



World Forum for Democracy

Participatory Democracy Incubator

Index Report – August 2016

Lublin, Poland

Background

Lublin has a population of about 340.000 and is the ninth largest city in Poland. It is situated approximately 170 km southeast of Warsaw.

Participatory city definition

The optimal strategy for participatory democracy on a city level would involve a demonstrated commitment to public participation. When public officials and other leaders make strong, clear claims about the value of participation, they can help inspire citizens to get involved. Cities with a coherent regulatory and policy framework for participation are more likely to succeed.

Boards and commissions can be a powerful tool for public participation, especially if the members of these bodies believe that bringing other citizens to the table – not just representing their voices – is a key part of their role. When communities support regular, interactive, and meaningful participation on a broad range of issues, they are better able to meet the diverse needs and goals of citizens.

There are many different methods, tools, apps, and meeting formats for public participation. Because different tactics fit different goals and scenarios, and because citizens have diverse needs and goals, cities are more likely to succeed if they employ a wide variety of methods. While efforts to increase transparency and open government may not be sufficient to increase public participation, they are essential complements to participation initiatives. Transparency can increase government accountability, decrease corruption, and enable citizen problem-solving efforts by giving civic technologists access to government data.

Public participation is more likely to improve over time if it is being evaluated in regular, transparent, and interactive ways. If citizens themselves are involved in measuring and assessing engagement initiatives and structures, they will have a greater stake in the success of those efforts, and more ways to ensure that participation is equitable, accountable, and productive.

Methodology

The Participatory City Index analysis is based on a questionnaire involving 69 questions grouped in ten indicators. Including a set of sub-questions for some of the 69 questions, the cities can gain a maximum of 164 points. The points are converted into a percentage measure to ensure the comparability of results. The ten indicators include commitment, regulatory and policy framework, advisory boards and commissions, civic associations, range of issues, range of tactics, grassroots problem-solving, young people, transparency, and monitoring and evaluation. The index serves as a tool of self-assessment for the cities to critically evaluate and improve their structures for citizen participation.

Results

1. Commitment

The optimal strategy for participatory democracy on a city level would involve a demonstrated commitment to public participation. Citizens are often doubtful about their ability to help solve public problems, and skeptical about the willingness of public officials to respond to their concerns. When public officials and other leaders make strong, clear claims about the value of participation, they can help inspire citizens to get involved.

Lublin's rate for commitment is with 90% significantly higher than the average rate of the city sample (43%). It is highly commendable that the city of Lublin, in order to systematize its participation strategy, has developed a participation plan, an official long-term strategy guiding the participation efforts of different departments in a coordinated manner. Council meetings in Lublin are open to the public and the city has established a participation commission (an official body, broadly representative of the city's population, which is charged with overseeing public participation). The city issues a regular bulletin that informs citizens about what city government is doing and how they can participate. Moreover, the city maintains active social media accounts. There are opportunities for citizens to give input on how participation should be structured and supported and to vote for particular policy options. An award programme supports citizen engagement, recognizing citizens, public officials, or other leaders for their efforts to support public participation. In order to demonstrate its commitment to citizen participation, the city has adopted a public statement declaring the importance of public engagement. It has also facilitated collaboration with non-governmental organizations to support participation.

For a better overview of its vast commitment to citizen participation, the city might consider producing an annual report on the state of public participation.

Recommendations

- ✓ Produce an annual report on the state of public participation.

2. Regulatory and policy framework

In many places, the regulations governing public participation are outdated and unclear. In other places, public officials and staff do not have the participation skills and resources they need. Cities with a coherent regulatory and policy framework for participation are more likely to succeed.

The city of Lublin has concrete regulations and policies that govern public participation. These regulations are reviewed on a regular basis. Public officials, staff, and citizens understand how the laws governing public participation are being interpreted and applied. The city has allocated a budget of 0.5% of the annual city budget for citizen participation activities and employs 1.3% of the total city workforce to support public participation activities. It provides training opportunities for public officials and city staff who want to learn more about how to support effective participation. With a rate of 66%, Lublin's results in light of its regulatory and policy framework are higher than the average of the city sample which is 40%.

