



Illustration:  
*The Effects of Good Government*  
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# CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION- MAKING TOOLKIT

## TOOLKIT

The toolkit aims to provide an integrated framework that guides local authorities and practitioners, through a step-by-step approach, in the design and implementation of context-based strategies to boost civil participation.

Council of Europe

Centre of Expertise for  
Good Governance

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CENTRE OF EXPERTISE  
FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE



# CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

## Toolkit

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in cooperation with

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## CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Since its inception, the Centre of Expertise has operated in a rapidly evolving context of decentralisation and governance: the transfer of functions from the national to the local and/or regional levels has advanced in most member states, and decentralisation policies have captured increasing attention. The tools and methods of the Centre of Expertise have developed over the course of its mandate to reflect these changes and emerging issues.

In this context, the Centre's capacity-building programmes and legal assistance activities support the on-going process of reform of local government but are increasingly aimed not only at local but also at regional and central authorities. The Centre is now in a position to offer cutting-edge expertise on multi-level governance to its partners and beneficiaries.

The practical and impact-oriented "specific projects" are implemented in cooperation with local, regional, national and international stakeholders and are aimed both at improving the legislation and at strengthening the institutional capacity of all tiers of government.

The Centre is uniquely placed to balance the needs of central and local authorities to support multi-level governance. While maintaining an approach that focuses on understanding the needs of local governance actors, the Centre's connection to the Council of Europe's intergovernmental Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) offers it ready access to high-level government officials from the 47 member states with a reservoir of knowledge and expertise in governance reforms.

Today, the Centre of Expertise aims to promote the relevant European standards such as the European Charter for Local Self-Government, and the 12 Principles of Good Governance through legal and policy advice, and through implementation of benchmarks, evaluation instruments and innovative methodologies ("tools").

## ISIG – Institute of International Sociology Gorizia

ISIG is an independent research institute in the field of social sciences.

Founded in 1968 in Gorizia (Italy), ISIG envisages a future of peaceful relations fostered by an international understanding, based on the acknowledgment of differences as resources.

ISIG carries out research at national and international levels, gathering knowledge on the problems arising from relations between states, ethnic groups and on the cultural, economic and social development of communities.

Participatory processes and participated local development processes are a key feature of ISIG work. Its research activities focused on the development of research methods and interpretative models that allow the development of innovative strategies and the effective implementation of policies at local level. Within this perspective, ISIG ultimate goal is to facilitate the inclusion of local stakeholders in the policy-making processes.

Through a wide range of participatory approaches and methodologies, ISIG achieves the integration of stakeholders, starting with an analysis and comparison of mediated social variables (i.e. the integrative function of the community, the role of symbolic spaces, the projection into the future and the actions needed to achieve it). This ultimately enables the integrated development of the local context, analysing the factors (internal and external) that may favour or not policy implementation, allowing for ex-ante assessment and project feasibility testing.

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## ACRONYMS

CBC – Cross-Border Cooperation

CoE – Council of Europe

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

LA – Local Authority

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

“Participation of citizens is at the very heart of the idea of democracy.”<sup>1</sup> Effective democracy depends on citizens having a say and being heard. A commitment to enhanced public participation lies at the heart of the 2018 Council of Europe (CoE) Recommendation on the participation of citizens in local public life. The aim is to see consultation and participation embedded in the culture of all CoE member states.

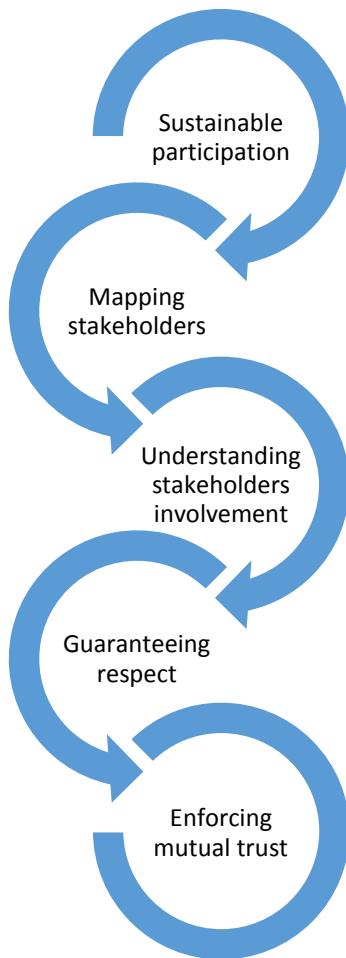


Figure 1 - Enforcing trust for mainstreaming participation

Participation by all groups of civil society in decision-making at all levels of government is one of the prerequisites for a functioning democratic society and for fostering democratic security. It allows for open dialogue on critical issues, supporting better decisions by the authorities and contributing to strengthen governance. Civil participation complements and supports representative democracy. Citizens who feel that they have a say in the general policy debate and in everyday decisions, are more likely to accept the decisions taken and, more generally, to trust their elected representatives. It is therefore crucial that individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society at large are involved in the conduct of public affairs and feel empowered to do so<sup>2</sup>.

Deploying effective civil participation mechanisms to deliver good local governance means that stakeholders’ engagement should be fostered inclusively and transparently. Effective participation also implies to move beyond the assumption that all can participate in all circumstances and in all phases of decision-making. Opening decisional processes to all would mean having to respond to all and integrate each statement and insight in the development of the strategy or policy at hand, to respect the mutual pact of trust established in the

moment the participatory process was launched. To make this feasible (i.e. being able to integrate stakeholders’ perspective in the design of the new policy/strategy), effective participation implies a careful planning of the stakeholders to be involved and the level of involvement for each, for each stage of the decision-making process on a given topic.

1 Council of Europe, CM/Rec(2018)4

2 Council of Europe, CM(2017)83, Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making.

The CoE efforts in the field of promotion and strengthening of civil participation across Member states may be drawn from the following documents:

- Charter on Local Self-government (CETS 122)
- Convention on the Participation of foreigners in public life at local level (CETS 144)
- Recommendation (2001) on participation (replaced by Rec (2018)<sup>4</sup>)
- Recommendation (2009) on evaluating, auditing and monitoring participation and participation policies at local and regional level
- CoE C.L.E.A.R. tool on civil participation (2008)
- CoE Toolkit for increasing Civil Participation in Cross-Border Governance systems – “European Experience of Citizens' Participation in Cross-Border Governance” (2015)
- CoE Guidelines for Civil Participation (2017)
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2018)<sup>4</sup> the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life

This Toolkit aims to channel all these insights and recommendations into an integrated framework that guides local authorities and practitioners, through a step-by-step approach, in the design and implementation of context-based strategies to increase a community’s civil participation.

The toolkit aims:



Figure 2 - Objectives of the Toolkit

## 1.2 TOOLKIT STRUCTURE

The Toolkit is structured in three sections:

- a compendium of the main CoE frameworks that set the principles of civil participation;
- operational indications on how to use the tool to understand the propensity towards participation of the community at large, as well as to analyse in detail the potential of each stakeholder to engage in participatory process on a given topic;
- an overview of strategies to activate the processes of participation for different stakeholders, based on the assessment of their potential to engage, and to enhance the level of participation.



## 2 THE FRAMEWORK OF CIVIL PARTICIPATION

### 2.1 RATIONALE

This section aims to give a brief overview of the Council of Europe's guidelines and frameworks on civil participation in political decision-making.

The present work stems from the frameworks and principles of civil participation, set by the Council of Europe over the last years.

The main pillars that stand at the basis of this Toolkit are:

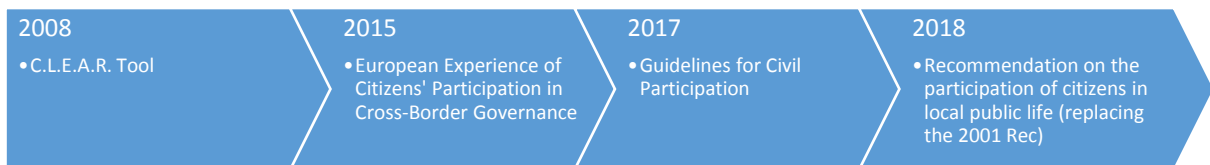


Figure 3 - Theoretical pillars of the Toolkit

Furthermore, the Toolkit reflects general principles and standards for participation set out in the Revised Code of Good Practice for Civil participation<sup>3</sup>. The Code, first adopted by the Conference of INGO in 2009 (CONF/PLE(2009)CODE1) and revised in 2019, sets a framework for the facilitation of a structured dialogue and cooperation between decision makers and civil society. Moreover, the Toolkit shares its vision of a multi-stakeholder and multiple levels approach to civil participation.

Aiming to contribute to the harmonisation of the CoE continuously evolving corpus of knowledge and tools facilitating civil participation, the Toolkit is envisaged as a step forward towards an effective implementation of the principles of civil participation.

### 2.2 KEY CONCEPTS<sup>4</sup>

The following paragraphs provide some useful definitions of key-concepts that recur in the toolkit.

<sup>3</sup> Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, Code of Good practice for Civil participation – 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Definitions of key concepts from: Council of Europe, CDLR. (2008): C.L.E.A.R. Tool, p.45-47.



Figure 4 - Key concepts for understanding civil participation

### 2.2.1 Community

A 'community' can be defined as a group of interacting people living in a common location. Community is sometimes defined as a tighter and more cohesive social entity compared to 'society', due to the presence within a community of a 'unity of will'. Communitarianism construes communities as originating from the voluntary acts of pre-community individuals. It emphasizes the role of the community in defining and shaping individuals and their identity. From a communitarian perspective, values and beliefs cannot exist outside the public space, in which debate takes place. This suggests that community is a condition and a result of participation. It creates a 'sense of community', which from a psychological perspective needs:

- membership,
- influence,
- integration and fulfilment of needs, and
- shared emotional connection.

### 2.2.2 Civil society

Civil society is composed of the totality of voluntary civic and social organisations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the force-backed structures of a state (regardless of that state's political system) and commercial institutions.

