



Circular Cities & Regions Initiative

Knowledge Hub

The Power of Citizen Participation

Empowering citizens to create a sustainable future



Funded by
the European Union



I have just moved to the area and I found valuable information about the recycling possibilities from the internet.

We organized a campaign against fast fashion and production of poor quality clothing.

I was voting in our local participatory budgeting. We got a container, where we can borrow household things like power washer.

I was answering to a questionnaire as city wanted to know where to have parking spaces for car pools.

The city awarded us a grant so that we can develop a mobile application that helps citizens to share services and goods.



Citizen participation

Promotes democratic values and principles.

Harnesses the collective intelligence and leads to more effective, innovative and equitable policies, services and practices.

Creates a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens, which can lead to a more engaged and active citizenry.



Opportunities for participation

5 types of citizen participation

I have just moved to the area and I found valuable information about the recycling possibilities from the internet.

Information Participation

involves the sharing of information between government officials and citizens. Methods: Public meetings, online forums, websites, **marketing campaigns** or other means of communication.

Decision making participation

Participation in decision-making is realized when the citizens can participate in the decision-making and planning for example services, residential area or policy making.

Methods: **Participatory budgeting**, voting, citizen assemblies

I was answering to a questionnaire about parking spaces for car pools.



Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a democratic process that allows citizens to directly participate in decision-making on public spending.

The goal is to increase transparency, accountability, and civic engagement. Participatory budgeting helps to ensure that public funds are allocated in a way that is fair and equitable, reflecting the needs and priorities of the community.

Participation increased my interest in influencing the city's decision making. Now I have better understanding of the city's operations and costs.



OmaStadi marketing

- Social media (FaceBook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok) Directed to certain areas or age and language groups
- Posters to city service points
- Posters for digital screens
- Flyers
- Self-supplemented marketing material for the use of the citizens
- Voting catalog in paper
- Induction material
- Articles for local newspapers
- Outdoor advertising (bus stops, metro stations, trams, shopping malls)
- OmaStadi exhibitions
- Co-operation with social media influencers
- Instructions for voting: Video and screenshot instructions
- The information was delivered in 7 languages: Finnish, Swedish, English, Arabic, Somali, Estonian and Russian



We started a Repair Cafe in our neighbourhood and it has been a great success!

I was attending a workshop, where we were evaluating how well the city's plan for circular economy has succeeded



Planning Participation

involves citizens providing input into the planning and development of projects.

Methods: design workshops, **dialogues**, community meetings, design jams, participatory budgeting, citizen juries, online surveys, crowdsourcing

Initiative Participation

involves citizens taking the initiative to propose and implement projects themselves. It refers to the individual's opportunity to act in their own living environment, in the services they use and in social relationships.

Methods: crowdfunding, volunteering, grants, or other forms of **community action**.

Evaluation participation

Hearing citizens when evaluating the city's activities results in participation in the evaluation.

Methods: workshops, surveys, research projects

Timeout dialogue

- Dialogue provides a deeper understanding of the topic in question and of different perspectives.
- It generates unpredictable insights and new thinking.
- The goal is not unanimity.
- Dialogue breeds a feeling of inclusion between the participants and in societal inclusion in general.

www.timeoutdialogue.fi



Already more than 400 organizations have adopted Timeout in Finland. More than 100,000 people around Finland and abroad have taken part in different Timeout dialogues.

CLEANING DAY



Cleaning Day is a day, which changes cities and neighborhoods into huge flea markets and marketplaces.

The idea of Cleaning Day is to make recycling easy and create vivid and responsible urban culture.

Anyone can offer their secondhand items up for sale on the streets, yards and at home.

Cleaning Day does not have an official organizer, all participants are organizers of their own events. Everyone is responsible for cleaning up after themselves.

Role of Citizens in participation

- **Providing Feedback**
 - Citizens can provide feedback by attending public meetings, submitting comments, or participating in online forums. This feedback can help policymakers, experts and politicians make more informed decisions that better reflect the needs of the community.
- **Sharing Expertise**
 - Citizens can share their expertise on specific issues or policy areas by serving on advisory boards, commissions, or task forces. This can help gain a deeper understanding of complex issues and make better-informed decisions.
- **Advocating for Needs**
 - Citizens can advocate for their needs and priorities by communicating with policymakers, joining advocacy groups, or participating in rallies and protests. This can help ensure that policies better reflect the needs and interests of the community.



Collective intelligence is created when people work together, often with the help of technology, to mobilise a wider range of information, ideas and insights to address a social challenge.



Benefits of the participation

Enhanced Resource Efficiency

Citizen participation is crucial for enhancing resource efficiency, reducing waste and promoting sustainable practices. It helps cities and regions achieve their sustainability goals and reduce their environmental footprint.