In order to foster its engagement, the city could issue a document – a policy, protocol, or set of procedures – that helps public officials, staff, and citizens understand when and why to use specific participation approaches and how a specific approach will affect policy decisions. It could also integrate the support of public participation as a category in the job expectations of people serving in management-level positions for the city.

Recommendations

- ✓ Publish a document – a policy, protocol, or set of procedures – that helps public officials, staff, and citizens understand when and why to use specific participation approaches.
- ✓ Include facilitating, encouraging, or supporting public participation as a category in the job expectations of people serving in management-level positions for the city.

3. Advisory boards and commissions

Boards and commissions can be a powerful tool for public participation, especially if the members of these bodies believe that bringing other citizens to the table – not just representing their voices – is a key part of their role.

Lublin's indicators in the field of citizen advisory boards and commissions are with 67% higher than average of the city sample (50%). The city of Lublin has 21 advisory boards and commissions for citizens. The members of boards and commissions are either appointed by public officials or chosen by lot. It is positive that they are broadly representative of the larger population, in terms of age, race/ethnicity, income level, and immigrant/native-born. Public officials are obliged to give information to boards and commissions, and consider their recommendations. The meetings of boards and commissions are mostly structured and facilitated in ways that encourage productive dialogue, deliberation, and participation, although this is not always the case. The city could strengthen its efforts in this area by hiring trained facilitators for the meetings.

Moreover, the members of boards and commissions should be encouraged to regularly lead public participation efforts that bring other citizens to the table. To inform more people about its activities, the boards and commissions could use online tools to interactively engage the public.

Recommendations

- ✓ Make sure that boards and commissions regularly use online tools to interactively engage the public.
- ✓ Hire trained facilitators for the meetings of the boards and commissions to ensure a high quality of deliberations.
- ✓ Encourage members of the boards and commissions to lead public participation efforts that bring other citizens to the table.

Best Practice¹

[Fernald Citizen Advisory Board, Ohio, USA](#)

To advise the Department of Energy facility in Fernald, Ohio, on environmental issues, the Fernald Citizens Advisory Board (FCAB) was created in 1993. FCAB was established in order to provide policy and technical advice regarding important environmental clean-up decisions to the regulated and regulating agencies. In 1995 it was deemed that over 3 million cubic yards of waste and contaminated material would need to be removed from the site.

FCAB recommendations and advice provided the DOE with an understanding of the issues and concerns that were important to local stakeholders and ensured that these perspectives were incorporated into planning and decision making on the Fernald Environmental Management Project (FEMP) site.

The Board was to not only include the easily identifiable affected parties, but also individual residents who live in the vicinity of the site. It was to be small in size, involving less than 20 people, to have a clear mission, to include governmental officials as nonvoting members, to reflect the variety of views in the surrounding community and to attempt to reach consensus. Administrative and technical support was to be provided by the government. FCAB was active until September 2006, at which point the clean-up was completed.

More information available at: <http://www.participedia.net/en/cases/ferald-citizens-advisory-board-ferald-ohio-usa>.

¹All Best Practice examples in this report are available at www.participationcompass.org or www.participedia.net.

4. Civic associations

Many cities have civic associations, operating in neighbourhoods, schools, and other settings, which help to engage people in public life. These associations are better able to contribute to public participation when they are inclusive, broadly supported, and well-connected to government.

Lublin scores 61% in the field of civic association and is thus above average (51%). It is positive that there are there active *neighborhood* associations in the majority of all neighborhoods and that there is an active online network in most of Lublin's neighborhoods, as well as a network that gives neighborhood groups an official role in public decisions. Moreover, Lublin has tasked city employees with maintaining communication between neighborhood groups and local government. As a result, neighborhood meetings, events, and online forums attract large, diverse numbers of people in Lublin.

However, the city has not put a system in place to track who participates in neighborhood groups. To further improve neighborhood engagement, the city could offer training programs or other support that help build the engagement capacity of neighborhood groups. The meetings of neighborhood groups should be structured and facilitated in ways that encourage productive dialogue, deliberation, and participation and the leadership of neighborhood groups should be broadly representative of the neighborhood, in terms of age, race/ethnicity, income level, and immigrant/native-born.