### 2.2.3 Civic organisations

Civic organisations are structures in which civil society is organised. It comprises NGOs such as groups, associations, movements. It is defined here in contrast to governmental organisations.

### 2.2.4 Civic activity

Civic activity is the outcome of the work of civic organisations. In a restricted sense, these activities would need to be in the service of the community. Even though the term does not include individual, privately orientated activity, it seems difficult to convincingly differentiate them in terms of purpose.

### 2.2.5 Social capital

Social capital refers to the collective value of all 'social networks' (i.e. who people know) and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other (i.e. norms of reciprocity). It is the stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw on to solve common problems.

### 2.2.6 Decision making process

Decision making process refers to the development, adoption, implementation, evaluation and reformulation of a policy document, strategy, law, regulation, or any process where a decision is made that affects the public or a segment of it by the authority invested with the power to do so.

### 2.2.7 Civil society at large

Civil society at large refers to the ensemble of individuals organised, less organised and informal groups through which they contribute to society or express their views and opinions, including NGOs, professional and grass-roots organisations, universities and research centres, religious and non-denominational organisations, human rights defenders, watchdogs and whistle-blowers.

## 2.3 CIVIL PARTICIPATION

“Civil participation means the engagement of individuals, NGOs and civil society at large in decision-making processes by public authorities”<sup>5</sup>. Civil participation in political decision-making should seek to provide, collect and channel views of individuals, directly or via civil society organisations (CSOs), providing a substantive exchange of factual and evidence-based information and views that inform the decision-making process and ensure that real public needs are met<sup>6</sup>.

Yet, getting people to participate is not a simple task. There are obstacles that often stem from a lack of capacity to participate or a lack of engagement with political organisations or issues.

This might be caused by the fact that citizens, including politicians, are not always well informed about the implication of participation and the role they can play in the democratic life of the community. Without appropriate knowledge, civil society cannot actively integrate a participatory approach in their daily discourses, consequently, in local identity.

### 2.3.1 Recommendation on the participation of citizens in local public life

The first Recommendation on participation was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2001, and in 2018 it was replaced by an updated version. The Recommendation identifies a set of basic principles of a local democratic policy and the related steps and measures to encourage and reinforce citizens’ participation in local public life.<sup>7</sup> It aims to serve as a helpful guide for local and national authorities committed to improving the opportunities for citizen participation in the life of the local community. It contains five recommendations to Council of Europe member states’ governments on: framing a policy; adopting measures to improve the legal framework for participation and ensuring that national legislation and regulations enable local and regional authorities to employ a wide range of participation instruments; co-operating with authorities on different levels; reviewing policies related to the participation of citizens in local public life and ensuring the translation of the recommendation into national languages.

The appendix to the Recommendation is divided into two sections: Section A sets out the basic general principles of a local democratic participation policy. These should guide policymakers at national level in the drafting of a framework for participation and should also be subscribed to by local and regional authorities; Section B outlines steps and measures that could be taken by the competent public authorities.

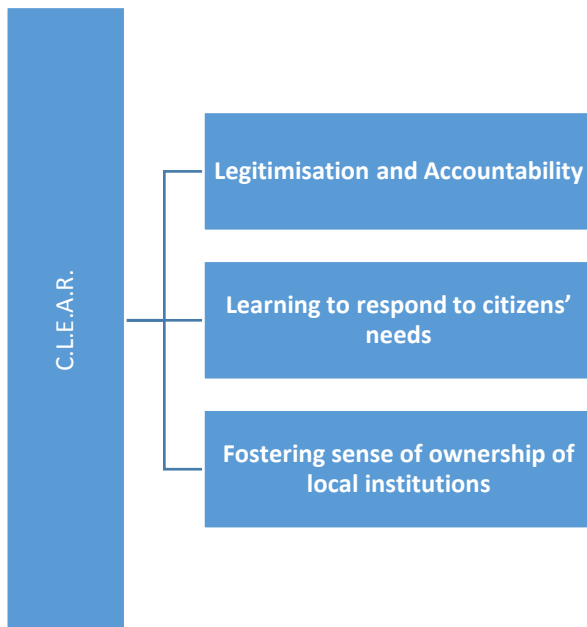
5 Council of Europe, CM(2017)83, Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, p.2

6 Council of Europe, CM(2017)83, Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, p.3

7 Council of Europe, CM/Rec(2018)4.

### 2.3.2 C.L.E.A.R.: An auditing tool for citizen participation at the local level

In 2008, the Council of Europe published the C.L.E.A.R. tool<sup>8</sup>, in order to aid public authorities in understanding their communities' propensity and capacity to participate, as well as their own resources to support this process.



The main principles on which C.L.E.A.R. is based are described in the next paragraphs.

#### 2.3.2.1 *Legitimisation and Accountability*

Local authorities are not able to act as effective community leaders if they lack a base of popular support. More generally, there is a need to strengthen public confidence in political institutions and the most powerful way to do so is to seek active citizen endorsement of policies and practices. Deliberative elements of democracy give citizens a voice, creating indispensable long-term loyalty to the political system. It is not necessary for citizens' individual voices to be decisive. It is part of democracy that the majority decides. But what counts is that one's voice has been considered.

#### 2.3.2.2 *Learning to respond to citizens' needs*

Effective channels of communication are essential to achieving the wider social and economic outcomes that Local authorities seek to achieve. Participation enables more effective learning and better decisions.

*Figure 5 - C.L.E.A.R. key principles*

#### 2.3.2.3 *Fostering sense of ownership of local institutions*

Participation has an intrinsic value. It is good that people are actively involved in decision making in their communities. Being a full citizen means having a say in decisions that one is affected by. Good governance is not just a matter of delivering good outcomes. The way they are achieved is at least as important. Public authorities at all levels should seek citizens' active endorsement of rather than tacit acquiescence to their policies and programmes.

Aiming to make these general principles accessible for all public authorities, the Council of Europe developed a set of key questions to function as a preliminary self-assessment. These guiding questions relate to the 5 dimensions of analysis that the acronym 'C.L.E.A.R.' embodies:

- **Can do** – that is, citizens have the resources and skills and knowledge to participate;
- **Like to** – that is, citizens have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;
- **Enabled to** – that is, citizens are provided with the opportunity to participate;
- **Asked to** – that is, citizens are involved by official bodies or voluntary groups;
- **Responded to** – that is, citizens see evidence that their views have been considered.

8 Council of Europe, CDLR. (2008). C.L.E.A.R. Tool

C.L.E.A.R. functions through a set of key-questions for each of the above-mentioned sections. By answering to these questions, public authorities can appraise their own and their communities' strengths and weaknesses in relation to the capacity to start and develop participatory processes, within the daily life of their public organisation.

### 2.3.3 The Guidelines of Civil Participation

In 2016, the Council of Europe developed further the criteria needed to define civil participation to achieve good local governance. This effort led to the Guidelines for Civil Participation (2017)<sup>9</sup>, defining the key principles of participation. In order to be effectively called so, and to positively impact local governance, a civil participation process must be based on:

1. Respect for all actors as the basis for honest interaction and mutual trust;
2. Respect for the independence of NGOs even when their opinions differ from those of the authorities;
3. Respect for the position of public authorities with whom responsibility and accountability for decision-making lies;
4. Openness, transparency and accountability, meaning that up to date, comprehensive information about the decision-making process and procedures for participation should be provided to the citizens;
5. Responsiveness, providing appropriate feedback, in the sense that adequate information should be provided in a timely manner at all stages allowing for substantive input from citizens as from the earliest possible stage of the decision-making process;
6. Non-discrimination and inclusiveness so that all voices, including those of the less privileged and most vulnerable, are heard and considered, ensuring the use of adequate means and channels;
7. Gender equality and equal participation of all groups including those with interests and needs such as young people, the elderly, people with disabilities, minorities, etc., in the sense that public authorities should solicit the widest possible input;
8. Accessibility of the process of participation using clear language and appropriate means of participation, offline or online, and on any device.

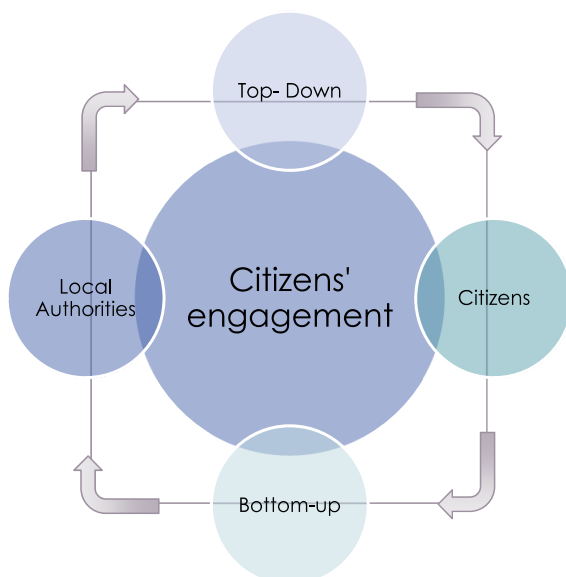


Figure 6 - Citizens' engagement Paradigms

As outlined in the figure below, citizens' engagement into policy-making processes traditionally links to two main paradigms:

- A top down approach (where policies descend from decision makers to citizens), based on the principles of deliberative democracy and of representation;
- A bottom up approach, expression of a participatory democracy, and implying a direct engagement of individuals in political decisions and policies.

9 Council of Europe, CM(2017)83, Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making.



These concepts are neither opposed nor mutually exclusive, but rather represent two ends of a circular process, initiated by citizens, whether through representation (i.e. voting) or direct participation. Although both perspectives ensure citizens' feedback, the successful integration of citizens' instances in policy-making - stemming from direct participation - carries an added value in terms of trust and sense of ownership.

Either way, two necessary features always characterize citizens' participation (Pellizzoni 2008, 93-116), namely:

- The willingness to participate (endogenous to the individual – its lack might be rooted in low level of trust in the participation process or in low sense of belonging/preparedness to the direct involvement process);
- The possibility to participate (exogenous to the individual and determined by the institutions).