Increased community engagement

Citizen participation can increase community engagement and promote a sense of ownership and pride in the community's sustainability efforts. This can lead to greater support for sustainability initiatives and more effective implementation of the circular economy.

Promoted Sustainable Practices

Promotion of sustainable practices like recycling, composting, and energy conservation benefits the environment by reducing waste and conserving natural resources. It also benefits the economy by creating jobs, reducing costs, and improving public health.



Increased Transparency

Citizen participation increases transparency in government decisions and processes. It allows residents to be informed about important issues and provides opportunities for them to provide input and feedback.

Enhanced Accountability

Citizen participation enhances accountability by ensuring that government officials are responsive to the needs and concerns of residents. It allows residents to hold officials accountable for their actions and decisions.

Promoting Inclusivity

Citizen participation promotes inclusivity by ensuring that all residents have an equal voice in shaping the future of their community. It allows for diverse perspectives and experiences to be taken into consideration when making decisions.

Increased Public Trust and Confidence

Citizen participation increases public trust and confidence in government by giving residents a greater sense of ownership and control over the decisions that affect their lives. This leads to more effective decision-making and better outcomes for all.



The challenges and obstacles of participation

Lack of Trust in Government

Many urban residents do not participate in civic activities due to a lack of trust in government. This may stem from a history of broken promises or a perception that government officials are corrupt or unresponsive.

Discouragement from Past Experiences

Urban residents who have had negative experiences with civic activities in the past may be discouraged from participating in the future. This could be due to factors such as a lack of meaningful outcomes or feeling unheard.

Power Dynamics

Power dynamics between the city and its urban residents can create barriers to involvement, making it difficult for residents to feel heard and valued.

Lack of Information and limited resources

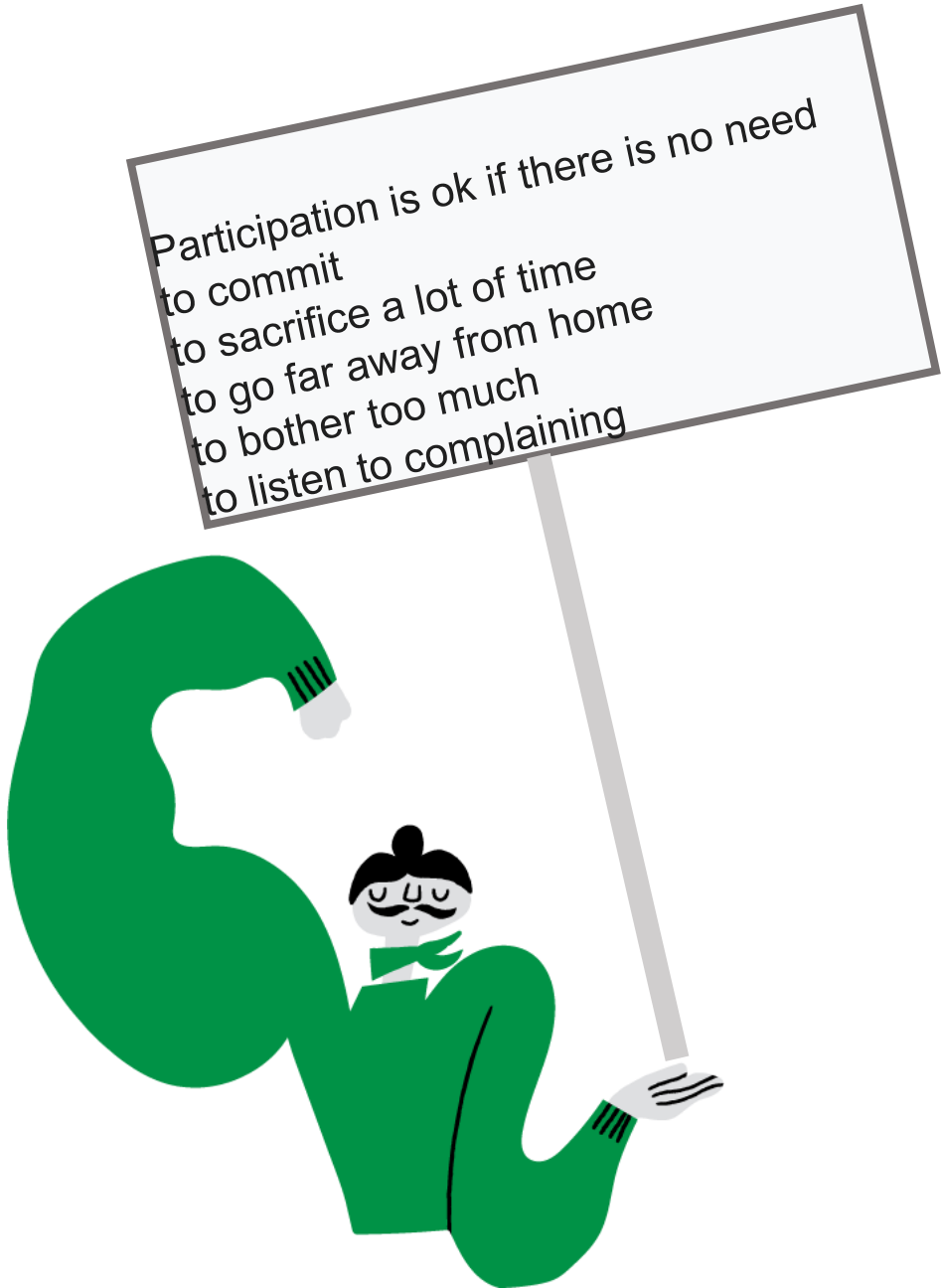
Urban residents often face challenges when it comes to accessing information about civic activities, which can limit their ability to participate in those activities. Many citizens face financial limitations that prevent them from fully participating in civic activities, such as lack of transportation and the inability to take time off work.