Also in the majority of Lublin's *schools*, there are active parent groups and online networks. The meetings of parent groups are structured and facilitated in ways that encourage productive dialogue, deliberation, and participation. The city employs staff to maintain communication between the local government and the schools.

Despite these efforts, school meetings, events, and online forums do not always attract large, diverse numbers of people and the leadership of most parent groups is not broadly representative of the school population, in terms of age, race/ethnicity, income level, and immigrant/native-born. In order to further improve its results, the city could track who participates in school meetings and provide training programs that help build the engagement capacity of parent groups.

It is positive to note that community organizing or issue advocacy groups, faith communities, and other social groups in the city help engage large numbers of people in public decision-making and problem-solving. Moreover, there are regular social events that help include large numbers of people in public decision-making and problem-solving. Most neighborhoods have buildings – such as community centers, schools, or churches – that are welcoming, widely used spaces for public participation events and activities.

Recommendations

- ✓ Meetings of neighborhood groups should be structured and facilitated in ways that encourage productive dialogue, deliberation, and participation.
- ✓ Install a system of tracking who participated in neighborhood and parents groups.

- ✓ Support training programs or other supports that help build the engagement capacity of neighborhood and parent groups.
- ✓ Make sure that the leadership of most parent and neighborhood groups is broadly representative of the population, in terms of age, race/ethnicity, income level, and immigrant/native-born.

Best Practice

Trade School

Teachers propose classes and ask for barter items from students. For example, if you teach a class about making butter, you might ask students to bring heavy cream, jars, bread, music tips, clothes, vegetables, or help with something like finding an apartment. Students sign up for classes by agreeing to bring a barter item for the teacher. Trade School is for people who value hands-on knowledge, mutual respect, and the social nature of exchange.

→ [Trade School Glasgow](#)

5. Range of issues

Most cities face a range of challenges and opportunities that affect citizens and that deserve productive public participation. When communities support regular, interactive, and meaningful participation on a broad range of issues, they are better able to meet the diverse needs and goals of citizens.

In the city of Lublin, there are participation opportunities for citizens in a range of policy fields, including planning and land use, budgeting, transportation, as well as racism and cultural difference. In these exercises, the people who participate are broadly representative of the larger population and the participation is interactive. Before the meetings, participants receive the necessary information for an informed debate. On this basis, the participants discuss why the respective issue matters to them and consider different policy choices. It is important that the participation activities have a clear impact on policymaking and enable people to take action in a variety of ways. Sometimes, but not always, citizens think of these participation opportunities as enjoyable. Therefore, the city could think of ways to make the meetings more “fun” for the citizens. Nevertheless, it is positive that the existing opportunities for participation usually attract large numbers of citizens (usually more than 5% of the overall population).

Lublin has an average index score of 34% concerning its range of issues. In order to improve its result, the city could expand opportunities for citizen participation to additional policy areas, such as public health, education and public safety. Moreover, the citizen’s meetings could be more frequent, i.e. the citizens should have at least once a month the opportunity to participate.

Recommendations

- ✓ Organize citizen meetings and deliberations more frequently and give citizens the opportunity to participate at least once a month.
- ✓ Provide participation opportunities in additional policy areas, such as public health, education, and policing and public safety.

Best Practice

21st Century Town Meetings

21st Century Town Meetings bring together between 500 and 5,000 people, to discuss local, regional or national issues. By using technology, this method combines the benefits of small scale face-to-face discussions with those of large group decision making.

This method uses technology to overcome the common tradeoff between the quality of discussion and the size of the group. The participants are split up into groups of 10-12 people, where they have facilitated small-group discussions. Each facilitator uses a networked computer to instantly collate ideas and votes from the table. This information is sent to a central point where a team summarises comments from all tables into themes that can be presented back to the room for comment or votes. Each participant also has a keypad which allows them to vote individually on themes or questions. The results of these votes are presented in real time on large screens for instant feedback from participants. The computers and voting pads generate volumes of useful demographically-sortable data. This information is often quickly edited into a report which is printed and given to participants, decision-makers and journalists at the end of the event.