This means that not all citizens represent, always, relevant stakeholders that should be engaged in the decision-making process “no matter what”.

In order to achieve effective civil participation, public authorities must be aware of the stakeholders of its community, but also understand that it is not obligatory nor desirable to engage all stakeholders at all times.

Citizens, CSOs and civil society at large represent the stakeholders a local government organisation engages with. They have an interest for the local government organisation activity and for the area and community it operates within because they are being affected by it, or being able to influence it, in a positive or negative way.

## 3 THE TOOL

### 3.1 RATIONALE

As already seen in the previous chapter, participation is not a ‘one size fits all’ solution. Successful participation cannot be achieved with a standard methodology to be applied for all decision-making processes and towards all stakeholders.

While transparency, availability of information and trust-building must be ensured for and towards all stakeholders (respecting 1 and 3 among the principles of civil participation as defined by CoE<sup>10</sup>), effective participation implies a clear understanding of the context in relation to the potential of each stakeholder to engage. In addition, civil participation in decision-making should not be limited to one modality. The scope and method of participation should be commensurate to the issue at stake<sup>11</sup>.

Participation in this sense should be based on a rigorous mapping of stakeholders, so to evaluate the level of potential engagement for each, according to the aim of the decision-making process at stake, its topic, the resources and interests of each stakeholder.

### 3.2 THE OPERATIONAL COMPONENTS

In order to effectively map stakeholders in preparation of the participatory process envisaged, public authorities can use the tool developed within this work. It is a self-assessment tool (as public authorities can use it autonomously, based on their own knowledge and perception of their own community) developed from the guiding questions proposed by C.L.E.A.R. and as a way to include as many voices as possible (as prescribed by the guidelines) in the public discourse.

The tool is composed of two parts:

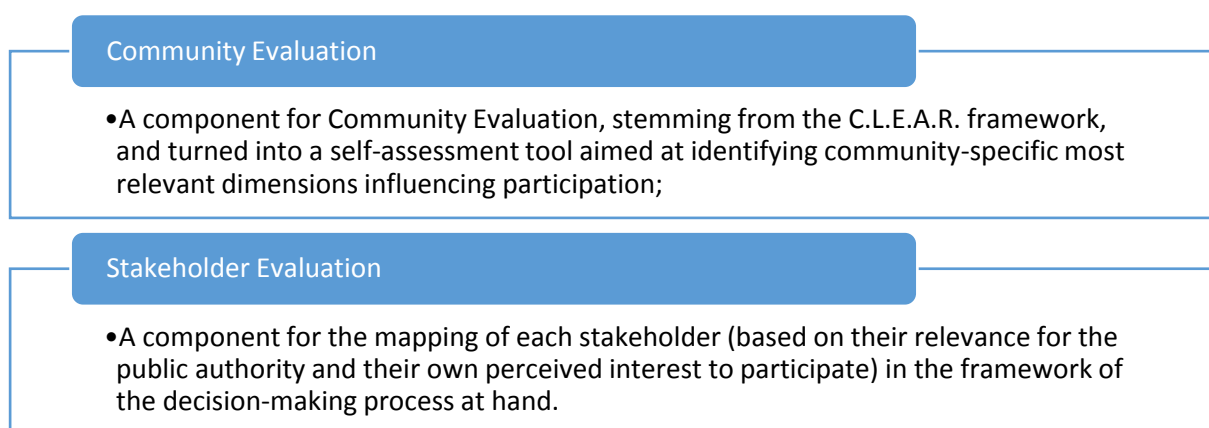


Figure 7 - Structure of the Tool

This community contextualization as well as stakeholders’ mapping process stem from the analysis of the following dimensions relevant for participation, as extrapolated from the C.L.E.A.R.<sup>12</sup> tool:

10 Council of Europe, CM(2017)83, Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making.

11 *Idem*

12 Council of Europe, CDLR (2008). C.L.E.A.R. Tool

- **Social capital** --- referring to both the social vitality of a community, and to the capacity/willingness of individual stakeholders to engage into social life and activities;
- **Economic capital** --- referring to economic health of a community, as well as to economic resources/capacity of each stakeholder;
- **Political capital** --- referring to both the political engagement within the community at large and to the engagement of individual stakeholders in the political life;
- **Human capital** --- referred to the knowledge/skills of the community at large, as well to the specific capacities of each stakeholder on given topics and in the participation arena.

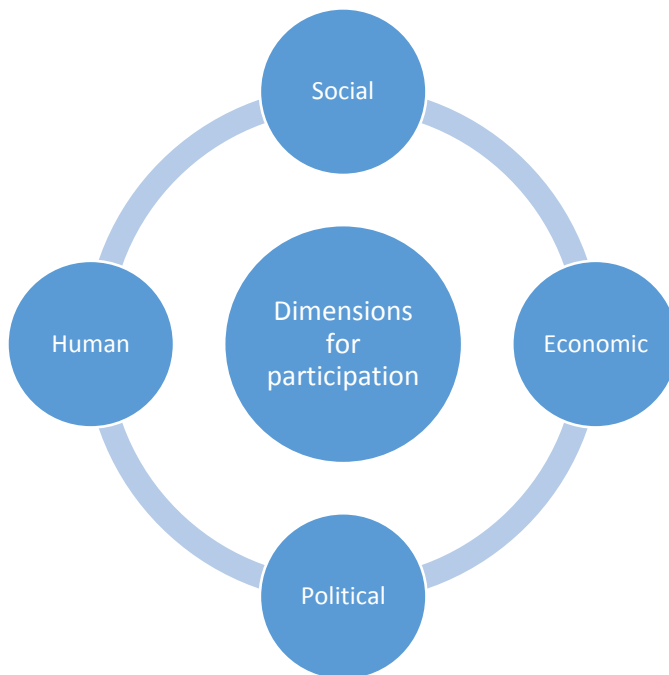


Figure 8 - The dimensions relevant for participation

The toolkit is the companion for policy makers to help them systematise the relevant information needed to assess the overall predisposition of their own community to engage in participatory processes. It also supports in the evaluation of the potential engagement for different categories of stakeholders on different topics, and ultimately to define strategies for the sustainable involvement of all, according to the principles of civil participation<sup>13</sup>:

- Encouraging and promoting mutual respect and trust between stakeholder, citizens and local authorities (as per Principles 1 and 3);

- Ensuring the inclusion of NGOs and other civil society organisations according to their competences and interest in the process at stake, rather than on their 'proximity' to the authorities' points of view (as per Principle 2);
- Ensuring a stakeholders' engagement process that is traceable in all its stages, thus respecting the principle of openness, transparency and accountability (as per Principle 4);
- Embedding appropriate feedback and communication strategies for different stakeholders' categories, making sure all are informed according to their means and requests (as per Principle 5);
- Identifying feasible participation levels, methodologies and means for different stakeholders' categories and individual stakeholders, so to guarantee access to all, both the most vulnerable and usually excluded categories, and those with specific needs/interests on specific topics (as per Principles 6, 7 and 8).

### 3.3 COMMUNITY EVALUATION

In order to effectively contextualise a participatory decision-making process, it is important to first assess the overall attitude of the community involved towards participation.

13 Council of Europe, CM(2017)83, Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making.

A community is shaped by social variables (average age of the population, level of civil society activism, access to information, etc.), economic variables (average income, distribution of resources, employment possibilities, etc.), human variables (skills and knowledge that the community members possess and can use/share) and political variables (political involvement in the community, level of engagement of the community in decision making, etc.). These are the four dimensions, which a public authority engaging in this evaluation will have to test his/her community against in order to start mapping the context.

In order to start an effective participatory process, in fact, it is important to understand how these variables, for a given community, affect the propensity towards participation.

Below, the variables are listed and explained, per dimension.

### 3.3.1 Social capital variables

The variables that compose the dimension of “social capital” comprise:

1. Variables related to what the C.L.E.A.R. tool defines as “identity”, i.e. the degree at which citizens belong to the community (thus considering level of mobility of the population, actual possibility to actively daily participate to shape the community as well as cultural/historical identification with that community):
  - Population that has recently moved to the city/town (last 5 years)
  - Population that has recently moved away from the city/town (last 5 years)
  - Work commuters to other cities/towns among the population aged 30-60
  - Population that is a minority
2. Variables related to “demography” (i.e. age of the population) and possibility to access information
  - Population that is below 30 years of age (based on Eurostat range defining “young people” as until 29 years of age)
  - Population with internet access
3. Variables related to the existence and vitality of civil organisations:
  - Active CSOs (civil society organisations)
  - Annual variation of local CSOs membership

### 3.3.2 Economic capital variables

The variables that compose the dimension of “economic capital” comprise:

1. Variables developed from the “employment/unemployment” guiding questions of the “Can do” section of C.L.E.A.R., intersected with aspects related to gender and youth, so to encompass also the Principles set forth in the 2017 Guidelines for Civil Participation:
  - Per capita average income
  - Unemployment rate
  - Youth unemployment rate (below 30 years of age)
  - Female labour force
2. Variables extrapolated from the “social class” and “resources” guiding questions of the “can do” section of C.L.E.A.R.:
  - Households in potential economic difficulty
  - Households in absolute poverty
  - Self-employed workers that are women
  - Self-employed workers that are below 30 years of age

### 3.3.3 Human capital variables

The variables that compose the dimension of “human capital” comprise:

1. Variables related to educational attainment:
  - Population (aged 25-64) with at least a high school diploma
  - Women (aged 25-64) with at least a high school diploma
2. Variables related to both skills/knowledge of the citizens and resources available to the population for their capacity building:
  - Presence of civic education courses within compulsory school curricula in the last 15 years
  - Professionalism
  - Population with digital competences
  - Population actively engaged in volunteering activities
  - Presence of life-long learning possibilities
  - Accessibility of life-long learning possibilities

### 3.3.4 Political capital variables

Please assess how the following influence the level of participation of the population in public life by marking with an 'x' the level of influence (from extremely negative to extremely positive for each item - row).

