Vej/Motorvej+ved+Silkeborg.htm>,

[http://www.jmom.dk/aar/\\_jmom/401\\_historie.html](http://www.jmom.dk/aar/_jmom/401_historie.html)

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.vejdirektoratet.dk/publikationer/VDrapp303/html/chapter04.htm>

put up for a public hearing<sup>56</sup>. Instead of focusing on the two recommended routes, the public hearing focused on another agenda. Jakob Løchte, who lives close to where the new route going north of the city would be passing, proposed a new route, called *The Combo-route*, a merger of the two routes which the Road Directory had drawn up. The new Combo-route would avoid both the part of the north route passing the ‘Silkeborg Lake’ and the part of the city route passing through the wild life sanctuary. But the combo-route was not without problems either. First of all it passes directly through the forest of ‘Nordskov’ which is named an EU protected zone, and secondly, several hundred houses would have to get expropriated, thereby creating resistance from new groups of citizens.<sup>57</sup> Finally several groups of citizens who opposed the new road in general, regardless of route, protested against it with demonstrations, marches and other events.<sup>58</sup>

The media has played a crucial role in this whole process. In the words of one interviewee who ran a local NGO protesting against the highway: “The local media has played a big part, especially the local newspaper and the TV show TV2Østjylland. It has been hard for us, as a small organisation to have any say. Especially on TV, they want emotions and not facts; they would rather talk to someone who is about to lose a part of their yard rather than to us as an organisation. It is also hard to get an overview of how they are going to use our statements, because they edit an hour worth of interview down to a two-minute clip. They turn your statements so they can use them for what they want. “

After some time, another Environmental Impact Assessment was prepared, this time for the newly-proposed combo-route. This was completed in 2006 and following this, the government decided to disregard the two original routes in order to proceed with the combo-route as the only solution.<sup>59</sup> The protests continued and in an effort to seek public support for the Combo-route, the Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, went to Silkeborg in 2006, in order to promote the solution of the combo-route to the citizens affected by it. The meeting did not go well, and the protests seemed as vivid and active as ever. Because of the number of complaints given, the government chose to push for a final vote on the route. A political settlement concerning the combo-route was finally reached in 2008.

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<sup>56</sup> <http://www.dr.dk/Undervisning/Plank/Lokalsager/Veje/Motorvej+ved+Silkeborg.htm>,

<http://www.vejdirektoratet.dk/publikationer/VDrapp303/html/chapter04.htm>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.silkeborg-motorvej.dk/tolosninger.htm>

<sup>58</sup> [http://www.jmom.dk/aar/\\_jmom/401\\_historie.html](http://www.jmom.dk/aar/_jmom/401_historie.html)

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.vejdirektoratet.dk/publikationer/VDrapp303/html/chapter04.htm>,

<http://www.dr.dk/Undervisning/Plank/Lokalsager/Veje/Motorvej+ved+Silkeborg.htm>

## CONCLUSIONS

The protesters are still active although most citizens in Silkeborg have accepted the combo-route as the solution. There have been numerous public meetings and hearings concerning the highway, the number of written complaints are in the hundreds, and thousands of signatures have been collected, this making the highway in the Silkeborg area one of the most debated infrastructure projects in Denmark in the last twenty years.

This case shows some of the key advantages as well as disadvantages of engaging with citizens. Firstly, there was a high level of interest concerning the new highway project, as the development of the new road would have had a large impact not only on particular individuals, but on a popular relaxation and leisure area. Secondly, the Roads Directorate was very keen to engage with citizens – in the words of one activist, they have “been good at giving us feedback and letting us know what is going on. They have a lot of accessible information and are good at accepting new proposals.” However, this extended level of participation has meant that the project is still being protested to this day.

### *7.1.6. Le Printemps de l'Environnement, Belgium<sup>60</sup>*

#### TIME PERIOD

Spring and summer 2008

#### OBJECTIVES

The Le Printemps project centred around enabling citizens to take an active part in consultation processes and to have an impact on environmental policies. The aim for this process was to involve the different levels of authorities and non-governmental actors in creating a roadmap for the environment with concrete commitments and actions.

#### INITIATORS

The federal ministry of Climate and Energy, in collaboration with other federal ministries and regional governments.

#### TARGET GROUP

The activities of Le Printemps were aimed mostly at the different government agencies, public authorities, civil society (Environmental NGOs, consumer organisations, etc.), experts and industry. Individual citizens were also given a venue for their voice online and welcome to the workshops, although they were not the main target group.

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<sup>60</sup> Based on interviews and [http://www.printempsdelenvironnement.be/FR/le\\_printemps](http://www.printempsdelenvironnement.be/FR/le_printemps)

## BACKGROUND

The Belgian 'political system' is a relatively consultative one. Belgium is highly institutionalised, and there are set practices and protocols for the decision making process. Legally, consultation is required in specific instances, mostly at the stage when a draft is already on the table, but Ad hoc consultations can also be made for special issues/circumstances. These are generally held when there arises a political opportunity- or when an issue is considered ripe.

At the federal level, there are 4 councils, that either can give advise on their own initiative or respond to questions. These are composed of social partners, civil society, NGOs, academic/scientific experts (Universities), consumer organisations, labour organisations, entrepreneurs etc. The councils advise at federal and national level. The Council on Sustainable Development was established in 1992. Thus a form of organised participation has been ongoing for the past 17 years.

Le Printemps, however, was a different form of consultation. It was a large-scale ad hoc consultation over a period of 6 weeks, where a large number of workshops and meetings were held in order to develop a roadmap for action in five environmental areas.

## INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

Le Printemps was implemented at a national level (which is federal level and regional level together). Over 100 meetings were organised in 3 cities, Brussels, Charleroi and in Ghent, during the period of the project.

Around 200 representatives of civil society, unions, businesses, scientists, public authorities and NGOs participated in the workshops and meetings, which were clustered around 4 thematic issues. These were Climate change and sustainable energy, sustainable production and consumption and biodiversity, environment and health, and mobility and transport. During the workshop meetings, an additional theme was added; green taxes. Within each theme a number of workshops were arranged on specific issues. For instance, within the sustainable consumption and production and biodiversity cluster, workshops were held on 10 topics, including defining a green product, eco innovation, food and environment and sustainable public procurement. Prior to the workshops, the Ministry of climate and energy, in collaboration with relevant Ministries, had developed a broad list of proposed measures, which were then prioritised and shortlisted, in collaboration with various stakeholders.

In addition to the workshops, there were working groups, and four blogs in line with the themes were set up online for the general public to ask questions, comment and provide their opinions. The website also serves as an instrument

for feedback, and all outcomes of the workshops and political implications are published there.

#### EVALUATION AND RESULTS

For coming up with a roadmap and a set of concrete actions for the environment, the Printemps approach managed to involve more stakeholders, and allowed for a much broader level of participation than the traditional way of consultation procedures. It was also a way to address the consultation fatigue, which can develop when consultations are frequent, as is the case for environmental policy making, and the group of stakeholders that are usually consulted is relatively small.

Although the participation was open to individual citizens, there was not a high level of participation by them and the online forum did not receive much input.

On the Printemps website, 159 measures that were the outcome of the consultation events are listed in the publicly available scoreboard. According to the scoreboard, updated in January 2009, around 15 of the 159 listed measures have been fully realised. A large number of the other measures have to a varying degree been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. A further follow up will be published online.

The initiative may be considered a success, to the extent of the level of participation, and the outcome of the workshops: the concrete proposed measures, action points, ideas and recommendations. Feedback has also been made available, and the ministry is in regular contact with the participants of the workshops. Additionally, the institutionalised ad-hoc approach, with the organised process, meetings, website, and feedback procedures could be reproduced and made into a regular way of working.

When it comes to the actual implementation of the measures suggested by the participants, the results vary. For instance, there was great interest in creating a national Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) policy. However, at the government level, the policy recommendation was not accepted, as certain regions preferred to make regional policies, and the 5 party coalition government failed to reach an agreement. Thus despite the fruitful outcomes of the workshops, there were some problems in transforming the proposals into political decisions in the federal government. On the other hand, the matter has not been put to rest. The ministry is currently working on finding an agreement on a national SPP policy, and is asking for support of the civil society to stand behind the ministry.



## CONCLUSION

As stated above, there is a tradition for political participation in Belgium, and especially in the field of the environment. There is a higher level of participation, and more opportunities at the regional levels. Local and regional levels are in a better position to organise consultations and they have competences that are also more relevant to people's every day lives. The federal level often conducts its consultations in collaboration with the regions. Le Printemps was the first of its kind in Belgium in the field of environment and the collaboration of the regions and federal level was very well implemented.

In general, direct citizen engagement and participation is not a priority of the cabinet. This is not due to a lack of interest, rather lack of capacity. Additionally, civil society organisations are professionally trained to understand the political language, the political system, and the specific issues, and are in a better position to communicate with the ministry, and also with citizens.

### *7.1.7. Reception Guide for Immigrants, Catalonia*

#### TIME PERIOD

2007 onwards

#### OBJECTIVES

To enable new immigrants to Catalonia to find information about the region, that will enable them to integrate into the locality easier.

#### TARGET GROUP

New immigrants to Catalonia, and Catalonian citizens who wish to find out more information regarding policies towards immigrants in the region.

#### INITIATORS

The Secretariat for immigration of the Catalan Government developed the project.

#### BACKGROUND

As part of the Citizenship and Immigration Plan from the Catalan Government, an information portal was planned to be developed. This would give new immigrants an easy way to seek information concerning their arrival, and how they can get involved in political life in the region.

Given that most portals of this nature can simply be information-heavy and not very user friendly, there was a challenge to be overcome. The Secretariat for immigration of the Catalan Government decided on an approach that integrated Frequently Asked Questions into the website as well as so-called 'Dialogues', which are static 'conversations' between the user and the website. These lead an

individual user through a series of questions, thereby making the interaction more user-friendly.

#### INSTRUMENTS AND RESULTS

The Secretariat has developed a website, which is available in a range of different European and non-European languages (ten languages, including Spanish and Catalan), for people to visit. According to recent figures, the site receives over 5000 visitors per month. Visitors to the site can seek information concerning any one of a range of topics, from 'Citizen Participation' to 'Education', or 'Housing'. The portal often provides links to further information, which then enable contact to be taken if answers or solutions cannot be found through use of the site.

#### CONCLUSIONS

This website and portal has clearly been a successful instrument from the perspective of number of users, and shows that the Catalan government have thought about ways to try to engage with migrants in their region.

#### *7.1.8. Congestion Charges, Stockholm, Sweden*

##### TIME PERIOD

Initial discussions started at national level in 2002. The trial period was from 3 January – 31 July 2006. The Congestion charges were finally approved in the parliament 20 June 2007, and came into effect in August 2007.<sup>61</sup>

##### OBJECTIVES

The congestion charges, involve taxing cars at certain hours for entering the city. The aim of the tax is to reduce traffic in Stockholm city, in particular at peak hours, to encourage public transport, cycling and car sharing, reduce pollution and to contribute to infrastructure expenses (e.g. better buses) with the generated income. The purpose of the trial and referendum, was to test whether the efficiency of the traffic system can be enhanced by congestion charges, and moreover, the acceptance of Stockholm's citizens for the new instrument.<sup>62</sup>

##### INITIATORS

Top down initiative. The tax trial was initially discussed at local level, but it was a result of national government negotiations. The idea was influenced by the successful implementation of charges in London, and not-so-successful trial in Edinburgh. The trial was implemented by the City of Stockholm, the Swedish Road Administration and Stockholm Transport (SL).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Dagens Nyheter, <http://www.dn.se/sthlm/odramatisk-start-for-biltullarna-1.710730>; Sveriges Television, <http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=33538&a=853655>.

<sup>62</sup> Stockholmsförsöket, <http://www.stockholmsforsoket.se/templates/page.aspx?id=2432>

<sup>63</sup> Stockholmsförsöket, <http://www.stockholmsforsoket.se/templates/page.aspx?id=7024>

## TARGET GROUP

Citizens of Stockholm as well as the neighbouring municipalities, to a degree.

## BACKGROUND

Congestion charges have been introduced at a local level in several cities. Congestion Charges were for example introduced in London in 2003 They were heavily criticized in the beginning, but with time acceptance grew and they are considered an effective and positive instrument for the city.

In 2002, the national government agreed upon testing this system of charges in the city of Stockholm. This instrument is a controversial one, and due to political differences on how to implement the instrument, the trial was only started in 2006. Congestion charging can be seen as a radical policy, confronting a dominant tendency of frictionless mobility, car reliance and road building as the norm. Therefore, a careful process was started that included extensive expert consultation efforts and that led to adjustments. Additionally, there was direct citizen involvement approach taken, by doing a trial period of 7 months, and by allowing citizens to cast their vote on the system before implementing the policy.<sup>64</sup>

## INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

### The system

Congestion pricing is an instrument where car drivers have to pay a certain price for entering the centres of larger cities. Similar to the London congestion charge, Stockholm's system imposes a fee on motorists entering the city centre using number plate recognition cameras to record the identity of vehicles. Contrary to London, the level of the charge in Stockholm depends on the time of the day the driver enters or exits the pricing zone. The system operates weekdays from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm and charges more in peak periods than during the day. Also, motorists have to pay for each new entry into the pricing zone.