The whole process can either take place within one room, or groups can gather in many locations around the country or the world. Often, the participants are selected to be demographically representative of the whole population.

The interchange between the small- and large-scale dialogues is powerful as it allows participants to discuss the issues in a small manageable setting, whilst maintaining the legitimacy of a process involving large numbers of people. The immediacy of the vote also creates transparency during the meeting

→ [Landscape Town Meeting \(Tuscany, Italy\)](#)

6. Range of tactics

There are many different methods, tools, apps, and meeting formats for public participation. Because different tactics fit different goals and scenarios, and because citizens have diverse needs and goals, cities are more likely to succeed if they employ a wide variety of methods.

The city of Lublin has experimented with a broad range of different tactics to involve citizens in policy-making and has therefore scored high in this category (86%). With social media aggregation tools, the

city sifts through social media networks to find common words and strings of words in order to get a better picture of the citizens' needs. Through online and offline surveys and polls, the city has collected the citizens' opinions on different subjects. The city also uses keypad polling for this purpose, a type of polling, using handheld polling devices or smartphones, which is typically conducted as part of a face-to-face meeting. Facilitated, face-to-face small-group discussions are being used to delve more deeply into people's views and perspectives, as well as the values, needs, and concerns that lie behind people's beliefs.

Via crowdsourcing on online platforms and through face-to-face exercises the city allows people to suggest ideas and then rank, refine, and comment on the ideas generated by the crowd. Crowdfunding is used to enable people to ask for or donate money, and small-grant programs run by institutions to support volunteer projects. Moreover, the city has put in place Wiki-Based Mapping and Writing Platforms (online technologies that incorporate individual contributions into a central map, database, or document), as well as Online Networks to encourage communication and collaboration within groups.

Collaborative Planning Processes bring people together to make design or architectural decisions. Besides, the city of Lublin organizes Participatory Budgeting activities through which large, diverse numbers of people deliberate, plan, and vote on how to spend a pool of public money. In such Public Deliberation exercises, citizens, public officials, public employees, and other stakeholders interact in small-group sessions where they share experiences, consider a range of policy options, and decide together what should be done.

Recommendations

The city of Lublin may wish to complement its diverse range of tactics with the following tools or methods to include even more citizens in local decision-making:

- ✓ Online problem reporting platform that allows people to enter data about particular problems and conditions, such as potholes, graffiti, and environmental hazards.
- ✓ Serious Games: Online or face-to-face exercises that give citizens a chance to test their knowledge, strengthen their relationships, or come up with their own solutions to public problems.

Best Practice

[SeeClickFix](#)

SeeClickFix is a communications platform for citizens to report non-emergency issues, and governments to track, manage, and reply--ultimately making communities better through transparency, collaboration, and cooperation.

7. Grassroots problem-solving

Citizens have more ways to contribute to public problem-solving than ever before. Productive public participation strategies encourage and support citizens to take action in a variety of ways. In their public

statements about the value of participation, public officials and staff should therefore support the idea that citizens can help contribute to solving public problems.

Lublin's scores are with 44% relatively high in this policy field, but could still be improved. The existing participation opportunities in Lublin are organized in a way that allows citizens to discuss and plan ways they can take action. In their public statements about the value of participation, public officials and staff support the idea that citizens can help contribute to solving public problems. The city also has a small-grant programme to support the implementation of action ideas. Lastly, it is commendable that there is an awards programme (every two years) which recognizes citizens for their efforts to solve public problems.

In addition to these efforts, the city could support an annual citizens' academy or some other training program for citizens and invite young people to contribute a certain number of volunteer hours before graduation.

Recommendations

- ✓ Support an annual citizens' academy or some other training program for citizens.
- ✓ Invite young people to contribute a certain number of volunteer hours before graduation.

8. Young people

As the adult citizens of the future, young people need experiences and education that prepare them for their future roles. But young people can also be dynamic leaders in the present. Productive participation strategies tap into the present and future civic capacity of young people.