COMMUNITY:						score per dimension
DIMENSIONS	Extremely Negative	Negative	not applicable	Positive	Extremely positive	
(1) Social capital						#VALUE!
1 Population that has recently moved to the city/town (last 5 years)						
2 Population that has recently moved out of the city/town (last 5 years)						
3 Work commuters to other cities/towns among the population aged 30-60						
4 Population that is a minority						
5 Population that is below 30 yrs. of age						
6 Population with internet access						
7 Active CSOs						
8 Annual variation of local CSOs' membership						
(2) Economic capital						#VALUE!
9 Per capita average income						
10 Unemployment rate						
11 Youth unemployment rate (= or below 30 years of age)						
12 Female labour force						
13 Households in potential economic difficulty						
14 Households in absolute poverty						
15 Self-employed workers that are women						
16 Self-employed workers that are below 30 yrs. of age						
(3) Human capital						#VALUE!
17 Population (25-64) with high school diploma						
18 Women (25-64) with high school diploma						
19 Presence of civic education courses within compulsory school curricula in the last 15 years						
20 Professionalism						
21 Population with digital competences						
22 Population actively engaged in volunteering activities						
23 Presence of Life-Long Learning (LLL) possibilities						
24 Accessibility of Life-Long Learning (LLL) possibilities						
(4) Political capital						#VALUE!
25 Citizens voting in the last municipal election						
26 Population actively involved in political life						
27 Women actively involved in political life						
28 Representatives of minorities involved in political life						
29 Women councillors in the local administration						
30 Affluence of citizens to public political debates/events						
31 Representativeness of interest of vulnerable group in the local policy-making process						
32 Level of participation in previous participatory decision-making processes						

Evaluate Community

The variables that compose the dimension of “political capital” comprise variables that are extrapolated from the “trust” and “citizenship” set of guiding questions in the “like section of C.I.E.A.R.:

- Electorate voting in last municipal election
- Population actively involved in political life
- Women actively involved in political life
- Representatives of minorities actively involved in political life
- Women councillors in the local administration
- Affluence of citizens to public political debates/events
- Representativeness of interest of vulnerable groups in the local policy making processes
- Level of participation in previous participatory decision-making processes

The public authorities using the tool, when assessing their own community against these variables, are asked to identify, for each variable, if this affects the propensity towards participation:

- Very positively
- Positively
- Negatively
- Very negatively

Figure 9 - Overview of the "Community Evaluation" page of the tool

Or if the variable has no influence at all shaping the level of participation within the community.

There are no given *true* or *false* assumptions needed to fill in the grid of the 'Community Evaluation'. Each public authority is called to interpret their own data according to the specific and unique impact that such elements have in fostering or limiting participation. Examples follow for each dimension so to clarify the way the 'Community Evaluation' grid can be differently filled in by public authorities that represent very similar communities.

### 3.3.5 Social capital dimension

A high number of CSOs might work for a certain community as a deterrent towards participation, as these CSOs might monopolise the participatory forums, thus excluding the potential for others to engage. For another community, the same factor might represent an element that does not affect at all the level of engagement of new citizens to the decisional process. Thus, with similar objective data (i.e. high concentration of CSOs), two representatives from two different communities might consider the variable as affecting participation 'very negatively' (in the first case) or 'not relevant' (for the second case).

(1) Social capital							0,5
1 Population that has recently moved to the city/town (last 5 years)							
2 Population that has recently moved out of the city/town (last 5 years)							
3 Work commuters to other cities/towns among the population aged 30-60							
4 Population that is a minority							
5 Population that is below 30 yrs of age							
6 Population with internet access							
7 Active CSOs							
8 Annual variation of local CSOs' membership							

Table 1 - Evaluation grid for social capital within the "Community Evaluation"

### 3.3.6 Economic capital dimension

For a first community, a high unemployment rate might 'very positively' affect the propensity of the population to engage, as their problem might become a stimulus towards sharing of ideas and commitment in public life. In a second community, the same issue might be a deterrent to participation, as people who lost their job might have lost their trust in any public effort. The public authority representative of this second community might thus feel that participation is 'negatively' or even 'very negatively' affected by the unemployment rate, which in percentage might be equal to that of the first community described.

(2) Economic capital							0,5
9	Per capita average income						
10	Unemployment rate						
11	Youth unemployment rate (= or below 30 years of age)						
12	Female labour force						
13	Households in potential economic difficulty						
14	Households in absolute poverty						
15	Self employed workers that are women						
16	Self employed workers that are below 30 yrs of age						

Table 2 - Evaluation grid for economic capital within the "Community Evaluation"

### 3.3.7 Human capital dimension

A high level of skills and competences among the population in a community might be read as an element affecting the propensity towards participation 'positively' or 'very positively'. In another community, this element might be 'not relevant' as the level of competences has been very high for a long time without seeming to affect the willingness of citizens to engage further in decision-making.

(3) Human capital							0,5
17	Population (25-64) with high school diploma						
18	Women (25-64) with high school diploma						
19	Presence of civic education courses within compulsory school curricula in the last 15 years						
20	Professionalism						
21	Population with digital competences						
22	Population actively engaged in volunteering activities						
23	Presence of Life-Long Learning (LLL) possibilities						
24	Accessibility of Life-Long Learning (LLL) possibilities						

Table 3 - Evaluation grid for human capital within the "Community Evaluation"

### 3.3.8 Political capital dimension

For what concerns the political dimension, it might be that a high degree of participation of citizens to political life within a community could be a factor affecting 'very positively' the propensity of the population towards direct participation decision-making. The same high degree of participation could represent in another community an obstacle to direct involvement of citizens, since the trust in authorities might be so high that citizens do not feel the need to engage directly in decision-making.

(4) Political capital							0,5
25	Citizens voting in the last municipal election						
26	Population actively involved in political life						
27	Women actively involved in political life						
28	Representatives of minorities involved in political life						
29	Women councillors in the local administration						
30	Affluence of citizens to public political debates/events						
30	Representativeness of interest of vulnerable group in the local policy making process						
32	Level of participation in previous participatory decision making processes						

Table 4 - Evaluation grid for political capital within the "Community Evaluation"

The public authority fills in the 'Community Evaluation' table. Once the evaluation is complete, the tool generates a score for each dimension (social, economic, human and political), ranging from 0 to 1 (where 0 is 'extremely negative' and 1 is 'extremely positive').



COMMUNITY: <span style="float: right;">INSERT NAME</span>	
Social Capital	Economic Capital
0,5	0,5
Human Capital	Political Capital
0,5	0,5

Average Community Evaluation Score 0,5

Go to Step 2

Figure 10 - Summary table for the "Community Evaluation" scores per dimension

The dimension with the higher score is the one that especially affects the context of participation at stake. The tool will register these data and embed the weighting of each dimension in the following 'Stakeholders Identification and Evaluation', so to ensure that the context-based relevance of each dimension is mirrored for each stakeholder considered, that will act upon that context.

### 3.4 STAKEHOLDERS' IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION

Once the propensity of the community towards engagement has been assessed, the second step implies the evaluation of each identified stakeholder. This process entails 2 stages:

- Stakeholder identification and systematisation within a database;
- Evaluation of each stakeholder's capacity and willingness to engage.

#### 3.4.1 Stakeholders' identification

The first stage of this process necessarily implies the need to identify the relevant stakeholders for the topic at hand. Stakeholders usually pertain to the following categories:

##### 3.4.1.1 Institutional actors

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

##### 3.4.1.2 Civil society

- Youth associations
- Women associations
- Associations representing the interests of minority groups
- Associations representing the interests of disadvantaged groups
- Volunteering associations
- Awareness raising associations
- Consumers' associations
- NGOs
- Trade unions

### 3.4.1.3 Private actors

- Trade associations (chambers of commerce, etc.)
- Professional associations
- Private investors (foundations, trusts, etc.)
- Entrepreneurs

Individual citizens are not listed as not easy to map and identify. Yet, citizens are represented by their elected representatives (through democratic representativeness), by CSOs, and are to be always informed on the decision-making process so can engage if motivated to do so.

Here the stakeholders' mapping process refers to the identification of all actors that at different levels (political, civil or economic) represent the interests and needs of the population at large. In identifying stakeholders it is thus very important to ensure the representation of a wide variety of categories.

The stakeholders identified for each category are then systematised in a database, indicating their name, name of the referent person, contacts and main domain of activity, as detailed in the table below offered as an example:

Name of institution/association/private body	Main domains of activity	Name and role of contact person	Main competences of contact person	Contact details (email -phone)
Stakeholder 1				
Stakeholder 2				
Stakeholder ...				

Table 5 - Example of systematisation of the stakeholders' database

A thorough classification per typology will allow promoters of actions aim to increase civil participation, to operate a pre-selection of stakeholders – that is, to include as many stakeholders per each identified category and for topics of interest.

In order to facilitate a systematic approach of stakeholder engagement, each time a participatory process starts, the number of stakeholders to be involved should not exceed 30 units, taking into account that stakeholders selected should be REPRESENTATIVES of a wider number of stakeholders. For instance, when considering economic operators, it might be relevant to involve chambers of commerce and professional associations as representatives of specific categories, rather than trying to involve all members of these associations, risking leaving out someone and not being able to guarantee the effective inclusion of the instances of all. Besides, the principle of democratic representativeness guarantees that a representative of, for instance, a chamber of commerce, is qualified to represent the interests and need of all entrepreneurs of the area, rather than 3 individual entrepreneurs that might be more likely to put on the table only their own individual needs.

### 3.4.2 Stakeholder's Evaluation

The further step implies the evaluation of each identified stakeholder, based on the relevance of its potential contribution to the decision-making process, and on the perceived interest it might have in engaging on the topic at stake. The stakeholder evaluation proceeds for each identified stakeholder individually.

The dimensions for its evaluation are the same as those of the "Community Evaluation". The variables instead are divided into:

- variables related to **relevance**;
- variables related to **interest**.