### The trial and referendum

As the system is controversial, and studies indicated that there would be significant public resistance to the system prior to testing it, a decision was made to try the charging system for a period of time, both to evaluate the cost effectiveness, and to see whether citizens would agree. The trial period lasted from 3 June to 31 July 2006. A referendum was held at the same time of national elections in the fall of 2006. As congestion charges falls under the scope of taxes, and the competencies of tax issues lie with the national

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<sup>64</sup> Isaksson and Richardson , 2009.

government, the referendum had to be directed at national level. A decision was made to base the referendum and the results only on Stockholm. However, 14 surrounding municipalities decided to hold local referenda. 65 Nonetheless, the trial referendum was formally defined as an issue for the municipality of Stockholm, and only the results of that referendum would have significant weight in deciding whether to implement the system or not. There had been no clear attempt to convince the whole region of the benefits of the charges; the argument for the city only focus was that the inhabitants of the city would have the most clear gains from the system.<sup>66</sup>

### Legitimation and promotion

The system was introduced to citizens in newspapers, radio advertisements, ads on buses and in many locations in the city and surrounding areas. Print material was distributed and there was a web portal, where citizens could also purchase their entries into the congestion zones. In the autumn of 2005, a letter was sent to all car owners in Sweden, and there were call lines set up for information provision.<sup>67</sup>

At the beginning of the process a programme of evaluation was designed in consultation with the National Road Administration Vägverket, the County Council's Regional Planning and Traffic Office, Stockholm Transport, specialist independent consultancies, various research institutes and some of the city administrations.<sup>68</sup> Already on the first day of the trial, a press conference was held, giving the first results. The idea was to be present in the media, and make a real awareness of the potential of the system.<sup>69</sup> An expert group of 8 traffic experts with different special fields worked on monitoring and evaluations, and at the end of the process produced an extensive assessment of the whole trial.<sup>70</sup>

### EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The Stockholm trial was fairly successful. Traffic in the pricing zone decreased by 22%. As a result of this reduction in motor traffic, access to the central district improved and travel times shortened. Both CO<sub>2</sub> and particle emissions in the inner city decreased by about 14%. The congestion charge seems to have increased travel by public transport by about 4.5% (total public transport figures

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.stockholmsforsoket.se/templates/page.aspx?id=10215>

<sup>66</sup> Isaksson and Richardson , 2009

<sup>67</sup> Swedish Road Administration. 2006. Trial Implementation of a Congestion Tax in Stockholm 3 January – 31 July 2006

<sup>68</sup> Stockholmsförsöket. 2006. Facts about the Evaluation of the Stockholm Trial. City of Stockholm.

<sup>69</sup> Isaksson and Richardson , 2009

<sup>70</sup> Stockholmsförsöket. 2006. Facts and results from the Stockholm Trials Final version – December 2006. City of Stockholm.

in spring 2006 were 6% higher than the year before, but 1.5% of this increase is attributed to rising gas prizes).

A cost-benefit analysis of the trial period that took also repercussions on the environment and public health into account concluded that a permanent congestion charge would lead to an annual surplus of social benefits over costs of 765 million SEK (=84 million €)<sup>71</sup>

The trial also changed the attitude of many citizens. In May 2006, 35% felt they had become more positive towards the congestion charge, while 15% felt they had become more negative. The remaining percentage had not changed their view. Whereas in autumn 2005 51% declared that the trial was a fairly/very bad idea, in May 2006 only 42% of Stockholmers felt that way and 54% judged the congestion charge to be a fairly/very good decision.<sup>72</sup>

Voter turnout at the referendum was 76.4%. Of votes cast, 51.3 % voted in favour of the congestion charges and 45.5% against. Results were more negative in the other 14 municipalities and the average vote result in the region was 40% for and 60% against.<sup>73</sup>

In the autumn of 2007, the congestion charges were adopted by the national parliament and have been in effect in Stockholm since then.

## CONCLUSIONS

Introducing the charges do require technical preparations, avoiding negative spill-over (e.g. increasing traffic in other parts of the city) and economic calculations, yet the main challenges are the social and political impacts that need to be taken into consideration to build legitimacy for the relatively radical policy decision. Citizens were not involved in the initial phases of the policy, and were forced to test it before being given a real chance for input. They were however, kept well informed about the system and plans for implementation.

The experimental strategy of making a trial and then allowing citizen the powerful instrument of direct participation via referendum was successful in implementing an initially unpopular policy without major conflict. And the city was successful in overturning public resistance and developing legitimacy. This case shows an interesting way of engaging with reluctant citizens and is an

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<sup>71</sup> Stockholmsförsöket (2006): Facts and Results from the Stockholm Trials ([http://www.stockholmsforsoket.se/upload/Sammanfattningar/English/Final%20Report\\_The%20Stockholm%20Trial.pdf](http://www.stockholmsforsoket.se/upload/Sammanfattningar/English/Final%20Report_The%20Stockholm%20Trial.pdf))

<sup>72</sup> Stockholmsförsöket (2006): Facts and Results from the Stockholm Trials ([http://www.stockholmsforsoket.se/upload/Sammanfattningar/English/Final%20Report\\_The%20Stockholm%20Trial.pdf](http://www.stockholmsforsoket.se/upload/Sammanfattningar/English/Final%20Report_The%20Stockholm%20Trial.pdf))

<sup>73</sup> Stockholmsförsöket, <http://www.stockholmsforsoket.se/templates/page.aspx?id=10215>

example of collaboration between a city and its surrounding municipalities as well as with the national level government.

At the European level, on March 11th 2008, the European Parliament adopted a non-legislative resolution on sustainable European transport policy, in which it gave its explicit support for market- based instruments and schemes, to reduce the environmental impacts of local transportation systems such as congestion pricing (see European Parliament 2008).

“The report calls on the Commission and the Member States to analyse the way in which transport infrastructure and the tariffs applied to it influence urban development and future demand for transport services. In this context, Members believe that it is necessary to invest in technological innovation, better exploitation of existing infrastructure (e.g. congestion charges and road pricing) and new ways to optimise the use of private cars such as car-sharing, carpooling and arrangements for working at home.”<sup>74</sup>

#### *7.1.9. National Strategy for Sustainable Development Plan, Hungary (NSSDP)<sup>75</sup>*

##### TIME PERIOD

In 2004 the funding was gathered to make a sustainable development plan, and in 2007, the strategy was adopted by the national government.

##### OBJECTIVES

To follow a European trend and to create a National strategy for SD. This strategy would define the main actions and direction of sustainable development projects in Hungary.

##### INITIATORS

At the recommendation of the EU, the National Development Agency coordinated the development of the Hungarian Sustainable Development Strategy until its approval by Government and its presentation to the Hungarian Parliament in 2007. The coordination, implementation of the NSSDP now is with the Ministry of Environment and Water.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu//oeil/file.jsp?id=5498452>

<sup>75</sup> The participation practice on the NSSDP is evaluated from the experiences of the different, national, regional, local governmental actors and one civil scientific organisation

<sup>76</sup> The Ministry is a central governing body for environment and nature protection and water affairs. The Ministry carries out the special fields' sectoral, expert management and regulatory tasks in the areas of environment and nature protection, water management and meteorology. The Ministry's responsibilities include policy development, tasks connected to governmental work and the continuation of the ever far-reaching international collaboration. The Ministry's field institutions – environmental and water authorities, national park managements – attend to the first-degree tasks of the authorities. Environment and nature protection second-degree tasks of the authorities are carried out by the National Environment and Water Authority. English website: <http://www.kvvm.hu/index.php?lang=2>

## TARGET GROUP

The target group for participation was mainly civil society, regional and local public authorities and the scientific community, although the consultations were open to all citizens of Hungary.

## BACKGROUND

The process of making a National Sustainable Development Strategy [NSSDP] began in 2005 and was intended to be one of the main strategic documents regarding environment and SD, along with the National Development Policy Concept. Both the National development plan and the NSSDP were constructed with the governmental coordination of the National Development Agency.<sup>77</sup>

For public participation, national legal rules exist. The government procedure regulation expresses the need to involve the relevant civil society organisations in the decision-making process. The Constitution does not directly regulate participation, but the relevant EU directives (Directives 2001/42 EC, 2003/4/EC, 2003/35/EC) apply since Hungary's accession. There is also an Act on Lobbying, Act 2006.XLIX and in 1998 Hungary enacted the Aarhus Convention with Act 2001. LXXXI.

The 1065/ 2007 (VIII.23) Gov. decree concentrates on measures that have to be implemented in 2008 and 2009 for developing the government's civil relations, and it mainly focuses on the civil information portal<sup>78</sup> as a tool for e-Participation. Act 2005 XC states that also electronic information freedom is to be ensured.

For the development of the NSSDP, no specific regulation on participation existed, and it had a similar participation procedure as that obligatory according to EU regional policy. What was unique for the development of the NSSDP was that consultation took place from the beginning of the working process.

## INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

During the pre-consultation, meetings, workshops and so called 'consensus conferences', which aimed to get together an overall consensus on certain objectives from all stakeholders, the invited participants (civil society, expert, and governmental) defined together the priorities of the future strategy. The Hungarian National Council on the Environment<sup>79</sup> and the Hungarian Academy

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<sup>77</sup> National Development Agency: Responsible for the planning and implementation of development strategies (having relevance for EU regional policy- EU Structural and Cohesion Funds), with special regard to the National Development Plan 2004-2006, „ New Hungary” Development Plan- Hungarian National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013. [www.nfu.hu](http://www.nfu.hu); <http://www.nfu.hu/introduction>

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.civil.info.hu/>

<sup>79</sup> <http://www.oktt.hu/>; <http://www.oktt.hu/?p=okt>

of Sciences <sup>80</sup>consulted the Agency on setting up the right method and agenda for the workshops.

Hungarian civil society organisations, associations and interest groups on the environmental, social, economic fields were asked to delegate representatives to the working groups. The contacts were selected, from the database of the National Development Agency and that of the 'Green' National Forum.

At the workshops, participants defined the priorities of the Strategy with the aid of moderators (consultants with experience on SD issues). By the end of the pre-consultation phase, a consensus on 11 priority areas was reached.

In May/June 2006, thematic workshops were organized. A draft agenda was sent to the potentially interested groups and they could choose which one they would attend. The National development agency had by then further prepared the text for the themes, based on the 11 priority areas. Finally, after all the workshops on different the different priorities, the Agency made summaries.

At the same time as the workshops were held, scientific actors, professors from universities and representatives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences gave opinions and proposals for the content of the Strategy. The Agency collected all information from public/ civil discussion and the scientific community and structured them. The Agency hired an academic person to write the Strategy using all the information from the consultations.

After internal governmental consultation including all relevant regional partners and civil actors, the Agency approved the first version of the strategy, published it on their website and opened up an online public discussion with forums and questionnaires. The public could also directly email the National Development Agency, or using track changes, comment on the document. All documents, comments and summaries of the comments are public and still available.<sup>81</sup> The time period for the online consultation was between 26 April and 31 May 2007. Approximately 90 professional, scientific organisation, interest groups, actors from civil society, economic, local governmental agencies sent their comments.

#### EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The NSSDP was adopted in December 2007 but the national parliament, and the Ministry of Environment and water is responsible for implementation.

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<sup>80</sup> <http://www.mta.hu/index.php?id=406&type=0>

<sup>81</sup> [http://www.nfu.hu/egkezdodott\\_a\\_nemzeti\\_fenntarthato\\_fejlodesi\\_strategia\\_tarsadalmi\\_egyeztetese](http://www.nfu.hu/egkezdodott_a_nemzeti_fenntarthato_fejlodesi_strategia_tarsadalmi_egyeztetese)



Since the beginning of December 2007, a Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations<sup>82</sup> and a National Council for Sustainable Development<sup>83</sup> has been established. These are also responsible for implementing and promoting SD at a national level.

In general, The European regional policy and practice guidelines for strategic planning have had a significant impact on the use of Cost benefit analysis (CBA), Environment Impact Assessment (EIS) and the compulsory Strategic Environment Impact Assessment (SEA) in policy-making in Hungary. The Sustainable Development Guidelines developed under the NSSDP are in practice implemented on an obligatory basis for all the Operational Programmes of the Hungarian NSRF and have been a basis for defining the Strategic Environment Impact Assessment.

An evaluation of the NSSDP is due soon. The National Council for sustainable development<sup>84</sup> has the role of reviewing, reporting and implementing the Strategy and will by the autumn of 2009 design a report on the Strategy for the Parliament. The council was created in 2008 by the Hungarian Parliament as a conciliatory, consultative and advisory organ for issues in the field of sustainable development. Chair of the Council is the current Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament

## CONCLUSIONS

The NSSDP itself is a good example of a successful consultation process with selected stakeholder groups and involvement from an early stage of a project. It follows a relatively common method for participation, but seems to be a new trend in Hungary. The outcome, the NSSDP is considered an important document and used as a basis for many policy decisions. The shift of responsibility between government organizations made it more difficult for stakeholders to follow up on and interact, but the regular conferences and online consultations were made easily available.

In general, the environmental sector has more active lobbyists and interested stakeholders than in many other sectors in Hungary. Some of the civil society members, scientists and regional offices mention that there is a lack of feedback or little information provided on where one can find out about outcomes. They may be published on the Internet, but people are not contacted, nor told about the availability. There is also not a strong link between national and decentralised departments of the government. Additionally, low level of influence of participants, even if they attend all meetings and open conferences,

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<sup>82</sup> <http://jno.hu/en/>

<sup>83</sup> [http://www.nfft.hu/main\\_page/](http://www.nfft.hu/main_page/)

<sup>84</sup> [http://www.nfft.hu/main\\_page/](http://www.nfft.hu/main_page/)

and lack of continuity were stated as general hindrances by non-governmental actors. Thus the NSSDP project was welcomed.

At local level, the municipality will find out about projects or the NSSDP from the Internet or at a forum organised by the General assembly at county level.<sup>85</sup> A representative of the municipality mentioned also that it is difficult to follow the decisions.

#### 7.1.10. *Local Agenda 21 (LA 21), Vienna, Austria*

##### TIME PERIOD

Ongoing since 1999

##### OBJECTIVES

The focus of the LA 21 process in Vienna is citizen participation in projects oriented towards urban sustainable development. Within this general goal, the majority of projects deal with (re-)design of public spaces, residential environments and mobility solutions that fulfil sustainability criteria. Other major areas of activity include projects on intercultural dialogue and diversity, young and old citizens, cultural and historical topics and sustainable housing.

##### INITIATORS

Agenda 21 is a UN initiative. Regional and local government is the main implementer of the project. Participation is mixed top-down/bottom-up initiated, seed-financed, institutionalised model; local citizen groups, includes e-participation

##### TARGET GROUP

Vienna's citizens, with focus on projects at district level.