Lack of knowledge or understanding

Participation can be a complex process and individuals with low language skills or a mild cognitive disability or reading difficulty can have difficulties to participate.



Planning the participatory process



Some basic guidelines

- Define the goal and communicate it clearly
- Define and communicate the boundary conditions for participation
- Promote equality
- Apply methods to suit different situations
- Show gratitude: Note that by participating, the resident is giving his precious time to promote the common good.

Develop a clear plan and process



1

Think twice: don't engage for engagement's sake



2

Be honest: what's involved and what are you going to do with the input?



3

Digital isn't the only answer: traditional outreach and engagement still matter

Get the necessary support in place



4

Don't waste time: get support from decision-makers before you invest too much



5

Don't cut corners: digital democracy is not a quick or cheap fix

Choose the right tools



6

It's not about you: choose tools designed for the users you want, and try to design out destructive participation

Let people know what you are doing: it's all about inclusive marketing



Complexity requires good leadership: Plan carefully an effective way to manage and lead the process.

Get organized: Find right tools to manage the data and to support the process.

Other cities

Experts

Divisions and services

Communities and organisations

Researchers

OmaStadi

Politicians

Citizens

Companies

Networks

Helsinki



Participation profiles

ACTING

PASSER-BY

Activated from time to time by matters close to them, such as improving their everyday life and building their identity. Hopes the city will offer visible and varying openings or campaigns to revitalise their everyday life.

SELF-CONFIDENT

Persevering and competent, promoting their own cause. Hopes the city will offer resources, cooperation, and appreciative interaction. Can have a positive or critical view of the city.

RANDOM

COMMITTED

SNOOZER

Comfortable in their own circles, not interested in more extensive participation with the city. Experiences official-looking channels as distant and slow, hopes the city will offer informal and low-threshold means of participation instead.

ORDINARY MEMBER

A satisfied long-term participant who experiences togetherness through seemingly small things. Hopes the city will offer support for the continuity of operations important to them, not so much new projects and fixed interaction.

EXPERIENCING

Equal possibilities to participate



Equal participation requires:

- Clear and accessible information
- Barrier-free physical operating environment
- Inclusive community and attitude
- Mutual respect and trust
- Non-discrimination and a safe space
- Encouraging atmosphere and encouragement
- Own motivation and interest
- Easy-to-use products and services
- Functional aids and devices
- Adequate access to help

Equal OmaStadi

REGIONAL
ALLOCATION OF
RESOURCES

SUPPORT AND
PROMOTION OF
EQUALITY IN CITY
SERVICES

VOLUNTEERS

COOPERATION AND
PARTNERSHIPS WITH
NGOS AND
COMMUNITIES

OTHER COOPERATION

EQUAL

ACCESSIBLE

ACHIVABLE

ACCESSIBLE AND EASY TO USE
NETSITE

EQUAL AND
ACHIEVABLE
COMMUNICATION

EQUAL AND ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

Equal OmaStadi

Digital isn't
the only
answer

- Cooperation with immigrant organizations
- Collaboration with the city's various services, for example libraries, schools, daycare centers, playgrounds, substance abuse and mental health care, youth services
- Young people vote at the same time in OmaStadi and the young people's own participatory budget
- Young people can vote with the special user codes at schools
- Those who can not electronically identify themselves have the opportunity to vote by showing their ID card in certain premises around the city
- Multilingual marketing material

Participatory budgeting game

- ✓ helps citizens to co-create city development ideas through gamified approach.
- ✓ makes participatory budgeting more approachable and understandable for citizens
- ✓ enables a more democratic citizen involvement.

Helsinki



Thank you!

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**Circular
Cities & Regions
Initiative**

Knowledge Hub



Funded by
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