It is highly commendable that Lublin undertakes extensive efforts to include young people in political decision-making. The city's score in this area is 100%. Within the school system, young people have meaningful opportunities to address key issues facing students and the schools. Also outside the school system, there are there meaningful opportunities for young people to take part in public decision-making and problem-solving, such as a youth council. The people who take part in the youth council are broadly representative of the larger youth population, in terms of age, race/ethnicity, income level, and immigrant/native-born. On a regular basis, they present recommendations to local government. The youth council is also connected to other participation opportunities and regularly organizes participation opportunities that bring other young people to the table.

9. Transparency

While efforts to increase transparency and open government may not be sufficient to increase public participation, they are essential complements to participation initiatives. Transparency can increase government accountability, decrease corruption, and enable citizen problem-solving efforts by giving civic technologists access to government data.

On this note, it is positive that the city of Lublin has a website on which it publishes city news and information. The city releases financial data and data on public meetings, but not on public services. This could be added. The city supports efforts to support the local civic tech community use public data and help citizens understand and use public data. As a result, Lublin also scores relatively high in the field of transparency, with a score of 63%.

In order to further increase transparency, the city could support Application Programming Interfaces and televise or livestream public meetings, with opportunities for remote interaction by citizens.

Recommendations

- ✓ Public meetings should be televised or livestreamed, with opportunities for remote interaction by citizens.
- ✓ Support Application Programming Interfaces.

Best Practice

Area Forum

Area Forums are meetings held locally, often hosted by the local council. The meetings are attended by local councillors, together with senior representatives from the local authorities, the Police, Primary Care Trusts and other key local organisations, to debate key topics and answer residents' questions face-to-face. The meetings are often streamed live online or televised.

The Area Forum workshops are normally run in the evenings and are chaired by a local councillor. A Chief Officer also attends each meeting and ensures that the recommendations made are properly fed back into the council's decision-making processes. Area Forums concentrate their conversations on the topics of particular concern to local communities in the area. The outcomes are reported to Area Forum members either on an individual basis or via an Area Forum newsletter, which is distributed to members after each meeting; the minutes from each meeting are normally available online. You do not have to be a member of an Area Forum to attend, but you are encouraged to join so that you can be regularly updated about meetings and developments that have occurred as a result of your input.

→ [King County Community Forums, UK](#)

10. Monitoring and evaluation

Public participation is more likely to improve over time if it is being evaluated in regular, transparent, and interactive ways. If citizens themselves are involved in measuring and assessing engagement initiatives and structures, they will have a greater stake in the success of those efforts, and more ways to ensure that participation is equitable, accountable, and productive.

The city has an index rate of 38% in this area and scores, relative to its rating in other fields, relatively low in the field of monitoring and evaluation. It is positive to note that the city of Lublin has installed a process for tracking the long-term effects of public participation on key social indicators. The citizens also have opportunities to give feedback on how official public meetings are structured and facilitated and there are regular opportunities for public officials, staff, and citizens to analyze participation evaluations and make recommendations.

In order to improve its results in this policy field, the city could additionally implement and publish a widely used, well-understood plan or protocol for evaluating public participation processes and outcomes. Participation processes and outcomes should be viewed through an equity lens. Besides, the city might consider publishing surveys, questionnaires, or other evaluation instruments that are used to evaluate individual participation opportunities. Lastly, the results of evaluations should be made publicly available and broadly disseminated.

Recommendations

- ✓ Publish a plan or protocol for evaluating public participation processes and outcomes.
- ✓ View participation processes and outcomes through an equity lens.
- ✓ Publish surveys, questionnaires, or other evaluation instruments that are used to evaluate individual participation opportunities.
- ✓ Make results of evaluations publicly available and disseminate them broadly.

Best Practice

Delphi Survey

A Delphi Survey is a series of questionnaires that allow experts to develop ideas about potential future developments around an issue. The questionnaires are developed throughout the process in relation to the responses given by participants.