##### BACKGROUND

Vienna is both the capital of Austria and one of Austria's nine provincial states ("Bundesland") with a population of around 1.7 million. Vienna consists of 23 districts, with local governments. The political institutions and administrative structure of the city of Vienna underwent several steps of decentralisation over the last three decades. They effected a stronger participation of the district level institutions and a stronger orientation of the administration according to regional criteria. These changes also allow for various forms of direct participation, including formal instruments such as district level referenda (binding and non-binding), petitions for a referendum, and other types of civic participation and interaction between administrations and citizens.

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<sup>85</sup> National Association of the Municipalities [www.toosz.hu], Association of Villages [www.faluszovetseg.hu]

The general orientation of the city development policies of the government of Vienna is strongly linked to the European project, in particular to the European Union's goals of European integration and sustainable development. In particular in the area of city development and planning, citizen participation has a long tradition, ranging from mere information provision to active participation in planning processes. Examples date back to the eighties, with issues such as new transport routes, or the development of a new transport concept in the nineties where 75 citizen initiatives were organised. More recent examples of citizen participation in this area are the 2003 Transport Masterplan and the latest City Development Plan (STEP 2005), which included a series of thematic workshops and citizen dialogues at district level as main instruments. In addition to these city level planning examples, citizen participation is also practised in development issues in specific parts of the city. Recent examples are the planning and development processes of large-scale new housing areas "Kabelwerk" and "Flugfeld/Seestadt Aspern" (see Antalovsky et al. 2006).

A long existing gap concerning participation guidelines or codes of practice has recently been closed with the provision of a manual on standards for public participation (Standards 2008), supplemented by a manual with practical guidelines. In addition to these sources the Vienna LA 21 management team has elaborated a handbook on organisation, principles, rules and methods of LA 21 processes (LA 21, 2008), which provides guidance for the projects at local level, enhances their integration and strengthens the capabilities of coping with conflicts.

Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human impacts on the environment. The initiative was adopted by more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.<sup>86</sup>

Local Agenda 21 processes play a key role for implementing the participation principle, which is one of the five key principles of Vienna's Strategic Development Plan (STEP 2005). As stated in the document (STEP 2005, 26), a main objective of political participation through citizen participation is making use of wider creative potentials and complementing institutions of representative democracy.

## INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

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<sup>86</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/>

As practised in Vienna, LA 21 is a participation instrument that is characterised by a combination of top-down and bottom-up elements. LA 21 provides an institutionalised organisational and financial support structure initiated and carried by the city government (top-down element) and invites citizen initiatives (bottom-up element) promoting the goals of sustainable urban development and participation contributing to new forms of governance. Support for Agenda projects is funded from the budgets of the city and the relevant district at equally.

LA 21 processes were piloted first in the Alsergrund district in 1998/1999. After this successful pilot project, LA 21 was formally institutionalised by decision of the city council in 2002. Since then LA 21 processes have been implemented in nine of Vienna's 23 districts. These nine "Agenda districts" have until now carried out around 100 citizen involved projects. Six districts are carrying on Agenda processes in the longer term.

The process starts as an "Agenda initiative" with the following steps: a citizen with a project idea supporting sustainable urban development; a clear objective; exploration of the action space; at least three project proponents willing to enlarge the citizen group; clarification of personnel and resource requirements; definition of start and end of Agenda project and Agenda group. An Agenda initiative is then presented to the Agenda steering committee; it undergoes a first check and finally a decision on acceptance or denial.

This process makes sure that Agenda projects and themes are locally developed and implemented by citizens in collaboration with policy-makers. The system makes specific demands on the involved politicians such as increased communication and cooperation, motivation for engagement and time resources, process and content knowledge, a positive attitude towards citizen participation and commitments for implementing projects. To reach these conditions, the Agenda office organises workshops for district level politicians, cares for regular contacts with the district level heads of all political parties and encourages district level politicians to participate in meetings of the Agenda steering committee.

A variety of instruments for initiating and practising interaction with citizens in Agenda districts have been developed and are applied as appropriate at varying stages of the process. The main characteristic is low-threshold in order to facilitate entrance for all citizens. Most frequently used methods are those that take place in open spaces and at street level. For instance, methods for activating citizens and generating project ideas include Info points, Agenda street bureaus, Agenda tents, an Agenda living room, Agenda bus, Agenda quarter forum, and Agenda expert talks.

Another category of methods allows for various sorts of analyses: a hermeneutic district analysis; an activating city diagnosis; SWOT analysis; and sustainability check. For citizen participation in project work itself, another set of instruments is being employed, again with specific labels differentiating between individual variants: Agenda coffee house; future workshop; street interview; explorative walk; roundtable; barrier check; bicycle tour; quiz; coaching; and concept workshop. Finally, for awareness raising and information LA 21 Vienna employs instruments such as discussion evenings; podium discussions; and reflections on relationships.

The relation of project ideas suggested by citizens and the political process stage is principally open but the focus of activities being the local district level favours more operational rather than strategic issues. Nevertheless Agenda projects can contribute to agenda setting at district level and influence the realisation process along the whole policy cycle. For instance, when a major redesign of a public square including transport measures etc. is proposed and is the subject of cooperative realisation by citizens, policy-makers and administration, the participation process runs through the whole policy cycle up to implementation decisions, actual implementation and its evaluation.

#### ACTORS AND ROLES

- Agenda groups: motor and carriers of participation projects; multipliers of citizen participation; group speaker represents the group in the steering committee; written elaboration of project idea into Agenda initiative; presentation of Agenda initiative in steering committee; if accepted as Agenda group, cooperation agreement with local district government; reporting on progress of Agenda project.
- District Agenda office: intermediary between citizens and authorities; activation and motivation; process design and process responsibility; decision preparation; moderation; meeting minutes; advise; organisational support; accompanying Agenda groups; public relations; information flow to municipal departments and programmes; quality assurance.
- LA 21 Agency: representative of LA 21 in Vienna; operative overall coordination, management of LA 21 processes and organisational units; central information functions; concept and instrument development; role in steering committee: advisory member with voting right; introduction of best practice from other districts and know-how from Austrian and international experiences; introduction of Vienna-wide Agenda structures, rules and qualities; demanding minimum-standards; representing LA 21 principles, values and quality criteria, including general city principles (sustainable development, gender mainstreaming, diversity).

- LA 21 steering committee: establishing information flows among citizens, politicians, administration and experts; striving for consensual decisions; advisory functions; decisions on start and finalisation of Agenda projects; recommendations to district chiefs regarding implementation; decisions on further steps for advancing Agenda projects; decisions on annual plans and priorities of Agenda processes.
- LA 21 district chief: heading the LA 21 steering committee; information flow to local district government; interaction with district Agenda office and Agenda groups
- LA 21 district heads of political parties: representatives with voting rights in steering committee
- LA 21 board of directors: Overall decisions on the association LA 21
- LA 21 advisory board: Recommendations and decision preparation for the board of directors; discussion with Agenda agency and Agenda offices on the progress of LA 21 processes
- LA 21 city administration team: information hub and provider of technical expertise; taking up topics from LA 21 processes which are of whole of the city relevance
- External experts: supporting LA 21 processes with technical expertise

#### EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The experience with LA 21 shows that citizens welcome these opportunities of participation very much and have a positive attitude towards participation offers principally. However, it turned out to be challenging to find readiness for active participation on a more continuous and long-term basis. Many motivation efforts are needed to activate citizens for participation. In areas of strong individual identification as is the case with the group on culture and arts related activities the self-motivated engagement is higher. Also the degree of identification with the district or quarter plays an important role. Regarding the social composition of participating citizens there is a tendency of imbalance towards middle or higher education and medium age strata whereas men and women are represented rather equally. The level of familiarity of LA 21 in Vienna has been rising and is relatively high: around 11% of Viennese people know about LA 21. In the ninth district, with its longest Agenda experience, the rate is already at 26%.

According to those interviewed, the instrument LA 21 as a whole as well as the methods employed within this initiative are working and there have been positive developments. The LA 21 has already been running for nearly a decade and during this time the thematic scope has broadened and clear structures, rules and quality assurance mechanisms have been developed. The main weakness of LA 21 is its modest leverage effect and its relatively small scale. Greater

attention to LA 21 both among politicians and citizens in Vienna are seen as desirable and needed for reaching the initiative's goals.

A total of around 100 LA 21 projects supporting local sustainable development have been carried out and new project ideas are currently being developed as Agenda initiatives. They range from redesigning of squares, schoolyards, streets and parks to advise on energy-saving and intercultural learning.

## CONCLUSIONS

A systematic evaluation of LA 21 in Vienna carried out between 2004 and 2007 had the two-fold purpose to contribute to its further development and to provide some assessment of results (Ornetzeder et al. 2007). It combined elements of formative and summative evaluation with a participative evaluation process. The two most important outcomes of the assessment revealed that:

- *there is a growing convergence of the actors of representative and participative democracy:* this result includes above all learning processes and a new communication culture which have positive effects on the realisation of projects and sustainable development at local level.
- *An appreciation and institutional advancement of the steering committees in Agenda districts are visible:* the local steering committees have turned out as being the most important interface between representative and participative politics in the Agenda process; standardisation of procedures, exchange of experiences among steering committees, external transparency of decisions have gradually been advanced.

Other strengths of the LA 21 processes include:

- projects get implemented,
- there is active and regular participation of politicians in steering committees,
- a high appreciation of the idea of participation among the involved actors,
- a political culture with civilised forms of interaction,
- an appropriate and clear participation process design.

An exchange of good practices occurs via several channels: the annual national LA 21 summit; in interactions with the group of sustainability coordinators; the platform of LA 21 coordinators of the provinces and the federal government ("DNS-LA 21" Working Group); the national strategy group on participation; excursions at European and other international levels; and contacts with scientific experts and institutions.

The LA 21 activities in Vienna have continuously enlarged the repertoire of instruments and produced new methods or variants of low-threshold approaches to invite citizen participation over the years. This is documented by the large number of individual tailor-made methods listed in the LA 21 handbook.

A new strand of tools is the IT-support for participation procedures. In addition to LA 21 websites with a growing amount of information resources, other elements of e-participation have recently become employed more. The Agenda office of Josefstadt, used its Internet platform for electronic polling in addition to a survey with face-to-face interviews. Around 150 citizens participated. Another form of e-participation was introduced in January 2009 by offering blogs, both at the central LA 21 website and at the LA 21 Josefstadt website. The suitability and benefits of e-participation tools will be explored further in the new LA 21 Plus processes which will be implemented as a continuation of the current LA 21 programme. Under the new “Operational Programme on Regional Competitiveness and Integrative Urban Development in Vienna”, harmonised with the “National Strategic Framework Plan” (STRAT.AT 2006), the agenda processes are being developed further in four districts (4, 9, 22, 23), including a stronger top-down element focussing on sustainable mobility, intercultural dialogue and quarters for young and old.

A European perspective is hardly ever directly introduced at the operational level of LA 21 participation projects. However, it does play an important role as a major source of origin of changing forms of governance, an increasing appreciation of participation and promotion of sustainable development that act as foundations and sources of legitimation for these types of projects. A direct link to a European perspective is being established with the European funding approach for the continuation with the renewed Agenda 21 Plus programme. Occasionally a European perspective comes also in on initiative of individual citizens in Agenda groups who collaborate with actors and networks at European level on specific issues such as solar energy.

## **7.2. Civil society led initiatives**

### *7.2.1. Diversity and Equality in European Cities (DIVE), Europe-wide*

#### TIME PERIOD

2007 - 2010

#### OBJECTIVES

To establish a Europe-wide benchmark report of the progress of European cities towards promotion of diversity and equality in the European Union.



## TARGET GROUP

Policymakers at the local level in cities across Europe and beyond.

## INITIATORS

The project is funded by the European Union, through the European Commission's Directorate General of Justice, Freedom, and Security, who manage the 'European Integration Fund'. The project is coordinated by Eurocities in Belgium, and has partnerships with various different European cities, along with the Migration Policy Group, a European civil society organisation.

## BACKGROUND

In order to ensure democratic practices are upheld at the local level, there is a need in many regions and localities in Europe to ensure that the rights and interests of minorities are promoted, and that individuals in these groups are given the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. All across the European Union, Member States have agreed to ensure that these rights and opportunities are upheld, but challenges exist in implementing processes to enable this engagement to take place. The idea behind this project is to facilitate and share knowledge about how to promote diversity and equality across Europe.

## INSTRUMENTS AND RESULTS

The project makes use of two specific methodologies to provide an overview of activities towards promoting diversity and equality: benchmarking and peer review. Both of these methodologies together enable cities to carry out substantial reviews of progress towards pre-agreed goals in the context of promoting diversity.

## CONCLUSIONS

DIVE provides an approach towards implementing pre-agreed goals concerning diversity and equality in the partner cities. This approach towards engagement between civil society groups and local administrations can prove very useful, as it stimulates and encourages action in the administrations; the civil society organisations can provide a monitoring role on the activity of local governments, and can also provide a framework in which local governments can learn from each other. As the initiative is in the form of a project, it has a definite timeline, and is set to conclude with a large conference in the Spring of 2010, where agreement will be made on future steps.

This project-based type of initiative has both advantages and challenges attached to it. First of all, one of the major advantages is that the project has some clear

objectives that will need to be met within a specific timeline: the final conference in 2010 provides a central opportunity to show what progress has been made during the lifetime of the project, and will ensure that all partners commit to certain tasks prior to the end of the project. On the other hand, due to the fact that this is a project-based initiative, there is no guarantee of sustainability in the outcomes, and this will need to be addressed if this model of promoting diversity is to be promoted itself.

*7.2.2. Civic initiative group (GIC) – interface between local public authorities and citizens and “Iocan’s glade” Up to date - Engaging citizen participation in rural areas, Iasi, Romania*

TIME PERIOD

short term, currently ongoing

OBJECTIVES

GIC is about enhancing the dialogue between citizens of the Alexandru cel Bun neighbourhood, Increasing the transparency of the decision process in the city of Iasi and stimulating the public participation in the decision making process in the local environment through the civic initiative group. The “Iocan’s glade” Up to date project aims at reactivating the traditional non-formal and civic social structures from rural areas mediating the relationship between citizens and Local Public Administration. The overall objective of both projects is to involve citizens in local issue decision-making and strengthen the democratic process.

