

WORKING TOGETHER – DECIDING TOGETHER

VINNYTZIA

19 NOV. 2014



Purpose of seminar:

To present, and have conversations about, challenges and best international and domestic practices of public participation in local decision-making.

To explore priority spheres of collaboration between public and civic sectors and of participation mechanisms that meet such needs.

To prioritise the relevant mechanisms and to create a first draft of how these platforms could be established and moved forward

Civil participation in decision-making at the local level; what needs to be done?

On 19. November 30 representatives from local government, NGOs and media met at the Press Club of Vinnytzia to explore how civil society could get more influence in decision-making on a local level

During the first part of the seminar representatives from local government and the UCIPR gave input on the framework that the present legislation offers and a perspective on present local practices.

This was followed by a presentation by Anna-Karin Berglund; “the Code of Good practice” giving an international perspective on the topic.

The afternoon was dedicated to conversations around two main questions:

“What are the priority areas where we see a need for public participation and influence?”

“Through what mechanisms can we achieve influence of the chosen priority issues?”

The November meeting will be followed up in December where the suggested ways forward will be further concretised.

The following is a short summary of the days events.

Welcome

Anastasia Krasnosilka Dashkevych , UCIPR, welcomed everyone and acknowledged that reforms were needed. *“We know how to do things better and we have protested enough so it is time to, together, find some mechanisms of participation, that will allow for more influence and better results.”*

Deputy of the City Council, Sergiy Kydlayenko acknowledged that since 2009 the Council of Vinnytzia has developed participation. Vinnytzia has in fact been given an award in Crimea for transparency in the administration and the way services are provided to its citizens. Sergiy also encouraged NGOs to take an active part in developing the future practice.

“THE NGOS WHO TO WANT CHANGE THINGS ARE HOPEFULLY HERE. - IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE THINGS YOU HAVE TO BE AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE!”

SERGIY KYDLAYENKO



Andriy Myslynskiy Vinnitsia City Administration

Andriy mentioned that cooperation between local government and civil society has until recently mostly followed formal ways i.e. councils, formal tenders etc. and they have mostly been initiated by the state or local government.

Even though Vinnytsia aspires to develop democracy there has only been one territorial meeting initiated by the public. Basically there are not many initiatives taken by citizens even though there are forms of direct democracy that have regulated how citizens can participate in local democracy.

Developing guidelines and practices is an on-going process and there is a need to revise and update the processes

Finally Andriy said that it is important to develop direct co-operation with NGOs operating in the city. Recent practices are positive but need to improve. NGOs need to take progressive initiatives and be in direct contact with the local authorities. *"We ask NGOs to get actively involved. We can initiate anything but without your (NGO) contribution the City Council can suggest things but there will be no real implementation without co-operation".*



Andriy Myslynskiy

"Citizens can do anything that is not against the law.

Authorities can do anything stipulated by the law."

Sergiy Pinchyk



THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND THE LOCAL PRACTICE

Sergiy Pinchyk reviewed the present legislation and mechanisms that create the legal framework. Article 5 says that the source of power is with the people and article 19 says that no one can do anything counter to the existing legislation.

Within the legal framework there are different ways to influence e.g. local referendums, public assemblies etc.

In spite of the relative freedom and possibility for self-organisation there has only been one Assembly in Vinnytsia in recent years.

Procedures need to be developed to create easier access and citizens need to be informed about their possibilities and the existing procedures.

Sergiy further pointed out that even if the law supports participation, the procedures or "technicalities" sometimes make things unnecessarily complicated or less effective. E.g. public hearings should be done in the initial phases where there is still room for influence not when everything is already decided, or having to collect a huge number of signatures when you just want to raise an issue that is restricted to a local area, does not work

New forms of interaction should be found within the existing legal framework.

Ivan Lukerya pointed out that there are many different ways to be in contact with public authorities and address the city council e.g. write a letter, meet the Major, use an "internet window", work with media to convey ideas, contact MPs or use your contacts and network etc. However, when the public believes that a problem cannot be solved, the result can also be apathy.

"Active communities result in active authorities - It might seem that the public does not know the tools or is reluctant to use them."

During a vivid question and answer session Ivan gave several examples of how local procedures are unnecessarily complicated as well as examples of how citizen initiatives can change them.

The conclusion was that citizens often do not use the available mechanisms, especially if they are too complicated with the risk of people finding it easier to demonstrate than to use existing "mechanisms" of influence.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING ON A LOCAL LEVEL.