Delphi Surveys are used to gather collective forecasts through questionnaires about likely or possible developments in particular areas. Delphi Surveys can be carried out face to face, online or by post. In online versions, participants are given their own login and password to access the site. This is useful when the expert participants are very busy people. The technique aims to derive the benefit of the opinions of a group of experts, while avoiding the disadvantages of 'group-think' and group dynamics where certain individuals dominate the discussion. The process takes place in a number of stages:

- The first questionnaire either asks the participants to individually identify issues and generate as many ideas as possible or to answer more close ended questions such as the likely dates for specific developments.
- The second questionnaire anonymously feeds back all the ideas and forecasts sent in the first round to all participants. This questionnaire also provides space for participants to refine each idea, comment on their strengths or weaknesses and to suggest new ideas.

- An additional questionnaire then summarises the input from the second questionnaire and asks for further clarification, strengths, weaknesses, and new ideas. This stage can be repeated as many times as necessary until consensus on key points is reached.

- The end product is either a consensus amongst the participants on likely and possible future developments, or a wide range of possible developments and their relative strengths and weaknesses.

→ [District of Okanagan-Similkameen, British Colombia, Canada](#)

Conclusion

The city of Lublin has an aggregate participatory city index of 52%. The city has put in place a diverse set of programmes and structures to involve citizens in political decision-making in many different policy fields, such as for example, Planning and land use, Budgeting, and Transportation. The city uses a broad range of different tactics to include citizens in political decision-making, such as online surveys and polls, opportunities for public deliberation, collaborative planning processes, crowdfunding and social media aggregation. Compared to the city of Neapoli-Sykies, Greece, and Ovruch, Ukraine, the city of Lublin has particularly good results in the areas commitment, regulatory and policy framework, range of tactics and inclusion in problem-solving (see figure 1).

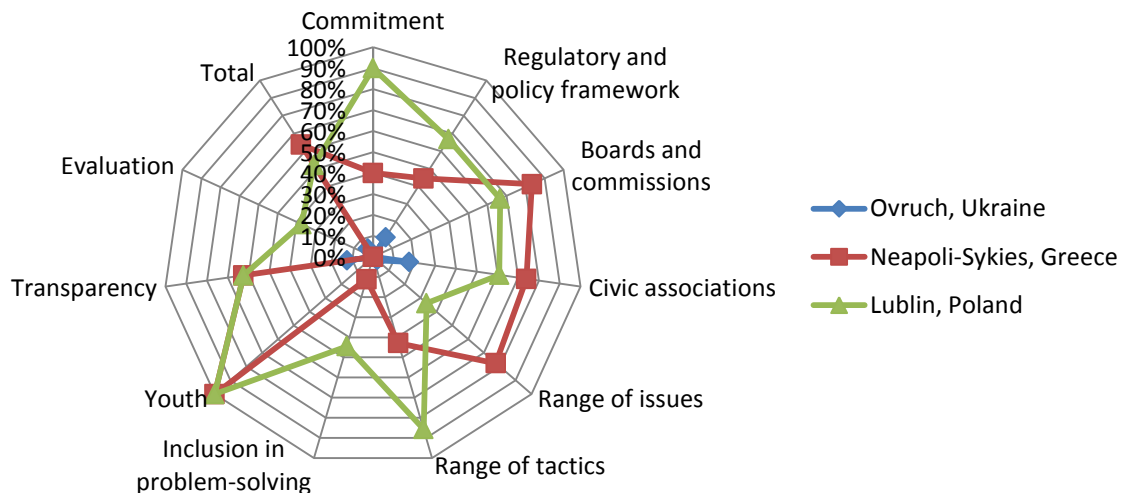


Figure 1: Index results of Ovruch, Neapoli-Sykies and Lublin.

In Lublin, the quality of the participation opportunities is high, as they are interactive and the people who participate are broadly representative of the larger population. The participation activities have a clear impact on policymaking.

However, the findings also suggest that there is still space for improvement in participatory policies in the city, especially in terms of reaching out to large numbers of citizens to involve them in participation opportunities. The city could also open new policy fields for increased citizen engagement. The municipality could identify useful insights and examples from other cities and civil society organizations and remain an active member city of the participatory democracy incubator to further improve the city's index results.