INITIATORS

Corona Foundation, with support of European funding (Phare) and in collaboration with local authorities and other civil society groups.

TARGET GROUP

For the GIC project, the citizens of the Alexandru cel Bun neighbourhood, with special focus on training a number of volunteers, as well as local authorities. For “Iocan’s glade” Up to date, citizens of 10 rural communities in Iasi county, with special focus on prominent individuals in the communities, as well as local authorities.

BACKGROUND

The Corona foundation is an NGO established in Iasi in 1999. The organisation has worked on several projects since its establishment, mainly within: citizenship and citizen participation, environment, work with rural communities. The foundation has a research department that focuses on social and economic issues and has a number of training and educational programmes, often working with unemployed people. The foundation is currently working on several

European funded projects on education and training, social issues and environment and citizen participation.

Public authorities are legally obliged to consult citizens on certain policy decisions, especially regarding the environment. However, the level of participation is low. This is partly due to the inadequate or complex information provided by the public authorities and the lack of visibility and advertising of a consultation event. Another reason is that citizens, even if they know about a consultation event, are hesitant to participate, both because it is not a part of their tradition, and also because they have little faith that their voice and the effort they put into participating will have an impact on outcomes. The Corona foundation tries to address these factors, by making participation more visible and possible, and by engaging the citizens.

For the two projects, that are similar in nature, Corona works with key citizens, who volunteer to be the spokespeople of their area. The Corona also acts as an intermediary between citizens and local authorities, city and town councils. The 2 projects have recently been initiated, and are ongoing. The GIC project is based on a similar project, conducted in the same neighbourhood 2 years ago. The setbacks of the project the last time, was the lack of involvement of authorities, which made the outcome of the project less than successful. This time, local authority involvement has been ensured, and Corona is working with the neighbourhood centre of Alexandru cel Bun.

#### INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

GIC. The Alexandru cel Bun neighbourhood is an area of around 40.000 people, who have some experience with participation projects. The Corona foundation has previously conducted a participation project there, and the Iasi City Hall has a neighbourhood centre in Alexandru cel Bun (which allowed Corona to use a space in the centre and is linked with the project) and has twice organised a European local democracy week there.<sup>87</sup> In June 2009, over 30 volunteers from the neighbourhood have received training, and will after their training be involved in building the dialogue between citizens and policy makers. They will aim to enable people to speak up about local issues that directly affect them. The Corona foundation has information material in print and created a website that connects the volunteers. The project centres around direct communication by going into the neighbourhood, and making a dialogue with the citizens. The events organised include discussions at the plaza, where local politicians will participate, and 60 workshops are being organised with the public authorities, NGOs, volunteers and other citizens. The topics discussed will vary from animal

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<sup>87</sup> The “European Local Democracy Week” (ELDW) is an annual European event with simultaneous national and local events organised by participating local authorities in all Council of Europe member States. The purpose is to foster the knowledge of local democracy and promote the idea of democratic participation at a local level (<http://www.coe.int/t/congress/demoweek/>).

protection to road constructions and after school programs for children. These 60 workshops should cover broad part of the community life. The goal of the project is to reach 900 citizens from the neighbourhood during these workshops (15 citizens per workshop). The outcomes of the workshops will be delivered to the local authorities responsible for each issue. While in the last project, the lack of interest and trust from public authorities hindered all concrete action, this time there is goodwill to take into consideration proposals that come out of the workshops.

Finally, the volunteers will also have the role of monitoring the local public administration's activities. Results of the monitoring process will then be published on the project's website and a newsletter "Iocan's glade".

Up to date is another similar project initiated by Corona that also relies on volunteers from the target communities. The focus is on 10 rural areas in the county of Iasi. It is based on the old tradition of Romanian rural life, where the local leaders would meet by the mill to discuss and decide upon issues that were important to the community.

This project, at the time of this writing, is in its early phase. The goal of the project is to reach citizens in various ways. Around 30 prominent figures who are in key positions in the rural communities, such as the priests, schoolteachers and physicians will be recruited as volunteers. These people, in addition to being influential and having the respect of the people in their communities, are also aware of the main issues going on in their area. They are in regular contact with a large number of the local population. The issues that are prominent are local ones, such as water shortages and need for water in certain areas, and children and grandparents in need of assistance, as many children in rural Romania are left with grandparents while parents emigrate seeking employment. These leading volunteers will be given training on a specific thematic area and a work plan. They will then act as monitors of the local public administration, and inform other citizens on their rights while at the same time receiving information from citizens. Based on the issues and outcomes of the discussions, Corona will assist in representing the rural areas and work with volunteers in communicating with the city hall.

The project seeks to train 30 local leaders, and will work with 5 local NGOs that will help in the training. The Corona foundation has prepared "citizens guides" that have information on citizens' rights, and these will be distributed to 9000 people living in the 10 target rural areas.

## EVALUATION AND RESULTS

As both projects have recently been started, there is no evaluation available at this time. The Corona has been involved in similar projects before, and claims that they are effective in enhancing awareness of citizens' opportunities to participate, and that there is a noticeable change in the interest of authorities to consider participation projects. As the neighbourhood project conducted 2 years ago did not manage to have much political impact, this project is more likely to reach tangible results with the expressed interest of local authorities to participate in the project. The Corona foundation had to establish trust not only between itself and its volunteers and citizens, but also towards the local authorities for them to be willing to take part in the project.

The approach taken for the two projects have certain similarities with the city hall's neighbourhood centres and the methods the city hall uses to reach citizens. The Internet and new technologies play only a minor part. Internet availability and use is very low in rural areas, and therefore not a practical media to engage rural citizens. The approach of the Corona foundation, as with the city hall's neighbourhood centres, is based on working with volunteers, people who are interested and willing to give their time to improve their society. The cornerstone of these projects is the people, and direct communication primarily between citizens, and then between citizens and local decision makers. The projects are small scale and temporary, but at the same time, they are targeted, and if implemented well, and the local authorities do their part, have a indication of being successful

## CONCLUSIONS

According to the Corona representative, much patience is needed, persistence and setting of realistic goals in order to reach the aims of a more participatory society. To change attitudes and tradition takes time and constant efforts of education and targeting. Moreover, the issue of participation should be addressed at three levels: with serious public initiatives and responsible and accountable county councils, more effort and focus of NGOs to address the issue and higher demands directly from the general public.

A challenge mentioned by the Corona representative is the NGOs' dependence on funding and the lack of funding for projects based purely on participation. Projects more often target certain issues or problems. Therefore, the focus of an NGO is guided towards other issues that are put forward in a call for applications rather than participation. There is also a lack of NGOs working in rural areas, and small NGOs often lack the capacity to apply for funding

Looking at the European level, there is a sense that Romanian MEPs in general do not discuss how they will try to have an impact at European level for

Romania. The recent campaign focused on Romanian issues, not European issues, and the campaign was similar to the national campaigns. But Romanians need to learn how at European level, their interests will be represented, and how funding for NGOs can be ensured.<sup>88</sup>

### 7.2.3. *The big Ask Campaign, EU-wide*<sup>89</sup>

#### TIME PERIOD

Ongoing since 2008

#### OBJECTIVES

The Big Ask campaign calls for governments to commit to binding annual targets for cutting emissions to tackle climate change. It is therefore mainly targeted towards governments, not individual behaviour. There is one European website, [www.thebigask.eu](http://www.thebigask.eu) where common information is posted and additionally, each country has their own site. According to the European website:

*“Our Big Ask is that EU Member States make legally binding commitments to cut emissions year-on-year. These cuts should be equal to at least a 30% reduction of EU-wide domestic emissions by 2020 and 90% by 2050. The Big Ask will engage hundreds of thousands of people across Europe. People will be empowered to take action against climate change by making this demand of their politicians – at the levels of both national government and the European Union. People will take action by visiting their local MPs, signing postcards and petitions and staging local actions. Friends of the Earth groups will organise concerts, exhibitions, and other events, and engage national celebrities to inform people about and engage people in the campaign.”*<sup>90</sup>

#### INITIATORS

Friends of Earth (FoE) UK, taken up by individual FoE groups at national, regional or local levels. Civil society bottom up initiative.

#### TARGET GROUP

Europe wide (in 17 MS), targeted mainly at national governments, but by targeting individuals (who are already environmentally conscious) to challenge their national government and to a degree the European Institutions.

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<sup>88</sup> Based on an interview

<sup>89</sup> Information in this section is based on an interview (Heller 2008); and the campaign’s websites (The Big Ask EU; The Big Ask UK; The Big Ask Flanders and Brussels).

<sup>90</sup> The Big Ask EU.

## BACKGROUND

The Big Ask campaign was started by FoE UK, over 3 years ago. In February 2008, the campaign was formally launched at a European level in Brussels, and has today spread throughout 17 countries in Europe. A pre-launch also took place in Brussels in December 2007, which marked the start for the FoE Flanders and Brussels. Participating countries are, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, EWNI (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. National and local FoE groups are organising the campaign at country level. As each national and local FoE office works autonomously, each campaign is conducted differently in each country, yet using the same theme, logo and postcards/petitions, and the same mission and goals.

## INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

As the campaign is conducted at a European level, but implemented by autonomous local FoE groups, the approaches and strategies differ. They all have the same target and they all use a mixture of tools to encourage people to sign a petition and to contact their local MPs. There is a European website in addition to the national/local ones, and the music band Radiohead participated in the European level campaign, during their European tour in the summer of 2008. At each concert, a European FoE group set up tents. National FoE groups conduct their campaigns at these concerts also.

FoE Flanders and Brussels, uses a variety of tools to reach and motivate the target citizen group. These include face-to face communication, media and marketing techniques, distribution of printed material, a short film, social networking websites and a campaign website.

As there is a relatively high awareness on climate change, the campaign efforts do not require giving detailed explanation on what climate change is, but focuses more on explaining the political opportunities and on asking for the annual reduction targets.

The face to face communication have been conducted at several locations, where the target group is likely to be, such as the annual world festival in Leuven and the Werchter music festival, where Radiohead was playing in the summer of 2008. On the 10 August 2008 at an event at Belgium's beach, Oostende, FoE arranged a large beach party with the support of several partners. In addition to having stands at these various locations collecting signatures, FoE Flanders and Brussels has also organised public debates, where there is a possibility to provide more in-depth information on the topic.

A film was shot at the beach and shown first at the federal parliament in November 2008. It has since been shown in several Flemish cities, and of course available on the Internet.

On May 26<sup>th</sup> 2009, the FoE Flanders and Brussels met with politicians at the Central train station in Brussels, where they handed over a 'quilt' made up of signed petitions and asked the politicians to make statements at this public location. The timing was chosen as it was close to local and European elections.

#### EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Radiohead's participation has been a key factor for attracting publicity and raising the profile of the campaign, and this is a conscious marketing strategy.

The websites also play a large role. On the European website, keywords used include to 'empower', 'engage', 'inspire' and 'inform' the people of Europe in order to reach the stated goals. A scan of the Big Ask Europe's website revealed that the clarity of objectives is clearly presented on the site, and there is some evidence of a solid research base. There is not much information on the problem of climate change, but a good explanation on government's position and role, as well as a solution for individuals – being to sign a petition and contacting local governments. The site appears credible (as FoE is an established NGO), information is regularly updated and the design of the website is very clear, and easy to browse through. On the downside, there are no interactive features on the European site, video material is hard to locate and there is little visibility of indicators or expected results.

On the Belgian website, similar features are found. There are links to FoE's facebook and myspace, but the full potential of the website for communication has not been reached, due to lack of capacity.

The Big Ask Campaign in the UK can be considered a success. Nearly 200.000 people contacted their MPs directly via letters, emails, by posting video clips or by visiting them directly. The campaigning has been ongoing for 3 years in the UK and Wales. On 28 October 2008, the British parliament voted for a climate law that promises 80% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 with regular reporting on progress. Although this cannot be credited specifically to the Big Ask campaign, the interest of the people shown via the campaign, or other campaigns did reach the parliament.

In Belgium, a relatively high number of people have responded to the campaign, but there is certainly some way to go before it is declared a success story. The campaign that has been running in Belgium for around 18 months has received funding and is planned to continue for at least one more year. This is therefore



the largest scale campaign the FoE Flanders and Brussels has been involved in and the highest amount of people that the campaigners are directly in contact with. The Big Ask campaign's internal target for FoE Flanders and Brussels is to engage 10% of the population. This goal has not been reached yet.

## CONCLUSIONS

Working on a European level campaign has its pros and cons. As FoE is not a centrally run NGO, but each office has autonomy, there is freedom to design the campaign that suits the local environment. Additionally, joining an existing campaign, that has been successful in the UK, both saves time and one can build on something already recognised. However, working locally, there is a lack of overall quality control, making the campaign conducted at very different levels of quality between countries. This might negatively impact the campaign.

In Belgium the timing of the campaign is not ideal. Today, there is perhaps a level of fatigue growing on the topic of climate change. Additionally, the market is crowded with many other organisations such as Greenpeace, WWF and Natuur punkt who are all involved in their own climate campaigns. Another problem related to timing, is that around the time of the launch of the Belgian campaign, and during some of the Big Ask major campaign events, the media was preoccupied with issues relating to the discussion of local politics, and regional conflicts between Walloon and Flanders, leaving less space for the campaign in the media.

Awareness raising campaigns to engage citizens are a common instrument used by civil society organisations. The way of conducting campaigns has developed significantly in the recent years, and the experience of civil society in communicating with citizens and their ability to be flexible and pro-active works to the advantage of reaching people. Several factors influence the impact of campaigning such as a clear definition of target groups, the combination of approaches and instruments, collaboration with the various partners etc. Civil society organisations are in a position to reach citizens and to translate abstract and complex language into practical solutions. As the case with the Big Ask Campaign, the demand for governments to set annual targets is clear and well explained, and it helps citizens to take a stand. Civil society organisations also have the advantage of being considered more neutral than governments,<sup>91</sup> which helps them gain support for an issue. Campaigns such as the Big Ask do have an impact when they are spread and they manage to reach a critical mass of people. However, their impact on actual policy making is hard to define.

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<sup>91</sup> OECD 2008.