### 3.4.2.1 Relevance variables

Bearing in mind the topic at hand, please evaluate the stakeholder for each proposed item (row) by it marking with an 'x' (from extremely negative to extremely positive).

A - RELEVANCE		STAKEHOLDER - insert name ->					pagP	
		DIMENSIONS	Extremely Negative	Negative	not applicable	Positive	Extremely positive	score per dimension
	(1) Social capital						#VALUE!	
	1 Capacity of the stakeholder to involve other stakeholders						Weighted value	
	2 Level of representativeness of the stakeholder of a specific category						#VALUE!	
	3 Level of participation of the stakeholder to local civil society activities							
	4 Capacity of the stakeholder to start/influence change							
	5 Level of acknowledgment of the stakeholder among citizens							
	(2) Economic capital						#VALUE!	
	6 Capacity of the stakeholder to act as donor						Weighted value	
	7 Capacity of the stakeholder to influence resources' allocation						#VALUE!	
	8 Capacity to facilitate access to existing exogenous resources							
	9 Capacity of the stakeholder to provide in-kind support							
	10 Influence of the stakeholder on the job market							
	(3) Human capital						#VALUE!	
	11 Knowledge/skills of the stakeholder on the topic						Weighted value	
	12 Awareness of the stakeholder on the topic						#VALUE!	
	13 Capacity of the stakeholder to engage in public debate							
	14 Capacity of the stakeholder to communicate through a range of different media							
	15 Capacity of the stakeholder to access public venues							
	(4) Political capital						#VALUE!	
	16 Trust of the local administration towards the stakeholder						Weighted value	
	17 Capacity of the stakeholder to engage further political actors						#VALUE!	
	18 Capacity of the stakeholder to engage with local authorities/other stakeholders							
	19 Capacity of the stakeholder to influence public opinion							
	20 Political awareness of the stakeholder							
<b>RELEVANCE SCORE</b>							<b>#VALUE!</b>	

Figure 11 - Overview of the Relevance section of the "Stakeholders Identification and Evaluation" page of the tool

These variables determine how important it is for the local authority to have the stakeholder on board, based on the same four dimensions of analysis adopted for community evaluation. Similarly to the "Community Evaluation" process, the public authorities using the tool, when assessing each stakeholders' relevance, are asked to identify, for each variable, if the stakeholder would affect the process at stake:

- Very positively
- Positively
- Negatively
- Very negatively

As seen for the "Community Evaluation", the four dimensions of analysis are:

**1. Social capital dimension**, thus focusing on the level of connection and power to network of each stakeholder (i.e. its capacity to reach out to other stakeholders as a reliable source). Social capital implies also the level of recognition of each stakeholder within the community (i.e. is it clear that a specific stakeholder acts on behalf of a specific category?). This dimension is shaped, for the purpose

of this analysis and based on the framework provided by C.L.E.A.R. and by the 8 principles of participation contained in the Guidelines for Civil Participation, by the following variables, as represented in the “Stakeholders identification and evaluation” table within the tool:

(1) Social capital							0,6
1	Capacity of the stakeholder to involve other stakeholders						<b>Weighted value</b>
2	Level of representativeness of the stakeholder of a specific category						<b>0,3</b>
3	Level of participation of the stakeholder to local civil society activities						
4	Capacity of the stakeholder to start/influence change						
5	Level of acknowledgment of the stakeholder among citizens						

Table 6 - Social capital variables within evaluation grid for relevance

Thus, if a stakeholder is seen as very well connected within a network, or very reliable on a certain topic, this might be evaluated as a capacity to affect “very positively” the decision-making process at hand. Vice versa, a stakeholder that does not participate much and has never been involved in awareness raising or communication activities, might be seen as “not relevant” for these specific variables, or even capable to affect “very negatively” the process at hand, for what concerns, for instance, a very low level of acknowledgement among citizens.

**2. Economic capital dimension**, focusing on the capacity of the stakeholder analysed to economically contribute to the process, be it as donor, as a multiplier of resources or as an actor on the job market. This dimension is shaped, for the purpose of this analysis and based on the framework provided by C.L.E.A.R., by the following variables, as represented in the “Stakeholder evaluation” table within the Tool:

(2) Economic capital							0,5
6	Capacity of the stakeholder to act as donor						<b>Weighted value</b>
7	Capacity of the stakeholder to influence resources' allocation						<b>0,3</b>
8	Capacity to facilitate access to existing exogenous resources						
9	Capacity of the stakeholder to provide in-kind support						
10	Influence of the stakeholder on the job market						

Table 7 - Economic capital variables within evaluation grid for relevance

If a stakeholder is perceived as having, for instance, a high influence on the job market, this could be “very positive” for the process at hand, if employment is a key factor within the decision-making process. The same stakeholder’s capacity to affect the job market might then be evaluated as “not relevant” within the specific analysis, if involved within a decision-making process that does not even touch upon employment/unemployment issues.

**3. Human capital dimension**, that focuses on the skills and knowledge that the representatives of the stakeholders identified possess in the specific field of interest for the process at hand. The human capital dimension also entails the capacity of the stakeholder to effectively share its own knowledge/skills to the benefit of the community. The evaluation of this dimension stems thus for the evaluation of each of the following variables, as seen in the Tool:

(3) Human capital								0,5
11	Knowledge/skills of the stakeholder on the topic							<b>Weighted value</b>
12	Awareness of the stakeholder on the topic							<b>0,3</b>
13	Capacity of the stakeholder to engage in public debate							
14	Capacity of the stakeholder to communicate through a range of different media							
15	Capacity of the stakeholder to access public venues							

Table 8 - Human capital variables within evaluation grid for relevance

As an example of this evaluation section, it might be that a stakeholder that could “very positively” affect the process at hand for what concerns its own awareness/knowledge on the topic, might be evaluated as “very negatively” equipped to engage in public debate. The overall score of this stakeholder for human capital would then be shaped by the sum of the scores of each variable, weighted against the importance given to that dimension, for the process at hand, within the “Community Evaluation”.

**4. Political capital dimensions**, evaluating the level of trust of the public authority towards the stakeholder, as well as the stakeholders’ own capacity to have a political stand in the topic at hand. Based on the principle of trust as defined by C.L.E.A.R., this dimension is thus structured within the tool in the following variables:

(4) Political capital								0,5
16	Trust of the local administration towards the stakeholder							<b>Weighted value</b>
17	Capacity of the stakeholder to engage further political actors							<b>0,3</b>
18	Capacity of the stakeholder to engage with local authorities/other stakeholders							
19	Capacity of the stakeholder to influence public opinion							
20	Political awareness of the stakeholder							

Table 9 - Political capital variables within evaluation grid for relevance

The political relevance of the stakeholder usually as a high relevance for either the priority setting or for very advanced phases of the decision making process. In a process that implies the need to engage further political actors to reach consensus, the capacity of the stakeholders to support this engagement would be evaluated as “very positive”. In a phase of feedback-gathering and revision the political engagement might not be so crucial, so this capacity of the stakeholder might be seen as “not relevant” at that stage. Therefore, the evaluation of each stakeholder might also depend on the relevance it has not only on a topic, but at a specific stage of the process.

### 3.4.2.2 Interest variables

INTEREST		DIMENSIONS	Extremely Negative	Negative	not applicable	Positive	Extremely positive	score per dimension
		(1) Social capital						#VALUE!
1		Interest for the stakeholder to engage in networking for the topic at stake						Weighted value
2		Interest of the stakeholder to represent a specific category for the topic at stake						#VALUE!
3		Interest of the stakeholder to be involved further in civil society activism for the topic at stake						
4		Interest of the stakeholder to start/influence change						
5		Interest of the stakeholder to increase its own acknowledgement among citizens						
		(2) Economic capital						#VALUE!
6		Potential economic benefit for the stakeholder						Weighted value
7		Willingness of the stakeholder to mobilise resources						#VALUE!
8		Willingness of the stakeholder to support access to existing exogenous resources						
9		Propensity of the stakeholder to provide in-kind support						
10		Interest of the stakeholder in increasing its own influence on the job market						
		(3) Human capital						#VALUE!
11		Interest of the stakeholder to share/increase own knowledge/skills on the topic						Weighted value
12		Willingness of the stakeholder to share/increase own awareness on the topic						#VALUE!
13		Willingness of the stakeholder to engage in public debate						
14		Willingness of the stakeholder to communicate through a range of different media						
15		Willingness of the stakeholder to access public venues						
		(4) Political capital						#VALUE!
16		Trust of the stakeholder towards the local administration						Weighted value
17		Political interest of the stakeholder in the topic						#VALUE!
18		Willingness of the stakeholder to engage with local authorities						
19		Interest for the stakeholder to reach out to a wider public						
20		Willingness of the stakeholder to share/increase own political awareness						
<b>INTEREST SCORE</b>								<b>#VALUE!</b>

Figure 12 - Overview of the interest section of the "Stakeholder Identification and Evaluation" page of the tool

These variables determine what might be the willingness of the stakeholder to effectively exercise its capacities for the decision-making process at hand. The public authorities using the tool, when assessing each stakeholders' potential interest, are asked to identify, for each variable, if the stakeholder would be willing to engage, thus affecting the process at stake:

- Very positively
- Positively
- Negatively
- Very negatively

The four dimensions of analysis mirror those identified for the "Relevance" evaluation. A high score in the dimensions of relevance does not necessarily imply a high score in the mirroring dimension related to Interest. In this case, as the section 4.2 "Participation Enhancement Strategies" describes,

it will be important to adopt Interest reinforcing actions. In areas where the Interest might be perceived as very high, but the level of competences/capacities (i.e. Relevance) was evaluated as poor, the need will be to enact capacity building strategies, to ensure to involve highly interested stakeholders, in order not to create frustration and enhance the level of mutual trust.