An introduction to the “Code of conduct” by Anna-Karin Berglund from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities

The Code was initiated in 2007 by the “Forum for Future Democracy”. The initial work was done by NGOs of Europe, who are the authors of the Code. It has then been adopted by the European Council, regional and local authorities in member states and NGOs.

The inspiration for the code was that citizens often did neither understand nor trust the political process.

NGOs should take part in policy making. The code gives indications how to manage the process while it

also allows for experimentation.

There are **different levels of participation** starting with *information (the lowest level of participation) to consultation, to dialogue and finally partnership or co-creation (the highest level of participation).*

Anna-Karin then explained **the cycle of political decision making** starting with *agenda setting, then drafting, decision making, implementation, monitoring and reformulation.*

Combining these two parameters offers a matrix, which can be used as a tool for analysis.

Anna-Karin then talked about international trends and experiences e.g. the struggle between increasing welfare demands in a tight economic climate.

Another trend is to involve users as co-creators e.g. in involving patients in improving health care services. *“Users are experts of experience-based knowledge.”*



Anna-Karin Berglund presented the Code

FROM INFORMATION TO CO-CREATION.

After the input in the morning Toke Paludan Paludan Møller and Monica Nissen from InterChange, Denmark facilitated a conversation on priority areas and the mechanisms needed to secure influence in these areas.

Toke emphasized that so far we have been talking about collaboration but not actually doing it. So the invitation for the afternoon was to engage in real conversation and collaboration to find the best solutions.

He also invited everyone to participate as equals “after all we are all citizens”

Lastly Toke reminded that listening to understand each other is a foundation for real conversation and collaboration.

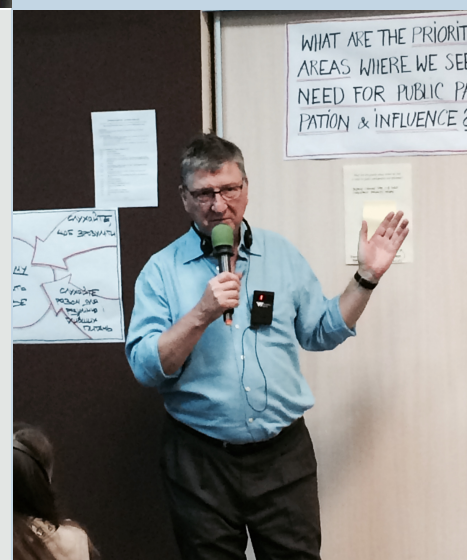
Toke Møller hosted the conversations



“We need to move away from the view of citizens as passive consumers of welfare to one where citizens are co-creators.”

Sweden has an agreement between local, regional and national levels of government and citizens. NGOs need to be more self-reliant and be a voice that can give citizens a voice. Civil society possesses a wealth of ideas. The future is calling for more co-creation, co-production and partnerships.

Lastly Anna-Karin mentioned several Swedish examples of promising practice. These examples demonstrated a special participatory attitude and practice of how to work with stakeholders on complex issues using concrete structured methods of collaboration..



CO-DEFINING PRIORITY AREAS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

The first conversation was about:

What are the priority areas where we see a need for public participation and influence?

The priority areas were identified in small group conversations and they were then prioritised by level of impact using a simple voting process. The result of the prioritisation was:

1. Development of NGO	30 votes
2. Creation of co-operation platform	13 votes
3. Transparency	12 votes
4. Budget	12 votes
5. Education	8 votes
6. Policy documents (influence on)	1 vote
7. Influence on prices / pricing	1 vote

COLLABORATING TO DEFINE MECHANISMS TO ACHIEVE INFLUENCE ON THE CHOSEN PRIORITY AREAS

Groups were then formed around the five highest prioritised areas to further work on the topic. Everyone could choose the group of their preference. Each group looked at how the chosen area could be moved forward by answering the question:

“Through what mechanisms can we achieve influence of the chosen priority issue?”

At the end the groups shared their key insights, recommended actions, next steps and who were willing to move the chosen topic or issue forward

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Anna-Karin thanked everyone and offered a reflection that during the day we had actually moved through all stages from information to consultation to dialogue and partnership.

Anastasia concluded that the desired outcome of the seminar was to have specific proposals of mechanisms of influence and at least three of the ideas could be moved forward. She suggested to do some “homework” on the proposals so that the next meeting, planned for December, could be dedicated to discussing and refining draft solutions. “Let’s be ambitious!”



UCIPR offered support if any of the workgroups needed advice.

The follow-up meeting in Vinnytzia will be on 10 December 2014