### **7.3. Networks and consultancies**

#### *7.3.1. Assembly of European Regions, AER*

##### TIME PERIOD

Ongoing since 1985

##### OBJECTIVES

AER's mission is to:

- Promote the principle of subsidiarity and regional democracy
- Increase the regions' political influence within the European institutions
- Support the regions in the process of European enlargement and globalisation
- Facilitate interregional cooperation across wider Europe and beyond.

The AER aims to promote regionalism and to institutionalise the regions' participation in European politics.<sup>92</sup>

##### INITIATORS

AER's General Secretariat is based in Strasbourg. AER offices are also located in Brussels and Alba Iulia. The AER is made up of 270 regions. It is an independent network, funded mainly by its members.

##### TARGET GROUP

The AER represents regions, and targets regional authorities, as well as the European Institutions.

##### BACKGROUND

Established in 1985, the AER was the main lobby group representing the Regions at a European level. The AER actively pushed for permanent regional representation, and supported the development of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE) (1993) and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union (1994). With these two institutions established, and with the increasing regional representatives holding offices in Brussels, such as the German Landers, the role of the AER has shifted. The AER has an office in Brussels, where the Brussels based standing committee on institution's task is to have close relationship with the European institutions, and other regional representatives located in Brussels. The Brussels office has diplomatic relations with the relevant groups and institutions.

Other regional representatives with offices in Brussels have different roles. Some conduct direct lobbying, whereas others are more of a foundation, associations with universities or are in Brussels to have information on funding,

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<sup>92</sup> <http://www.aer.eu/about-aer/vocation.html>

even writing applications for funds for their region. The AER acts as a platform for the regions and brings them together to create a bigger voice for them in Brussels. For instance, the AER organises monthly meetings with MEPs and Commissioners to discuss major policy developments.

The AER is an independent network, paid by membership fees. Political cooperation of regions is organised through regular meetings. There is an annual general Assembly where policy directions are decided. Then a decision-making body steps in during the year with authority to make decisions.

The AER is split into different departments. There is a committee on Economy and Regional Development, a committee on Social Policy and Public Health, a committee on Culture, Education & Youth, a Standing Committee on Monitoring and Evaluation, a Standing Committee on Institutional Affairs and a Group on Equal opportunities.

#### INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

The AER has a number of actions, events and methods to represent and bring together its members. Broadly, these can be categorised into 4 main actions:

- representing the regions in the European institutions and lobbying for their interests,
- providing information to the regions on funding options and decisions made at European level that affect them
- acting as a platform in Brussels, and bringing together the various regional representatives
- organising events, meetings, competitions, conferences and training to strengthen the standing of regions, enhance relationship between regions and their presence at European level.

These initiatives are all organised within each of the committees of the AER

A major issue for many of the regions, and therefore also for the AER, are the cohesion funds and other opportunities to receive funding for regional projects. This means on one hand that there is a relative consensus between all the regions on the matter, which gives the AER an opportunity to take a strong stance on the issue when lobbying. On the other hand it creates a demand for information, and the AER tries to meet this demand by spreading information via newsletters, their website and emails to its partners.

The AER also uses its position in spreading information on good practices between its members, and gives awards, such as AER Award for Innovative Regions, the Communicate Europe award and the Most youth friendly region. Additionally there is a partnership pool, where regions can propose their projects and also search for projects on specific issues.

Via the biannual meetings, conferences and workshops, regional politicians get the chance to network, learn and become more involved in European level issues of relevance to them. Meeting topics include Cross-border e-health: Challenges and Opportunities, Culture and Creativity, 'Shaping the future of Europe – on the eve of the European elections', Water, engagement for our future, and AER Citizens' Forum: 20 years later... Polish transitions and prospects for Europe.

Youth is a target group of the AER, and it has several support programs such as summer schools, youth focus groups and a training academy. Additionally, the AER organised the *Do you speak European* competition and the *Snapshot Europe* competition.

*Do you Speak European* is held at a regional, national and then at a European level, and is targeted towards youth. Youth teams create a short presentation/performance piece linked with European issues and communication, and the final top teams compete in Brussels. The Dolj Region from Romania won the competition, with a dance piece, where the theme was the cross border river the Danube. In this way, youth is made to think about European issues, from a creative perspective, and those who make it to the finals will get to meet other youth groups from all over Europe.

*Snapshot Europe* is a currently ongoing photography competition aimed at young people. The deadline is 31 July 2009, and the winners will have their photos exhibited at an international art-exhibition in Brussels from September 17 – October 15 2009. Again the idea is to involve young people in communicating Europe in an unconventional and creative way. There are 3 themes that the photos must fall under: Europe on the move - Migration, integration, stereotypes, European identity - Values, diversity and cultural dialogue, and Europe tomorrow - Sustainable development, ecology, environment

#### EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The role of networks such as the AER is broad, and as can be seen through its development from 1985, must be dynamic and flexible, and adapt to the changing needs of its partners. Unlike the issue specific networks such as the Climate Action Network or the European Environment Bureau, the scope is broader.

Representing 270 regions, of whom not all are within the EU has certain strengths. By having 270 regions standing behind it, the AER's voice in lobbying will be heard. Additionally, the wealth of knowledge and opportunities for learning and sharing information is very high. On the negative side, 270

regions will have very different needs and priorities, and thus making a strong stand will not be easy except on matters that many of the regions will agree upon. Hence perhaps the large interest in funding opportunities and cultural diversity and youth projects.

Participation in the organised meetings and conferences is relatively high. For instance, around 500-600 of the members participate in the annual meetings, and around 200 participated in the climate change conference organised in 2008.

## CONCLUSIONS

Having representation and flow of information at European level is crucial for regions and smaller groups. There is also some competition between the European level umbrella networks, and in order to survive, flexibility and adaptability is needed. However, where useful, the various European level networks can team up, and benefit from each others partners and knowledge, as much as their members do.

As stated in the annual report of the AER 2008, the network is member driven, and those members who are the most active have been the most successful in attracting funding, co-operation projects, locating partners and have been more visible at the European stage. Thus, a network, when used can be very important, but in the end it is also about the members interest and perceived benefit of participating that counts.

### 7.3.2. *Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-E), Europe-wide*

#### TIME PERIOD

Ongoing since 1989 at European level

#### OBJECTIVES

CAN-E's objectives are twofold

- The overarching objective of the network is to achieve the protection of the global climate in an equitable and socially just manner, sustainable development of all communities, and protection of the global environment.
- The CAN-E aims to reach its goal by supporting and empowering civil society and to bring together organisations to influence the design and development of an effective global strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure its implementation at international, European, national and local levels in the promotion of equity and sustainable development.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> [http://www.climnet.org/about/whois\\_can.htm#](http://www.climnet.org/about/whois_can.htm#)

## INITIATORS

CAN-Europe is a non-profit organisation, made up of its 120 members. CAN-E receives funding from the European Commission, the Belgian Environment Ministry, the Oak Foundation and the European Climate Foundation and from contributions from its' member organisations. The members are non-governmental, or community based non-profit organisations. Some of the members are also working themselves at a European level, such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) European unit and Friends of Earth (FoE) Europe, whereas some members are smaller local actors.

## TARGET GROUP

European and international decision makers are the primary target group. CAN-E also targets its members, with information provision and initiatives reaching out to their members and enabling them to take action at local level.

## BACKGROUND

One of Europe's leading network on climate and energy issues, CAN-E is comprised of over 120 member organisations in 25 European countries (including Iceland, Norway and Switzerland).

The CAN-E is actually a member of an international Climate Action Network of over 365 NGOs, and has a link with other CAN regional offices such as CAN CEE (Central and Eastern Europe), CAN LA (Latin America), USCAN (United States), CAN Canada (Canada), CAN SA (South Asia), CAN (East Africa) and more.

As there is a CAN CEE network, CAN-E's focus is on Western European country based members. However, members include organisations from Hungary, Armenia, the Czech Republic and Turkey. Membership is open to non-government/community based non-profit organisations, which promote sustainable development and are active in climate change issues. CAN members have administrative independence and pursue their own mandates, organisational aims and objectives.<sup>94</sup>

## INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

As an umbrella organisation, representing over 120 members who share similar interests, that is, combating climate change, CAN-E acts in several fields, such as providing and sharing information, lobbying and acting as a watchdog towards the European institution, publishing, and advertising the cause through media coverage, and assisting its members to reach out to local citizens all over Europe.

**Figure 7-5 CAN-E topics**

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<sup>94</sup> <http://www.climnet.org/about/membership.htm>

### Information provision for CAN members and wider public

CAN-Europe acts as a source of information for its members (and interested citizens) both on International and EU policy developments. The network conducts its own research, and follows closely all political developments around the issue of climate change. CAN-E publishes press releases, e-press statements, newsletters, posts publications of member groups on its website, EU council conclusions and IPCC95 documents along with other documents of interest. On the CAN-E website, there is also information material regarding the issue of climate change and energy, statistics and tips, that members can use for their own awareness raising initiatives (topics of information available can be seen in figure to the right- these are the focus areas of CAN-E). The CAN-E also has its own policy recommendations online.

#### European Process

- ▶ EU and Kyoto Protocol
- ▶ ECCP
- ▶ Emissions Trading
- ▶ Development and Climate
- ▶ Energy Policy in Europe
- ▶ NGO networks
- ▶ Health and Climate

#### International Process

- ▶ Negotiations
- ▶ Kyoto Mechanisms
- ▶ External credits
- ▶ Future action
- ▶ Forests and Climate
- ▶ Other processes

#### Energy Technologies

- ▶ Renewable Energy
- ▶ Energy Efficiency
- ▶ CCS
- ▶ Hydrogen
- ▶ F-gases

### Exchange of practices and linking campaigns

Coordination of information exchange and NGO strategy on international, regional and national climate issues is an important task for CAN-E. The network provides a forum for NGOs to share ideas and expertise, strategies and information on climate change, promote actions and link these with wider efforts. By joining the various members, creative and interesting proposals, solutions and collaboration projects may arise. CAN-E also looks to cooperate with the other regional networks, and builds partnerships with industry and business, trade associations, local authorities and other sectors of society.

CAN-E is in a strong position to disseminate and aid in growth, member's actions and initiatives through the network.

### Advocacy

Apart from assisting the local and national NGOs to address their citizens, local authorities and to increase activity at local levels, the CAN-E has an important role in advocacy, and in pressing for EU and international level commitments and actions.

CAN-Europe, representing and speaking on behalf of its many members, ensures that NGO voices are heard in the wider policy arena by liaising with varied policy stakeholders and Institutions.

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<sup>95</sup> Inter Panel on Climate Change

CAN-Europe monitors and encourages the implementation of policies and measures that combat climate change in the EU on all aspects of EU policies linked to climate change issues. This includes the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP), emissions trading in the EU, promotion of renewable energy, ratification of the Kyoto Protocol in the EU, liberalisation of the energy market, security of energy supply, green electricity and F-gases.

CAN-Europe also follows closely the international negotiations on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). CAN Europe members have been present at all official meetings since the meeting in Kyoto in 1997.<sup>96</sup>

#### EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The CAN-E network is in a strong position and is influential at European level and somewhat at international level. CAN-E has links with the local and national level organisations, the European institutions, and the other regional Climate Action Networks. Members with low capacity and time to follow European decisions, and are not in a position to directly conduct European level lobbying, benefit from the presence of CAN-E in EU level meetings, consultations and from their informal as well as formal relationship with the EU and international institutions.

The website of CAN-E is however not well functioning, and some pages are inactive. Nonetheless, the main publications are available. The strategy and objectives of the CAN-E are clear, and relatively narrow. And there are numerous civil society NGOs that share similar vision and goals. In a case such as climate change, where there is a large consensus of many organisations on the importance and acuteness of taking action, creating a network poses obvious advantages and gains.

The information provision and advocacy seem to be stronger than the partnering and good practice sharing efforts. The CAN-E network does partner up with institutions for international campaigns, but collaboration and making of local campaigns on a European level, such as the Big Ask of the FoE, could further enhance the networks impact.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Where a topic has great support among many organisations, and is relatively narrow, such as combating climate change, and where there is a large number of organisations that have a consensus, there is a clear strength in collaborating, especially with regards to ‘mainstreaming’ information and pressuring EU institutions into further action.

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<sup>96</sup> <http://www.climnet.org/aboutcne.htm>



Although the network does not directly target citizens, it is dependent on citizen interest in the topic. The role of a watchdog has little meaning when citizens do not care. And without citizen pressure, there would be a much weaker civil society movement.

### *7.3.3. Migration Policy Group (MPG), Europe-wide*

#### TIME PERIOD

1983 onwards

#### OBJECTIVES

MPG's mission is to contribute to lasting and positive change resulting in open and inclusive societies by stimulating well-informed European debate and action on migration, equality and diversity, and enhancing European co-operation between and amongst governmental agencies, civil society organisations and the private sector.

#### TARGET GROUP

MPG's target groups are varied; they aim to provide advocacy services to ensure that policy makers are provided with information relevant to the issues of concern to migrants, including diversity and equality, but at the same time, they aim to create opportunities for mutual learning and dialogue with migrants.

#### BACKGROUND

The Migration Policy Group has been providing information concerning migrant issues since 1983. They focus on the areas of diversity, equality and anti-discrimination, and migration and integration. It is an organisation that is based in Brussels, but operates worldwide, with a focus on Europe. The governance of the organisation reflects this European focus, with Board Members from all over Europe, including Switzerland, Norway, and several EU countries.

#### INSTRUMENTS

MPG makes use of various instruments to get their opinions and views across to their audience. They have developed, in collaboration with a group of other research institutes and universities, a Migrant Integration Policy Index (used in this study) to identify 140 policy areas which have an influence upon the lives of migrants in 28 European countries.

Additionally, MPG run their own newsletter and produce other publications, such as a 'Handbook on Integration', informing of the latest developments in migrant policies and integration politics across Europe.

One of the key resources developed by the MPG is the European Website on Integration<sup>97</sup>, which provides a collection of resources about different practices towards supporting and promoting integration across Europe.