The variables identified for Interest, divided per dimension, are as follows:

**1. Social capital dimension**, thus evaluating, for the variables identified for “Relevance”, the potential willingness of the stakeholder to use its capacities for engaging in the process at hand. The variables, as defined in the Tool, are:

(1) Social capital							0,6
1	Interest for the stakeholder to engage in networking for the topic at stake						Weighted value
2	Interest of the stakeholder to represent a specific category for the topic at stake						0,3
3	Interest of the stakeholder to be involved further in civil society activism for the topic at stake						
4	Interest of the stakeholder to start/influence change						
5	Interest of the stakeholder to increase its own acknowledgement among citizens						

Table 10 - Social capital variables within evaluation grid for interest

**2. Economic capital dimension**, thus evaluating the economic interest that each stakeholder might have in participating in the process at hand. Even stakeholders with little economic power might be very interested to participate, so to also gain further influence, for instance, on the job market. The evaluation by the public authority in this regard will have to be based on the perceived benefits that the stakeholder might be able to achieve through engagement, based on the knowledge of needs/issues of the stakeholder category at hand. The variables of the economic dimension are:

(2) Economic capital							0,5
6	Potential economic benefit for the stakeholder						Weighted value
7	Willingness of the stakeholder to mobilise resources						0,3
8	Willingness of the stakeholder to support access to existing exogenous resources						
9	Propensity of the stakeholder to provide in-kind support						
10	Interest of the stakeholder in increasing its own influence on the job market						

Table 11 - Economic capital variables within evaluation grid for interest

**3. Human capital dimension**, similarly to the economic dimension, is related (besides the willingness of the stakeholder to share expertise) to the benefit, in terms of acquiring skills/knowledge, that the stakeholder might have in participating to the process. Understanding this might be useful so as to identify potential relevant incentives to stimulate willingness to participate of extremely relevant stakeholders.

(3) Human capital								0,5
11	Interest of the stakeholder to share/increase own knowledg/skills on the topic							<b>Weighted value</b>
12	Willingness of the stakeholder to share/increase own awareness on the topic							<b>0,3</b>
13	Willingness of the stakeholder to engage in public debate							
14	Willingness of the stakeholder to communicate through a range of different media							
15	Willingness of the stakeholder to access public venues							

Table 12 - Human capital variables within evaluation grid for interest

**4. Political capital dimension**, thus evaluating the trust the stakeholder might have towards the public authority. This also is related to the stakeholders' willingness to either share contacts and knowledge, or to the potential to increase its own political awareness and understanding. This willingness is in this case ultimately based on the level of trust. If trust is low, there needs to be a strong incentive system for stakeholders to engage at a political level.

(4) Political capital								0,5
16	Trust of the stakeholder towards the local administration							<b>Weighted value</b>
17	Political interest of the stakeholder in the topic							<b>0,3</b>
18	Willigness of the stakeholder to engage with local authorities							
19	Interest for the stakeholder to reach out to a wider public							
20	Willigness of the stakeholder to share/increase own political awareness							

Table 13 - Political capital variables within evaluation grid for interest

As the stakeholder is assessed for each variable, according to the knowledge and perception of the elected public authority (as promoter of the decision-making participatory process), the overall dimension scores are automatically weighted so to mirror the relevance of the dimension identified

as most relevant in the 'Community Evaluation'. Thus, each stakeholder is evaluated not only based on its own capacities and willingness to engage, but also against the actual context in which it is called to engage.

The 'Stakeholder Evaluation' thus results in 2 scores (one for relevance, one for interest), ranging from 0 to 1. The tool automatically plots these scores on a graph, divided in 4 quadrants (as in the figure below). Each quadrant represents a different level of potential involvement of the stakeholder.

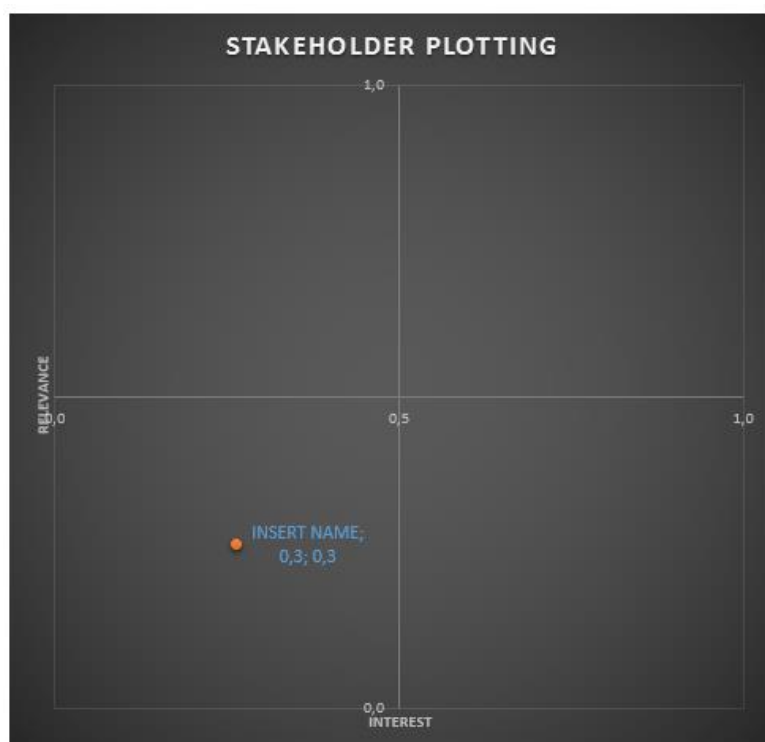


Figure 13 - Stakeholder plotting in the Tool



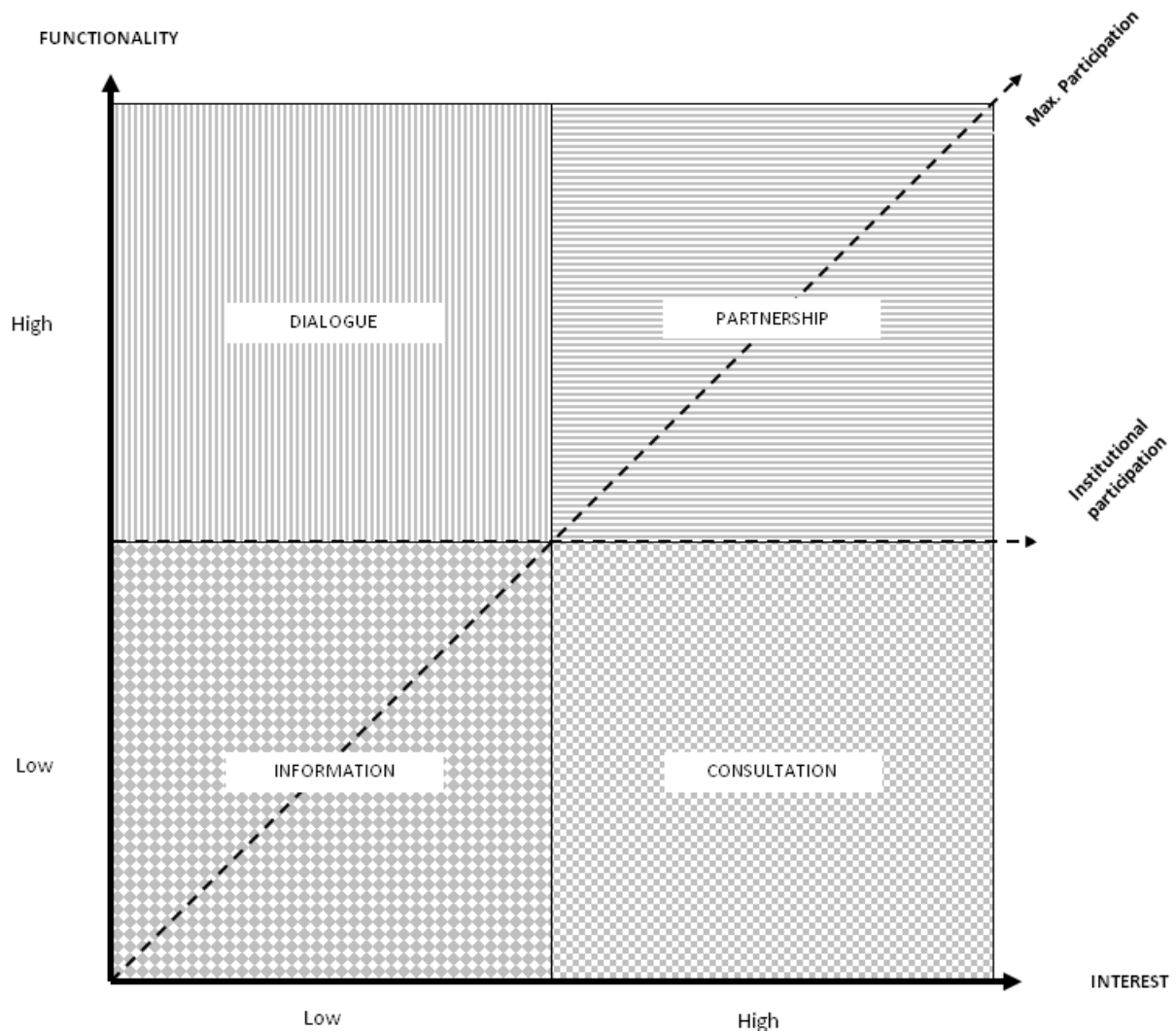


Figure 14 - Taxonomy for stakeholders' identification

The graph (taxonomy) is generated from the intersection of two dimensions:

- degree of perceived actor's interest (by the public authority promoting the participatory process) for the topic at hand (x-axis, horizontal);
- degree of functionality perceived by the public authority on the functionality of the stakeholder firm for the topic at hand (y-axis, vertical).