## CONCLUSIONS

Organisations such as the MPG are clearly useful for policy makers, as they can provide additional support to the policy making process as experts and consultants. As independent organisations, they are also able to interact with practitioners at various different levels, and so provide an independent viewpoint that can be used by policy makers.

## 7.4. Citizen Initiatives

### 7.4.1. *The Critical mass (for bicycles)*

#### TIME PERIOD

The first recorded initiative took place in 1992, although similar events have taken place much earlier.

#### OBJECTIVES

As this action is spread over the world, and performed differently from city to city, and because of the ‘spontaneous’ and ‘unorganised’ nature of the activity, the objective varies between cities, and even between participants. In general though, it can be said that the cycling event is meant to draw attention to the poor conditions for cyclists in cities, lack of bicycle paths and increase of pollution caused by traffic in the cities. It is meant to sensitise drivers to notice and respect the rights of cyclists, and to reach attention of the media and the local government to address the needs of cyclists as well as to point out the lack of environmental commitment in the car oriented cities.

#### INITIATORS

An ‘unorganised coincidence.’ The first Critical Mass initiative took place in San Francisco in 1992 and since then, critical mass ‘happenings’ have been held in over 300 cities in the world. According to participants in the Critical mass, there is no one specific who organises these events, and these are not protests, but more spontaneous gatherings. As such, there is no legal obligation to notify the police prior to an event.

#### TARGET GROUP

The action is held in the various cities of the world. The target group of participants are cyclists, and those concerned about too much traffic and

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<sup>97</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/index.cfm>

pollution in cities. Participants aim to reach drivers and their local politicians in this global event.

#### BACKGROUND

Bike tours similar to the critical mass events are known to have taken place as early as the 1960s. In San Francisco in 1992, the event became known as the Critical mass, and stands as the model for the following events.

The event addresses policies related to transport and pollution standards. It also challenges the rules of organised protests and demonstrations. There are numerous other actions or movements that perform in a similar way, reaching attention worldwide with simple acts.

#### INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

The form of the Critical mass events varies greatly between cities. In smaller cities, it can be a monthly event, where the last Friday of every month people gather at one location and bike a specific route together. In Budapest, where on earth day 2008 over 80.000 cyclists participated, the event is held twice a year with a large number of participants. In some cases, the cyclists just bike from point A to B, but on other occasions, the cyclists stop at one point and lie down, or lift up their bikes or perform some kind of an act.

#### EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Assigning specific assessment or results from an event such as the Critical Mass is difficult. In Iasi for example, there is a plan to build bicycle paths in 2012, but this would probably have been the plan regardless of these events. If the project gets pushed forward and we see bike paths earlier, the group can take some credit.

Certainly this event has reached attention worldwide. The larger ones, such as the Budapest events, attract cyclists from all over Europe every year. In Iasi, the local police and the City Hall has taken notice of these events, and even monitors and follows the bikes each last Friday of the month, and the events are conducted in a peaceful manner.

#### CONCLUSIONS

At a micro level, a Critical mass happening may reach the local authorities and pressure them into constructing bicycle paths along with all the new road constructions that are currently taking place. And it may increase car drivers' awareness that they are not alone on the roads. Moreover, these non-hierarchical actions are a part of a symbolic network. Communicating to cyclists that this is a worldwide action will empower them and enhance a sense of belonging to a larger group.

The Critical mass happening is an example of grass root action, where people come together in a creative and peaceful way, to express an opinion, to create a group pressure and call for a change.

#### 7.4.2. *Blogs – No impact man and others*

##### TIME PERIOD

Varies. The No impact man blog has been ongoing since early 2007

##### OBJECTIVES

Varies. Blogs can be a way to communicate issues that people or groups find important, to increase awareness and attention to a subject and to create a community online. The no impact man blog is meant to show people that there are ways to reduce their negative environmental impact by giving a practical and real example, and to spread the word.

##### INITIATORS

Varies. Individuals or groups, sometimes members of environmental groups or political groups.

##### TARGET GROUP

Individuals searching online, people who already are aware and interested in environmental matters, and the media. The nature of the Internet allows cross border communication and can be created in one corner of the world and accessed in another.

##### BACKGROUND

Blogs have become a much spread instrument online. They can be like online diaries for people, and more increasingly, blogs are being used strategically by citizens or groups who want to get a point across. Blogs can be written by one person, or there may be a community or a group of people who can add information to a web page.

##### INSTRUMENTS AND MEASUREMENTS

As the number on type of blogs vary greatly, different examples will be described.

#### No impact man

The No impact man blog<sup>98</sup> was started by Colin Beavan, in Manhattan New York in 2007. He, along with his wife, young daughter and a dog decided to

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<sup>98</sup> <http://noimpactman.typepad.com/>

conduct an experiment and to reduce their environmental impact significantly for one year by removing their refrigerator, air conditioning, composting all waste etc. Over the course of the year, the family takes new steps in order to reduce their ecological footprint, and Mr. Beavan blogs about each step, the barriers, and solution to upcoming obstacles the family faces.

Driven by his own desire to make an impact Beavan stated:

*“The way I see it, waiting for the senators and the CEOs to change the way we treat the world is taking too long. Polar bears are already drowning because the polar ice is melting. In fact, research shows it’s worse: they are so hungry, they are actually starting to eat each other. I can’t stand my so-called liberal self sitting around not doing anything about it anymore. The question is: what would it be like if I took the situation (or at least my tiny part of it) into my own hands? I’m finding out.”<sup>99</sup>*

On the website of no impact man, there are a number of links, which he has handpicked that helped him or he finds interesting. There is a moral to most of the blog entries, but most of all, people follow a real normal person, making a huge step towards low impact living, and he gives hints and tips and insight into how that life can be.

After a quick glance, responses to the blogs vary from a few to around 100 per posting. Beavan managed to reach out to more than the ‘green online community’ in September 2007, BBC posted an article on the blog<sup>100</sup> and the Beavan’s have made numerous media appearances in the United States. Beavan has written a book, and a documentary on the No impact man was made and showed at the Sundance festival in January 2009. The no impact man blog has now grown into the No impact man project, with an upcoming book and a movie later in 2009. The stated goal of the project is: *“to inspire, engage and propel citizen action in the environmental movement.”<sup>101</sup>*

Blogs such as the No impact man, do not aim directly at addressing governments or participating in political decision-making. They do however create a momentum for change, and can influence a large number of citizens that will make a lifestyle shift. And with a critical mass of people, living in a certain way and making demands, pressure will grow on authorities to take measures, and industry will respond, as when demand for sustainable products and lifestyle opportunities increases, business will supply.

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<sup>99</sup> [http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/2007/02/the\\_no\\_impact\\_e.html](http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/2007/02/the_no_impact_e.html)

<sup>100</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7000991.stm>

<sup>101</sup> <http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/2009/06/index.html>

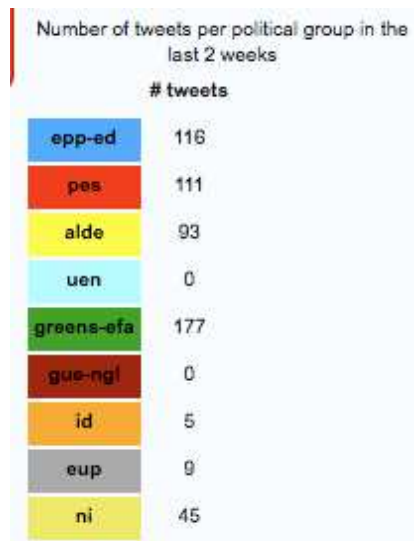
## Europatweets

As stated above, many blogs are organised by groups, and the European Parliamentarians are now blogging at Europatweets.<sup>102</sup> It is a service that is aimed at connecting the public with politics, and promotes better and more transparent communications between voters and Members of Parliament through open conversations. It is not associated with Twitter, but designed in a similar way. MEPs post short texts, in the same format as the Twitter application. There are also news posted by parties such as European Voice, Berlaymont and Euros du village. People can read about what the parliamentarians are commenting on or working on, and follow the latest news directly on the Europatweets website, People can also receive their comments on their twitter account (on 22 June 2009, 670 are following Europatweets on Twitter). There are more followers of individual MEPs on the Europatweets website. For instance, the most followed candidates are: Sophie in t’Veld with 2282 followers, Reinhart Buetikofer with 1823 followers and Wim van de Camp with 1800 followers.

In order to follow the MEPs, one must sign up, and can then choose whether to follow all or specific persons. It is also possible to go onto the website and browse through. MEPs’ activity is measured, and there is a list on the web of the most active political groups (see figure).

The Europatweets can be a useful instrument for those who are involved and interested in European politics, and for those who have a good understanding of Internet applications and language. The posts are written in the different languages, and if browsing through all, it can be challenging to find what one is looking for. It is rather more useful when following specific MEPs or political parties.

Figure 7-6 Europatweet's Members' activities



## Cool the planet

Cool the planet<sup>103</sup> is an initiative of Greenpeace Southeast Asia. It is an example of the limitations and downsides of blogs. Whereas some of the bloggers are campaigners of Greenpeace, the others are Greenpeace volunteers. This blog is an open forum for those interested in climate change issues, to come together and build a community. It is stated that “*the views expressed in the blog do not necessarily represent the views of Greenpeace. They reflect the aim of the blog*”

<sup>102</sup> <http://europatweets.eu/>

<sup>103</sup> <http://coolmyplanet.blogspot.com/>

*to start a vibrant conversation about climate change, to spark interest in the negotiations surrounding the global climate treaty and to increase public participation in the many development pathways -- good and bad -- facing the world today.*"<sup>104</sup>

This type of a blog has another purpose than the No impact man or Europatweets. It supports the development of an online community where people have the potential to engage in a dialogue and come up with actions, spread information and find a group of people that shares opinions. The Cool the planet blog is not very active, it does not receive many comments or new posts. This is the risk of a blog, as its success depends on people's involvement in both posting on the website, reading the posts and spreading the word.

There are also databases and directories for blogs that may help those searching for information. For instance the Best Green Blogs<sup>105</sup> is a directory of green and sustainable themed weblogs. *"Writers from all over the world are publishing articles and stories dealing with a wide variety of topics dealing with environmental issues and green living; and Best Green Blogs is an attempt to capture some of that independent publishing spirit."*<sup>106</sup> These types of directories vary in quality and are of course there to help people who are already searching for information and blogs on sustainable living.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is a large number of blogs and other Internet application for communication, information provision and citizen engagement on the Internet. Blogs have the potential to reach a large number of people in a simple manner and can enhance transparency and involvement.

Blogs are always dependent on people searching for them and as there are so many, usually, people must know what they are looking for if they want to find a specific type of a blog. The target group is limited to those with Internet, relatively good understanding of the various applications, and for environmental issues, those people who are active 'green'.

Thus as stand alone tools they are not ideal, and may not have much impact, but strategically used, and in combination with other instruments and good media coverage do provide many opportunities, especially at the level of bottom up citizen initiatives.

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<sup>104</sup> <http://www.blogger.com/profile/32666262>

<sup>105</sup> <http://www.bestgreenblogs.com/>

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.bestgreenblogs.com/>

## **7.5. Conclusions**

The cases above give a small insight into the variety of activities and actors who work to engage and encourage citizen participation. There are a vast range of other activities going on, large and small scale all over Europe. In the context of environmental issues, and with the adoption of the Aarhus Convention, environmental decisions are subject to consultation, and as such, people do have the right to information and to voice their opinions.

The examples above show some examples of what has been done across Europe; whilst there are many differences between the cases portrayed, there are some commonalities.

The methods used depend very much on both the location of an activity as well as on the actors initiating a participatory project. For instance, the focus in Ask Bristol is on technological advances, and facilitating busy citizens to follow political decision-making and feed in to the process as well, whereas the local authorities and civil society in Iasi use rather traditional information material, and rely on personal communication and working with volunteers. Catalonia's portal for immigrants, although making use of new technologies, was not in itself identified as a key element in a direct engagement strategy, but rather as laying the foundation for such activity. Stockholm's congestion charges were well planned before being made public, and the experiment involved forcing people to try a new system, before giving them the final decision making power. This is a very different approach from for instance AER's and Wienerwald region's, where incentives, games, and competitions were employed to reach citizen acceptance.

The approach taken does of course depend on location, target group and the issue at hand, and as can be seen with the examples above, a well planned mixture of instruments, combining incentives, internet, direct meetings, media and information provision with entertainment and feedback mechanisms are the trend.

The range of issues where governments decide to consult their citizens is broad. In the cases of Belgium's Le Printemps, Hungary's National Sustainable Development plan, the highway through Silkeborg, and Romania's City Development strategy, people were consulted in the policy development phase and early engagement gave room for citizen oriented plans. In all cases, expert groups, civil society and specially targeted actors were the main focus groups for consultation, although individual citizens were given a chance to provide input. On the other hand, Ask Bristol's participation projects vary, with a bulk of the topics for discussion relating to every day lives of people, their opinions about art exhibitions, walk paths etc.



Thus, the targeting is of essence and very specific. In general, long term projects, complex environmental issues and abstract processes are targeted more towards closed stakeholder groups, and experts in a particular field. Issues that affect people's every day lives are aimed rather toward general public participation. The need to bring in marginalised groups does receive attention. Ask Bristol's target group includes youth and those who would not normally be considered active participants. The Romanian NGO initiated project, focuses on rural citizens, and aims at aiding the citizens in addressing their government on very local issues, rather than climate change or national budgets. The DIVE Project can be seen as mainly useful for policy makers and administrators in local cities, as well as people working in civil society organisations that focus on the issues of diversity and equality; but despite this focus, the objective of the DIVE Project is to monitor and benchmark treatment of minorities in cities where this has been agreed to.

Looking at the cases described, learning is of major importance for developing good projects. Iasi, learned from France, the Critical mass event is spread all over the world through information sharing, a main tasks of networks such as AER and CAN-E is namely to share information and aid its members in implementing projects. The European Union, and the UN have obviously influenced the development of projects, both with EU's funding scheme, and also through programmes and projects such as Agenda 21.