Proceeding with a horizontal reading from the bottom of the diagram, the four types identified, and relative levels / variables, are:

Typology of involvement	Variable levels of involvement
<b>Information</b>	↓ Low interest of <i>stakeholder</i>
	↓ Low relevance perceived
<b>Consultation</b>	↑ High interest of <i>stakeholder</i>
	↓ Low relevance perceived
<b>Dialogue</b>	↓ Low interest of <i>stakeholder</i>
	↑ High relevance perceived

Partnership	↑ High interest of <i>stakeholder</i>
	↑ High relevance perceived

Table 14 - Typologies and levels of stakeholders' involvement

The dashed line labelled 'Institutional Participation', which stands at the junction of the four quadrants, represents that level of mandatory participation and, therefore, non-elastic compared to perceived functionality parameters or degree of interest. Specifically, it represents those types of institutional actors' involvement that must be involved (by law or institutional configurations) in the decision-making, regardless of their interest on a given subject or the degree of contribution that the promoter believes they can make.

## 4 THE STRATEGIES

Since the tool plots the stakeholder analysed on the graph, in one of the 4 quadrants or at their intersection, it is important to understand the implications of each level of participation (i.e. each quadrant) and the relevant actions to be implemented at that level, with the stakeholders following in each category, to effectively implement participation at feasible levels for the widest range of stakeholders.

### 4.1 PARTICIPATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The decision-making process is composed of six different phases<sup>14</sup>, as follows:

- Priority setting, that is the definition of current priorities for topic at stake, based on a need-assessment;
- Drafting, that is the elaboration of a preliminary version of the policy/strategy, based on need assessment performed;
- Decision, that is the definition stage of the policy/strategy;
- Implementation, that is, turning the decision into practice through actions;
- Monitoring, that is, following the development of the implementation phase and its impacts on the target groups it is addressed to;
- Policy tuning, that is, integrating the insights gathered during the monitoring activity into an amelioration of the policy at stake.

For stakeholders falling in each quadrant, involvement in the process might be foreseen for all phases of the decision-making. Of course, for each quadrant the strategies and actions implemented to allow stakeholders to participate are different. The present section illustrates objectives for quadrant, for each phase of decision-making. In addition, strategies and potential methodologies of implementation are suggested, for the effective involvement of stakeholders in each quadrant.

#### 4.1.1 Quadrant 1 – Information

Stakeholders falling in this quadrant are characterised by a perceived low interest as well as relevance on the topic at hand. Yet, it is crucial that information is always provided to all in a decision-making process, in line with the principle of openness and transparency of CoE 2017 Guidelines for Civil Participation. At all stages of decision-making all relevant information should be presented in clear and easily understandable language and in an appropriate and accessible format (both online and offline), without undue administrative obstacles and, in principle, free of charge, in accordance with open data principles. This is valid both for the specific stakeholders falling into this quadrant after the evaluation, as well as for the population at large.

Specifically, for the different phases of decision-making, it is important to:

- Priority setting: ensure brokerage of knowledge and raise awareness on the methodology used for priority setting, the actors involved as well as the main topics considered;
- Drafting: ensure transparency, thus that all relevant and public documents (i.e. not those encrypted for security purposes) are available for consultation;
- Decision: ensure prompt delivery of information on the decision made;

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<sup>14</sup> ISIG. (2015). European experience of citizens' participation in cross-border governance, Council of Europe: Strasbourg. Available at <https://rm.coe.int/1680686b1b> (last accessed February 2017), p.12-13

- Implementation: ensure transparent management in all procedures implemented;
- Monitoring: ensuring transparency of indicators and criteria used, as well as of opportunities to feedback the public administration on enhancements needed;
- Policy tuning: ensure feedback is provided to all, detailing the way feedbacks and experts' evaluations have been integrated in the new policy definition.

As for the obligation towards openness and transparency for the wide public, there might be different ways to effectively implement the information level of participation.

As already set forth by C.L.E.A.R. tool<sup>15</sup>, the actions implemented, in accordance with the principles of civil participation, might include:

- Opening meetings to the public;
- Publishing agendas, reports and other relevant materials online, on public authority website or on social media;
- Producing brochures and posters to be disseminated at community meeting areas, so to ensure reaching also citizens with limited or no internet access, or no digital competences;
- Producing documents as well as information on public events in the official language as well as in any minority language present within the community, so to disseminate information to the widest public as possible.

For what concerns specific stakeholders identified through the “Stakeholder Identification and Evaluation” as belonging to the “information” quadrant, more specific information strategies might be identified, such as:

- Updates on the development of the decision-making process through dedicated newsletters, sent via email or to the postal address;
- Dedicated invitations to participate to public presentation events;
- Dedicated information shaped on aspects of the topic at hand that might be more specifically targeted to the stakeholders' specific interests.

#### 4.1.2 Quadrant 2 – Consultation

Stakeholders falling in this quadrant are characterised by a perceived high interest, but a low level of relevance on the topic at hand. Engaging stakeholders through consultation allows public authorities to collect their views at different stages of the decision-making process.

Specifically, for the different phases of decision-making, it is important to:

- Priority setting: involve the stakeholders in a need assessment procedure, so to gather their insights and perceptions on the specific topic;
- Drafting: ensure the integration of the insights gathered from stakeholders through need assessment conducted during Priority setting;
- Decision: ensure the possibility for stakeholders to feedback on decision made, and receive answers/explanations;
- Implementation: offer possibilities to stakeholders to challenge the implementation process, by raising objections, or to ask for clarification on the methodologies and procedures adopted;
- Monitoring: offer possibilities to stakeholders to feedback on the implementation procedure, offering ideas, suggesting changes, highlighting obstacles;

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15 C.L.E.A.R. Tool Final version [CDLR(2008)42], p.20

- Policy tuning: ensure the integration of monitoring insights received from stakeholders into the re-definition of the policy for its amelioration.

Relevant tools for the actual implantation of the “Consultation” strategy might be:

- Opening an online questionnaire to gather stakeholders’ needs and feedbacks;
- Creating opportunities for non-online data gathering for stakeholders with no access to the internet or no digital competences (e.g. making the need assessment questionnaire and feedback forms available on paper at town hall and other public meeting places);
- Ensure relevant stakeholders are aware of the online and offline data gathering tools and opportunities (by sending newsletters via email or post);
- Organising dedicated meeting with stakeholders to allow for direct data gathering/feedback.

For what concerns the methodologies to be used for the dedicated data gathering meetings, this section offers two options: the brainstorming, and the world café.

#### 4.1.2.1 *Brainstorming*

The brainstorming is a creative group technique that aims to stimulate ideas and insight on a given topic. It is generally used in the initial phases of a participatory process, so to allow for the gathering of different ideas and insight, without the restriction of a limited mind-frame.

Brainstorming works very well for group up to 15 participants. For more than 15 participants, it is advisable to split the group in smaller working clusters, so to allow for a smooth facilitation.

The working atmosphere of a brainstorming is an informal one, that allows for creative thinking. Having a spacious, luminous room helps to make participants feel comfortable. It is advisable to make the group work around a round table (i.e. where no one is at the head of the table, and all are, also physically, on an equal level).

Participants can also be standing (the brainstorming sessions are rather quick, max 20 minutes per session) and work around a poster located on an empty wall.

The organisers need to provide a block of post-its and a black marker for each participant.

The brainstorming develops according to the following procedural steps:

1. In each working group, a facilitator asks participants to write down on their post-it their ideas (they might be needs, perceptions, problems, etc.) on the topic discussed. Each participant writes down his/her own post-it in silence, making sure to use the marker and not a pen (so that all post-it will be visible once on the poster) and to use 1 post-it for 1 idea/concept, and not to crowd all ideas on only one post-it. This stage of individual, silent work last for 5 minutes.
2. The facilitator invites all participants to post their post-its on the wall or on the dedicated paper sheet. Then he/she asks the participants to work in silence to move post-its to form clusters, i.e. groups of post-its linked by the same theme. If a participant feels that his/her post-it should be in a different position than the one chosen by another member of the group, he/she can move it to where it seems to be relevant, without asking for clarifications or explaining his/her reasons. This phase lasts 5 minutes and is concluded when the moving of post-its is finished and once the wall or poster the identified clusters are visible. The facilitator then asks the group to work together to find titles for each of the clusters, so as to identify the thematic areas.
3. Once the group has named the clusters, the facilitator moderates a debate aimed at defining the priority of the clusters. On the topic at hand, which is the most relevant theme (cluster)

according to the group? This phase lasts between 5 and 10 minutes and concludes the brainstorming session.

Should the participants be working in more than one group, it is advisable to have a final plenary session during which each group can brief the other participants on its work and insights. The facilitator can then decide to moderate a debate among participants.

Insights and data gathered during this process should be used by the public authority to inform the decision-making process, should this be at the priority-setting phase or already ready to integrate the feedback on implementation and tuning actions.

**Important note for facilitators:** the silence featured in the first two steps of implementation of a brainstorming is a very important element to guarantee the success of the procedure. Working in silence, each participant has the chance to share his/her own idea, in written form, so to see it integrated in the following prioritisation process. If the brainstorming is conducted through open debate since its initial phase, the risk is that participants with high charisma and capacity to talk in public might override the possibility of quieter or introvert participants to express themselves. Since the objective of brainstorming is to allow for a proliferation of ideas, this group dynamic leading to the dominance of the most extrovert necessarily impairs the process, imposing only few ideas, and limiting the capacity of expression of other perspectives. Thus, the role of the facilitator in this process is key, to ensure that each has the right to a dedicated, silent space to gather and write ideas, so that all have a chance to express their opinion.

#### 4.1.2.2 *World Café*

The World café method aims to stimulate informal conversations on topics of interest among different stakeholders, allowing for cross-fertilization of ideas. It might be used in the initial stage of a participatory process, or a second meeting following a first data gathering done through brainstorming.

World café works very well for large groups, starting from 15 and up to 100 participants. Stakeholders involved gather around “working tables” where 5-10 participants at the time are called to debate.

The working atmosphere of a World café is informal, almost simulating that of a real café, where people can meet and discuss. As for brainstorming, it is advisable to use a spacious luminous room. The room has to be equipped with round tables, able to host from five to eight participants each. In order to encourage the informal debate atmosphere, jugs of water, coffee, tea and cups could be made available for all to bring to the table and sip while working.

The organisers need to provide for each table markers and post-its, as well as posters to write on. In addition, a facilitator is needed to moderate debate at each working table.