When it comes to assessing outputs, changes and trends towards a more participatory democratic society, concrete answers are not so clear. None of the cases above have transformed society. The cases show incremental changes and small-scale success stories. The examples are players in an ongoing continuous progression, and long term vision, accountability and feedback instruments are needed to enhance the process.

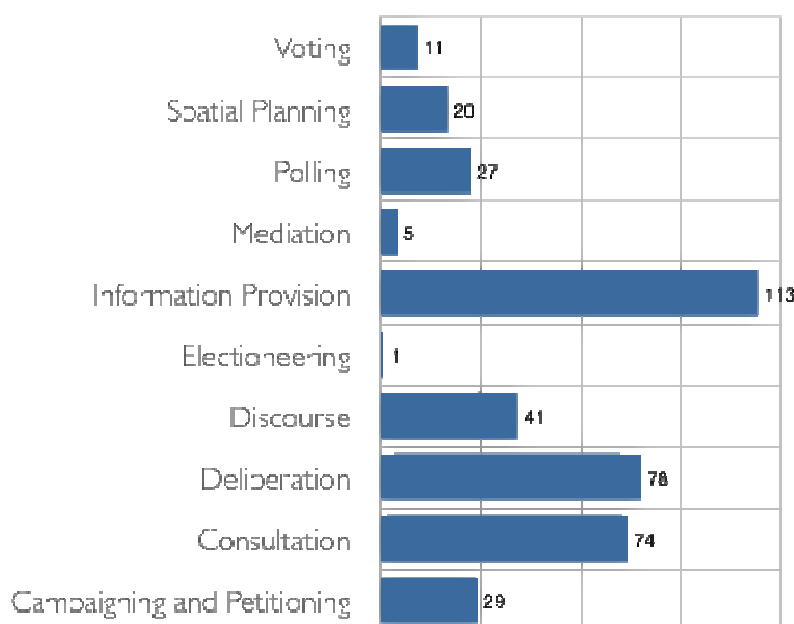


# **PART IV: Communication, participation and legitimacy**

## 8. The challenge of communicating Europe

As should be clear from a reading of this study, and particularly the cases the precede this chapter, participation and democratic legitimacy are not solely about elections and traditional means of citizen engagement through the so-called electoral feedback loop. This loop provides a central element in our democratic societies, but is not the ‘be-all’ and ‘end-all’ of democratic practice. The Figure below highlights different types of activities that can take place under the umbrella of participation.<sup>107</sup>

Figure 8-1 Different types of Participation (source: Millard, Smith, Macintosh 2009)



### 8.1. Challenges and opportunities to participation

There are a large number of challenges which arise from current forms of participation. Although applicable in any democratic institution, they need to be addressed in a study on participation and legitimacy building in a European context.

#### 8.1.1. Trust, transparency and accountability

Trust, transparency and accountability are arguably the three biggest challenges which need to be ensured and promoted in any system of participation and democracy, and all are inextricably interlinked. Without trust in political and

<sup>107</sup> This figure is drawn from research of over 270 participation exercises across Europe that make use of ICT. See <http://www.european-eparticipation.eu/>

participatory systems and in political representation, active democracy, with a reliance upon an informed and engaged citizenry, becomes difficult to maintain. It is a truism that trust is difficult to grow and easy to degrade, so it is imperative to find ways to reverse this trend. Governments can do this by maximising transparency and openness so citizens can see how decisions are made, who takes them and why. Suitable opportunities to challenge the decision-making process are also needed within clear rules. In addition, accountability needs to be clear and traceable, so that if things go wrong it is clear who is responsible and how the situation is resolved. Simplicity helps all these issues by increasing the possibility of understanding and awareness of the democratic process.

### *8.1.2. The threat of 'street politics'*

Increased citizen participation will also strengthen the formation and activities of non-governmental interest groups, whether from the community, from private interests or from established institutions, and this is a trend particularly strengthened by the ICT Web 2.0 phenomena such as blogs, wikis, instant messaging clients, Facebook etc. These interest groups have the advantage that they typically respond to actual on-the-ground and practical needs, and can often find additional resources and energy through being genuinely grass-roots and bottom-up driven. However, in most cases they are beyond formal democratic control, many are unelected, and there can be questions about who they represent and who gains and who loses from their actions. Therefore, a fine balance is needed between bottom-up free-for-all empowerment and top-down rules and frameworks for participation.

### *8.1.3. Can there be too much participation?*

Another important challenge, for example in the context of ICT-enhanced participation, is that existing capacities may set practical (if not legal or ethical) limits on participation. Too much participation may not be in the interests of democracy if the system is overwhelmed by a massive increase in involvement, resulting in instability and system breakdown. Further, too much participation may not be in the interest of the individual citizen, certainly without on-going commitment, knowledge and perhaps some training, if this leads to shallow, knee-jerk or populist participation. New technologies and methods could reduce the cost of collective decision-making, but thereby could de-stabilise the political system with, for example, too many decisions and not enough responsibility. The right of participation in decision-making must be balanced against the need for responsibility for those decisions. Participatory decision-making produces problems – if all are responsible then no-one is. Note, however, that the same arguments have been used throughout history to restrict the democratic franchise, and limits to participation may only be an attempt to preserve elitism or the meritocracy.

#### *8.1.4. Trivialisation and short-termism*

Just as serious, however, is the danger of trivialisation and short-termism which can result if direct voting or participation by Internet were to be widely introduced. These already bedevil the political system and could be made worse by the unthinking introduction of new tools and methods for participatory decision-making without educational and informational support structures, and without engendering responsibility for decisions on the part of those participating. For example, a situation could arise where frequent polling, petitioning or voting reduces complex issues to over-simplified yes-no questions and sacrifices the long-term view with pressures for immediate gain and quick ill-thought out populist panaceas. It could undermine citizens' sense of being accountable for their decisions if participation becomes too routine and too divorced from the process of policy assessment. Above all, there is a need to avoid potential problems such as trivialisation, populism, lack of responsibility, and dominance by the loudest.

#### *8.1.5. Nimbyism and self-selecting elites*

However, whether or not citizens use new tools and methods like ICT to participate in democratic processes, current evidence indicates that most will only get involved if they see a threat or issue that directly (and perhaps dramatically) affects them personally-- (i.e. the 'nimby', 'not in my back yard', syndrome). Maybe ICT will make this participation easier and more effective. Apart from this, the small number who already get involved are likely to be able to strengthen their involvement by using ICT even more. How do online consultations in the European Union context actually influence the political discourse and political agenda setting, etc.? To date, the majority have been often initiated top-down and used to legitimise existing policies, so that all the parameters are already set by the policy makers, as can be seen through the 'Consultations' section on the Your Voice in Europe portal. ICT thus needs to be managed to support different types of involvement, and to ensure that the only result is not to magnify the voice of the already involved.

#### *8.1.6. Apathy in participation and the political process*

One of the biggest concerns is public apathy and lack of understanding of the participatory and democratic process. However, useful evidence is starting to be collected as to how to break this democratic deficit challenge, such as people (especially young people) getting involved if they are approached in relation to specific issues of relevance and interest to them, and not just 'consulted'. Older people, once started, can get on very fast with new tools and methods like ICT, as they have the time, a dispersed family and still a true sense of community closeness. It is possible to build for the future by working with children in schools on democracy in their country/locality, how it works, what it is, what the council does, etc. This is the way to engagement, not by trying to get them to

‘participate’. Various forms of communication and engagement strategies and initiatives such as online games, etc., can be successful, enabling the children and young people to become more involved, and thus more likely to participate and vote in the future. The unknown is the actual long-term impact and how to design the engagement process, not just using traditional mechanisms but also the ICT channel, and applying different weights and different ways of analysing each channel. Part of this may be constructing ‘ideal discourse rules’. An aspect which can be positively used to increase understanding of issues at stake, the relevance and decision-making process closer to the electorate is the principle of subsidiarity, as briefly described in Section 2.4.1 of this study. This nonetheless requires that communication is clear and in a language that local stakeholders understand.

#### *8.1.7. Improving the participatory and democratic process*

Finally, the examples illustrated above, show the considerable potential, not yet realised, for participation to change the broader interactions between citizens and government, as well as to improve the overall quality of decision-making and to widen the involvement of all citizens. However, it is also clear that the incorporation of new technology into participatory processes can also be difficult and controversial. For example, ICT raises the potential to re-engineer representative democracy and replace it by more direct forms, but many question whether this is a choice we wish to make, and that we should rather be supporting our existing democratic processes and enabling them to function better?

## **8.2. The European public sphere(s)**

The increasing importance of the role of the European Union’s institutions in the daily lives of citizens has sparked a wide-ranging discussion in political and academic circles as to the way in which decision-making at the European level should be communicated to citizens. The previous subsections of this chapter have highlighted some of the challenges that need to be overcome in general terms before engagement can be seen as feasible in any meaningful sense.

The cases highlighted in Part III of the study have, in general, shown that participation is most successful when citizens are actively engaged by nature of the subject or issue under discussion. It is, logically, easier to engage around local issues. In other words, **the relevance and proximity of engagement** plays a key role in the success of any attempts to facilitate deliberation. This runs counter to certain desires at the European level, to try to build ‘grand debates’ about European issues from the top-down, yet it does not preclude successful decentralised cooperation to be executed, such as that carried out by the

Committee of the Regions. A brief description of some of those plans follows in the next sections.

### 8.3. From reflection to reaction: European Union policies and strategies

One of the major recommendations to emerge from this study is that when considering the ‘European project’, LRAs should attempt to engage citizens in debates, deliberation, and democratic activity **about issues of local importance with European relevance**, and that the European relevance should only be brought to the fore as and when useful and if it contributes to the impact of a deliberation on citizens’ lives. This is seen as a crucial key to encouraging debate at the European level between active citizens. The idea of a democratic deficit has hung over European institutions for many years, and is now being considered a ‘Communication Gap’ (Shahin and Bierhoff 2005; Shahin and Neuhold 2007). However, this perceived gap cannot be filled by placing abstract issues concerning European institutions to discussion. Individuals that are inclined to stay away from politics will not spontaneously get involved in discussions of a ‘political’ nature (Gibson and Ward 1999). Therefore, Communicating Europe, and all the ‘real’ issues that are at stake, needs to be done in a way that is not limited by institutional considerations.

The Union’s strategies to attempt to encourage citizen engagement have been, more often than not, very timely, but have often failed to appreciate some key factors surrounding what actually motivates, stimulates, and sustains participation; some of the examples shown in the previous part of this study have revealed that there are certain key elements that need to be brought through in order to have a chance for citizen engagement.

Coordination, not control is the key to a successful involvement of Active Citizens in European politics and policymaking. Top-down approaches to involving citizens in democratic discourse are doomed to failure. Similarly, only taking ‘European’ issues into consideration will not facilitate engagement with citizens. An Open Method of Communication, which relies on bottom-up driven participation, and focused upon specific topics of interest and relevance, may well encourage and engage citizens in discussion. Particularly when linked to specific political activity.

The key is not only to bring Europe closer to the citizen, but also to make Europe listen, and make Europe answer citizens’ needs and desires. These are, as our cases have shown, mainly expressed at the local level.

‘Plan D’, released by Ms Margot Wallstrom, Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for Institutional Relations and Communication, is an attempt to link together the idea of ‘Communicating Europe’ with providing



spaces for dialogue and debate. The Internet is seen as an area where such a set of debates can take place. Despite this fact, the Futurum website, established to discuss the 'Future of the European Union', was closed after the European Convention for the European Constitution. However, Vice-President Wallstrom has opened up her own blog,<sup>108</sup> along with nine other European Commissioners, and seven members of European representations. In these blogs, debate can take place, but in a highly limited fashion: this kind of participation would only be actively carried out by someone with a strong belief (or, as can be seen, a strong *disbelief*, in European political issues). Some of the existing initiatives, as shown above carried out at the European level can be seen as being more concerned with building legitimacy for the 'European project', rather than being intent on enhancing democratic activity in the EU.

The Committee of Regions' Communications Toolkit (Committee of the Regions 2009b), which provides a set of ideas and links to further information for members of the Committee of the Regions who wish to communicate Europe to their citizens and residents. This toolkit highlights the need to deal precisely with the *issues* that can stimulate discussion and interaction, rather than on the institutions themselves. The Committee of the Regions is not alone in trying to stimulate an interactive European political framework. As well as providing citizens with information about how they can interact with the EU institutions, the European Commission is also carrying out activities that involve direct interaction through use of the Internet; this is known as the Interactive Policy Making initiative (Shahin 2006; Shahin 2007). The notion of interactive feedback again highlights one of the central characteristics of the Internet, which has been promoted through the eGovernment agenda. Encouraging debate at grass-roots level and providing information are seen as necessary requirements towards a Europe based upon a new form of governance: but these actions only provide partial solutions. When debates are centred upon specific issues, the actors involved at policy level must be willing and able to provide responses to interested bodies. In other words, there must be a purpose in activity from the citizen; she must feel that her voice is being acted upon, and that politicians and policy-makers alike are actively listening to what is being said (Coleman 2001). Agreement with what is being said is not necessary, but an awareness that feedback from citizens to policy-makers is appreciated can often facilitate the engagement process by encouraging citizens to provide their precious time and efforts towards the policy making process. Interaction, and feedback as part of this entire process, must take place in order to make the overall process acceptable to citizens. Similarly, when information is provided by citizens, public administrations and governments must be able to provide response to further questions that emerge.

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<sup>108</sup> <http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/wallstrom/>

Thus it can be seen that responsiveness to requests for information is more than simply providing the ability to post an email to a standard mailbox, to which a response may, or may not be given. To take advantage of the technology, human interaction is required and there is no simple technological fix for this. The consultation procedure becomes increasingly important in this respect as it provides the opportunity for many aspects of better governance to be exercised. In the case of the European Commission, which forms the focus of this chapter, responsiveness to interested parties in policy development is also important: this is done with citizens and businesses through the various consultation procedures.

The European Commission, has been somewhat of an innovator in simply providing citizens with information and enabling them to provide feedback. This has been carried out by the Commission in the online environment, notably, through such activities as the CONECCS database (subsequently the Voluntary Register of Interest Representatives)<sup>109</sup> and the IPM policy initiative. As well as open and closed consultations using the IPM tool, DG Internal Market has also established a so-called Feedback Mechanism, which aims to get “spontaneous feedback” on specific European policy issues for businesses. It is part of the IPM initiative, and was established as a pilot project in April 2000 for use by 41 Euro Info Centres. Since that time, it has grown: between October 2001 and June 2002 the initiative grew to include around 300 citizen and business contact points that included Euro Info Centres, European Consumer Centres, and the Citizens Signpost Service (<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/>). These organisations are contracted by the European Commission to enter issues that are raised with them into an online database which is then referred to by each DG when designing new legislation or reviewing existing legislation. The whole database was operating for DGs Internal Market and Enterprise, and would be available to all DGs by the beginning of 2003. More recent evaluation has been carried out on the feedback mechanism which has questioned the utility of this mechanism, and in particular the use made of such a tool by policy-makers (European Evaluation Consortium 2005). Furthermore, this highlights the need for a bottom-up approach, driven by citizens, for citizens, which discusses issues of importance to citizens.

The European Commission, along with very many public authorities, needs to go one step further to now move further along the democracy value chain and empower citizens.

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<sup>109</sup> The CONECCS website is now defunct, and replaced by that of the ‘Voluntary Register of Interest Representatives’, available at: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/transparency/regrin/welcome.do?locale=en>

### *8.3.1. Towards an Open Method of Communication?*

One suggestion for improving the active participation of European citizens in European issues would be to implement an Open Method of Communication to help promote and encourage the development of networks within current institutional frameworks crucial to the new modes of governance that appear to be emerging in the EU polity (Shahin and Bierhoff 2005). There is a need for a successful model for stimulating active interaction between citizens of the EU, which encourages and nurtures Debate, Dialogue, and Democracy concerning issues of importance to European citizens at both the local and European levels. As a result of the cases portrayed here, it is becoming clear that any channels for communication that are used must be on issues that are relevant to citizens, preferably with an impact that is at the local level.

Given the experiences the Commission has had in ‘building better governance’ and reform of EU policy-making processes, we can see that the European Commission and other European institutions are still trying to find the most effective way to deal with civil society and individual citizens in a way that enables them to be an effective, active, and legitimated policy-making body. Involving civil society is not as simple a task at the EU level as the European Commission could have hoped (European Commission 2005). Events such as the more recent Forum on “Communicating Europe – Going Local”, cohosted by all the major EU institutions, are a welcome phenomenon, as they at least start to approach the topic of engaging citizens at the local level; the next steps need to be watched very carefully to see if something emerges that actually integrates policy-making and the entire policy process to a more participatory process, adhering to standards and norms of governance as elaborated upon in chapter 2 of this study.

Much of this confusion and difficulty in getting citizens to engage with the European institutions is due to the fact that the tasks and goals of the European Commission and its partner institutions are vague and ill-defined, particularly to the general public. Using an approach which starts at the local level, and only uses a loose coordinating role at the European level, we can start to build up understanding of the EU’s role in European, national, and local policy making processes that can be easily and effectively communicated to citizens, in order to avoid, or respond to, some of the accusations that can be found of the Commission. This may well bypass some of the criticisms of past European debates (notably the European Convention on a Constitution for Europe), which was far too abstract for most European citizens. Networks are a highly important element in the contemporary modes of EU governance, and here, the use of ICT can clearly provide a positive, open support to these networks.

This conflation of networks and new, different actors requires that a Communication strategy for the Commission be put in place that can overcome some of the particularities of the Commission's situation as a supranational body that is highly involved in policy making, yet removed from the traditional and well-established national and domestic political arenas. The Commission is also limited in its ability to effectively communicate the EU to citizens due to the lack of a European Public Sphere. Hence, this study advocates utilisation of existing local and regional 'spheres' to build a basis for European dialogue, which will bring relevance 'up' to the European level as and when necessary.

1. Fundamental issues that serve as **preconditions to engaging and empowering active citizens** include:
  - a. the understanding of digital, electronic communication as a feature of the transition from a traditional, industrial, hierarchical, to a modern, information-driven and non-hierarchical (networked) society that makes a very great use of ICT in advanced democratic practices;
  - b. EU communication and democracy seen in the context of a broader process towards a greater understanding of democracy, in other (national, local) governments and other societal domains.
2. **Participation from the citizen level is issue-specific in most cases**, and acknowledgement that this is the case is crucial to the process. This enables and will provide exemplary e-consultation scenarios that can be used as best-practice across the EU. These will be based on actual or imminent policy matters; of relevance to (associations of) citizens and civil society organisations in local areas, and have a concrete possibility for an impact on decision-making, or on the decision-making process. European relevance of the topic will be a key driving factor in the selection of the topic.
3. **Who to involve, and when**, is also a crucial element of any successful engagement strategy, as this needs to take into consideration the multitude of actors described in chapter 5, including:
  - a. Civil society organisations
  - b. Networks and umbrella organisations, and
  - c. Local, regional, national and (eventually) European media

As well as the politicians and civil servants that need to be involved in discussions.

4. Dissemination, and the channels in which information is broadcast to the wider public, needs a high level of consideration, to ensure that the information provides incentive and opportunity for individuals and groups to engage in discourse amongst each other as well as with public bodies. This naturally leads on to a focus on how citizens will use various tools to engage with one another and decision makers.
5. Activity at the European level should not always be considered a prerequisite for discussions that involve a European perspective; in essence, the role of the Committee of the Regions is to ensure the link between local and regional authorities and the larger European institutions, such as the European Parliament and the European Commission. It can also provide support for potential engagement between citizens at a European level, if this is necessary.
6. **Transition to the EU / transnational level** may be carried out using the methodology described above (the Open Method of Communication), which will promote discussion of issues of common interest to the relevant participants in local discussions. This will enable participants to share opinions on the chosen topics with others in different regions. Making more use of the Committee of the Regions, with its ready-made links to local and regional authorities in the European Union, would be a boon for such a transitional process.

#### **8.4. Engaging citizens**

A huge amount of effort has gone into ensuring that governments of all levels provide opportunities for citizens to engage in policy-making. The easiest way to do this is by providing information to citizens; which is the first step in the OECD's democratic value chain.

In 2002 when the European Commission launched their Communication on an Information and Communication Strategy for the European Union (European Commission, 2002a), they were very keen to ensure that Member States would share the responsibility of developing a Europe-wide communication strategy. There is, however, a need for inclusion of local and regional levels in this partnership, as well. This has been recognised by subsequent proposals for the development of a communication strategy for the EU.

As the Country Sheets show, there is a large level of discrepancy in the roles and legal responsibilities from one region/locality to the next. Therefore a large responsibility lies on the shoulders of local government for the way in which participation policies are created.

Local politicians need to be supported in their learning of how to engage with citizens and NGOs. The Committee of the Regions could establish support networks to help 'enable' politicians integrate empowerment strategies into their policy-making processes. These support networks would need to:

- Highlight the importance of the democratic process to local and regional politicians and civil servants, particularly given the constraints mentioned in Part I of this study.
- Remind politicians that they are 'representatives' and need to respect the position they are in and appreciate feedback from the electorate. This personal relationship, which provides a level of openness not possible at the European, or (in most EU Member States) national levels, should be capitalised upon.
- Seek out, enable, and then share instruments, or methods of participation, with colleagues, and in the context of the Committee of the Regions' Committee meetings, where relevant.
- Make effective use of new media channels
- Look for a means to measure impact, assess effectiveness of your policy-making processes.
- Don't try to reinvent the wheel! A lot of the principles on European Governance can be very useful in a local and regional context.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) also have an important role to play in the local and regional policy-making sphere:

- These organisations can and should act as a filter for European and global issues, as has been shown in great detail in the case studies described in Part III of the study.
- Local and regional public authorities should make use of NGOs/CSOs in the entire policy lifecycle, and not just in the lobbying stage, yet ensuring that principles of good governance are adhered to. Examples like that of the Slovenian government's NGO Portal, during its Presidency of the EU (second half of 2008) provide good models to examine further, for potential lessons learned.<sup>110</sup> One of the challenges that face CSOs is that

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<sup>110</sup> <http://www.predsedovanje.si/en/>

of their funding mechanisms; which can be the first priority, rather than participating and engaging with government and decision-makers.

Like individual citizen participation, that from CSOs is very highly specific and normally driven by one individual subject. Hence, without ‘co-opting’ these actors into government, ways should be made of using their passion and expertise to build better policies not only in the locality where they are based.

Finally, with regards to citizens and helping facilitate building democracy from below, local and regional politicians should attempt to:

- Make politics a part of citizens’ lives, by highlighting the relevance to them of political decisions.
- Frame debates in terms that citizens will understand and appreciate.
- Try to help build up political literacy, through encouragement for political activity.
- Start with youth, and make participation fun! Many political activities are based around entertainment and gaming.





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# Annex – Interview protocol

## Mobilising Participation in the ‘European Project’ Draft Interview Protocol

1. Is there an ‘official’ policy for participation in your country/region/locality?
2. What sector or issue is your focus area, if there is one (or many)?
3. Do you have links with
  - a. Policymakers at the European level, or others involved with policy making at the European level?
  - b. Networks/ actors who operate in a European context?
4. What are the opportunities (**instruments**) for interaction with citizens/authorities (local, national...) in your local community / region/country.
  - a. How (widely) is it spread?
  - b. When is it used? At what stage in the policy cycle?
  - c. How do you introduce a European perspective into the debate (if at all)?
5. How are higher levels of government engaged in the resulting outputs?
6. What is the level of community activity in the issue area/locality? Are citizens highly active and willing to interact with politicians/policy makers?
7. Who are the main **actors** related to the instruments?
  - a. What is their role?
  - b. Are these considered to be ‘representative’? Or a consultative sample?
  - c. How are they engaged?
  - d. Does the media play an important role?
8. Has there been any **evaluation** or assessment of interaction between citizens and local authorities?
  - a. How well is the system/instrument/approach working?
  - b. Why do you think it is, or is not working well (what factors do you believe contribute to the success or failure of these?)
  - c. Have you participated in any exchange of best practices?
  - d. What role has the European level played in these evaluations?
9. Does feedback get processed in a systematic and/or transparent way? Is it integrated into policy making, and at which point in the cycle are these (participative) approaches dominant?
10. Are you aware of any *innovative* instruments or approaches contributing to participation or mobilisation of citizens?
  - a. What are the main opportunities to engaging participation through these innovations?
11. Are you aware of any instruments or approaches that have not worked and been discontinued, and what are the main reasons in your opinion for failure?
12. Do you have any documents or other contacts that might be useful for our project?
13. Do you have any other comments?

## Annex – Partial list of interviewees

| Place | Name                        | Organisation   | Type  |
|-------|-----------------------------|--|---|
| RO1   | Sinziana Olteanu            | CeRe - Centrul de Resurse pentru participare publica /The resource center for public participation | Civil society- General  |
| RO2   | Nicoleta Bitu               | Romani CRISS / The Roma center for social intervention and studies                                 | civil society- Roma representation and minorities                   |
| RO3   | Irina Sile                  | Fundatia Corona / corona foundation  | civil society- participation, environment, education                |
| RO4   | Dan Stoica                  | Environmental Protection Agency in Iasi  | public authority, environment                                       |
| RO5   | Ninel Berneaga              | City Hall  | Public authority, communication                                     |
| RO6   | Bogdan Chelariu             | Food not bombs and Critical mass   | grass root NGO-Social Integration /homeless                         |
| RO7   | Anca Gheorghica             | Maibine /Better  | civil society - Environment   |
| HU1   | Szilvia Lakatos             | Khetanipe Romano Centro  | Civil society - Roma minorities                                     |
| HU2   | Nemoda István               | Prime Minister's Office,   | National public authority, Societal partnership coordination office |
| HU3   | Jácint Horcath              | West-Pannon Regional Development Agency  | public authority  |
| HU4   | Mrs.Uhrin                   | City of Békéscsaba   | public authority  |
| HU5   | Gergő Csaba BÍRÓ            | Fenntartható Fejlődés és Erőforrások Kutatócsoport   | Research institute - environment                                    |
| HU6   | Ákos ÉGER                   | National Council for Sustainable Development   | public authority, environment                                       |
| HU7   | Gyöngyvér GYENE             | National Development Agency  | public authority  |
| HU8   | András CSANÁDY              | Ministry for Environment and Water   | public authority, environment                                       |
| HU9   | Csaba JAKAB                 | Central Transdanubian Regional Development Agency  | public authority  |
| HU10  | Ignác TÓTH                  | Újtelek, Mayor's Office  | public authority  |
| BE1   | Cedric van de Walle         | Ministry of Climate and energy   | Federal public authority  |
| BE2   | Anne-France Rihoux          | Ministry of Climate and energy   | Federal public authority  |
| BE3   | Regine Kramer               | Assembly of European Regions AER   | Network organisation  |
| BE4   | David Heller                | Friends of Earth Flanders and Brussels   | civil society - Environment   |
| BE5   | Peteris Zilgalvis           | European Commission, DG Research   | Public authority  |
| AT1   | Christoph Westhauser        | Regional government of Lower Austria   | Public authority  |
| AT2   | Franz Gausterer             | Association of Village and City Renewal  |   |
| AT3   | Mag. Michael Praschl        | Communication Research and Consulting  |   |
| AT4   | Bernhard Haas               | Regional government of Lower Austria   |   |
| AT5   | Mag. Andrea Binder-Zehetner | LA 21 Vienna Agency  |   |
| AT6   | Doris Berghammer            | LA 21 Local District Office Josefstadt   |   |
| AT7   | Heinz Tschürtz              | representative of Agenda citizen group   |   |
| AT8   | DI Otto Frey                | Urban Planning Group, Municipality of Vienna   |   |
| UK1   | Philip Higgins              | Acting Corporate Consultation Manager  | Public authority  |



|            |                       |                         |                  |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| <b>DK1</b> | Claus Øster-Jørgensen | Combiramt               | Civil Society    |
| <b>DK2</b> | Sami Saidana          | Bazaar Vest             | Public authority |
| <b>DK3</b> | Birger Munch          | Danish Road Directorate | Public Authority |