The World café develops according to the following procedural steps:

1. During the preparatory phase, organisers think of at least 3 guiding questions that they would like to receive an input on from participants, on the topic at stake. An advice would be to ask for identification of issues perceived by stakeholders on the topic, potential resources already existing to face those issues and further needs to overcome obstacles.
2. At World café, participants would be asked to sit at the tables available in the room, making sure each table hosts between 5 and 10 people. At each table, a facilitator would be welcoming participants and moderating the debate. Once all participants are seated (ideally, it would be better if each table would host representatives of different categories of stakeholders), the

facilitator introduces the first question for debate. For 20 minutes, all tables debate on the same question. The facilitator takes notes on post it or on the poster, to keep the memory of the group.

3. At the end of the first session, all tables stop working simultaneously. The facilitator and one member per group (that will be the 'memory' of the table) remain seated, while all the other participants migrate to other tables.
4. Once all are again seated, the second 20 minutes' session starts. It is introduced by the 'memory', who updates the newcomers on the insights of the table on the first working question. Then the facilitator introduces the second working question and asks participants to debate based on the insights of that table on the first session.
5. At the end of the second session, the same procedure of migration is reiterated. This is done for each working questions. The number of 'table turns' will thus be equal to the number of working questions.

At the end, the facilitators invite all the 'memories' of the tables to brief all the participants on the narrative developed by each table following the guiding questions. The facilitator can then decide to moderate a debate among participants in a plenary session.

Insights and data gathered during this process should be used by the public authority to further develop ideas generated during a brainstorming session, and in any case to inform the decision-making process, making sure to integrate stakeholders' insights, might this be in the shape of needs (for priority setting) or feedbacks (for monitoring and policy tuning).

**Important note for facilitators:** the role of facilitators of a World café is more active than those of a brainstorming. In fact, the balance of voices that during brainstorming is guaranteed by silence and possibility write on post-its, in a World café must be ensured by the facilitator. The facilitator needs to guard group dynamics from power games and making sure all feel free to speak. The facilitator needs to be extremely concentrated and committed, while acting in a very relaxed way so to make participants feel comfortable. Thus, it is advisable to use a professional facilitator to ensure the successful outcome of such participatory event.

#### 4.1.3 Quadrant 3 – Dialogue

Stakeholders falling in this quadrant are characterised by a perceived low interest, but a high level of relevance on the topic at hand. Engaging stakeholders through dialogue allows public authorities to benefit from stakeholders' competences, while ensuring a constant feedback so to increase the level of interest and keep the stakeholders involved. Dialogue differs from consultation as it implies a constant bilateral communication between public authority and stakeholders. In the consultation quadrant, the willingness to engage stems mainly from stakeholders and the process organizers make sure stakeholders have the possibility to express their views. On the dialogue quadrant, on the contrary, it is the public authority that mostly feels the need to include the stakeholder's capacities and competences into the decisional process, thus creating incentives and occasions for a mutual exchange with the stakeholder.

Specifically, for the different phases of decision-making, it is important to:

- Priority setting: involve the stakeholders in the definition of priorities, based on their knowledge and/or influence on the topic at hand;
- Drafting: ensure there is a multilateral revision process of the documents prepared as draft of the strategy/policy;

- Decision: ensure stakeholders endorse the decision made and the steps defined for implementation;
- Implementation: involve stakeholders in the implementation actions, based on their competence/roles within civil society and economic sector;
- Monitoring: involve stakeholders asking their feedback on different stages/methodologies of the implementation process and procedures;
- Policy tuning: involve stakeholders in the revision of the policy, considering their suggestions for improvement when re-defining the amelioration strategy.

Relevant tools for the actual implementation of the “Dialogue” strategy (besides the Information and Consultation strategies that could also be applied) might be:

- Organising dedicated in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders;
- Organising meetings with stakeholders to allow for direct exchange of information, gather data and provide clarifications where needed. An example of the methodology to be adopted is given in the following paragraph.

#### 4.1.3.1 *Focus groups*

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

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

Yet, to make participants feel comfortable, a luminous room is important. Participants sit around a table, to debate on the topic at hand. Useful material might be post-its, markers and poster, although in focus group it is rather the facilitator that keeps the flow of the discussion by making notes on a flipchart. This allows stakeholders to only focus on the topic they are debating, without having to keep track of the flow in their notes. For this purpose, it might be advisable for the facilitator to be supported by a note-taker, who could write the minutes of the meeting in support to the facilitator’s notes used to keep the debate on track.

A focus group can last 1 or even 2 hours, as it implies a rather in-depth analysis of the ideas and proposals set forth.

The focus group develops according to the following procedural steps:

1. It is advisable for organizers to prepare relevant guiding questions before the meeting, on the specificities of the topic at hand on which stakeholder’s expertise and point of view are needed;
2. During the focus group, the facilitator takes the lead of the debate, asking each participant to introduce him/herself and his/her role and competences on the topic;
3. The first guiding question is illustrated to participants, that start debating based on their competences and knowledge on the topic. Differently from brainstorming or World café, during a focus group stakeholders act based on their role and actual knowledge, as the information they share needs to be checked against actual resources and feasible opportunities;
4. The facilitator makes sure all guiding questions are touched upon, ensuring during the time of the meeting all topics are analysed. While facilitating the debate and encouraging all to speak, the facilitator takes note on a flipchart, so that notes are visible for all to comment on;



5. To close the meeting, the facilitator summarises the information gathered for all to agree upon and modifies the notes based on stakeholder's feedbacks, to ensure all has been understood as it was meant by participants.

**Important note for facilitators:** while a facilitator does not need to be an expert on the topic at hand, it is advisable that he/she possesses a certain level of competence on the matter. In fact, focus groups are very professional meetings, where, to achieve the trust of participants, it is important to interact on a high level of professionalism, showing and understanding of the topics at stake.

#### 4.1.4 Quadrant 4 – Partnership

Stakeholders falling in this quadrant are characterised by a perceived high interest, as well as high level of relevance and competence on the topic at hand. Thus, there is no need to stimulate their interest to participate, but it is rather important to create appropriate embedded participation mechanisms, such as dedicated committees or scheduled periodical meetings.

For the different phases of decision-making, it is important to:

- Priority setting: involve the stakeholders in the definition of priorities, based on their knowledge and/or influence on the topic at hand, asking them to involve also other relevant stakeholders, consulting them also on the methodology to be used for data gathering;
- Drafting: ensure the drafting is done in cooperation. The stakeholder might also be involved in writing parts of the draft relevant to his/her competence;
- Decision: ensure decision is jointly taken with stakeholders, within a dedicated permanent committee for instance;
- Implementation: involve stakeholders in the implementation actions and methodologies, making them responsible for certain areas of the implementation phase;
- Monitoring: involve stakeholders in the definition of monitoring methodology as well as in monitoring actions (this might also be done through the creation of a dedicated working committee);
- Policy tuning: cooperate with stakeholders in the revision of the policy.

Relevant tools for the actual implementation of the “Partnership” strategy (besides the information, consultation and dialogue strategies that could also be applied) might be:

- Creation of dedicated drafting, monitoring or policy tuning committees, involving specific stakeholders for their field of competence and interest;
- Signature of multilateral cooperation agreements with stakeholders, specifying distribution of role and responsibilities during the decision-making process;
- Organisation of dedicated working sessions to develop in depth priorities, objectives and strategies within the decision making-process at hand. An example of this could be the organisation of an EASW, as detailed in the paragraph below.

##### 4.1.4.1 EASW – European Awareness Scenario Workshop

The EASW technique was elaborated within the Innovation Programme of the European Commission in 1994, as a pilot action aimed to foster innovative participatory processes across Europe. After a successful implementation within initiatives on environmental issues (e.g. Agenda 21), EASW was later implemented in a broader context of local development issues. EASW implies the need for a careful planning and organisation, and thus is best suited to involve stakeholders that already cooperate with the local authority within a committee or an institutionalised agreement.

It is usually conducted in groups of 24-32 participants, from different stakeholders' categories. The group is further divided in smaller groups of 6-8 participants, working in parallel sessions. For this purpose, it might be advisable to have a big room for plenary sessions, while allowing then the groups to work in dedicated, smaller rooms. Each separate working room should have a table (ideally, round) and post-its, markers, flip charts for the group to work on. EASW implies the involvement of a specialised National Monitor, as well as of as many facilitators as the parallel working group will be.

EASW develops in 2 working days, during which participants work on future scenarios and strategies on the topic at hand. The atmosphere should encourage communication and open dialogue, thus it might be useful to organise coffee breaks, joint lunches, etc., so as to allow participants to familiarise also besides strictly working times.

An EASW is organised as follows:

1. Participants should be informed in advance on the specific content of the workshop, so to be prepared and adequately informed;
2. On the first day, an EASW facilitator introduces the workshop objectives and methodologies. He/she also presents different potential future scenarios in relation to the topic discussed;
3. Then each working group (of 6-8 people, per stakeholders' category) moves with a facilitator to a dedicated working room, to elaborate creative solutions to the challenges imagined as consequences of the proposed scenarios. This part of the work is called 'vision making' and can last for the whole first day of work: each working group brainstorms and debates on the implication of scenarios, writing on posters, post-its, making graphs etc., supported by the facilitator;
4. At the end of the first day, all participants convey in the plenary room and each group details the work done in the previous day. The plenary debate starts, with the aim of conducting a comparative analysis of the different visions. At the end of the plenary debate, participants have identified the elements that their visions have in common, as a starting point for the second day of work;
5. The second day starts with the participants gathered in their parallel working sessions, where each group works on the shared vision identified at the end of the previous day (*What might be the solutions to those challenges? What are the resources to be used? The synergies needed? The main actors to be involved?*);
6. Then all participants gather back in the plenary, where they present their work and again identify common elements to all working groups, selecting best ideas and most relevant topics of actions;
7. The national EASW monitor coordinates the drafting of recommendations for decision makers on the topic at hand and prepares a report on the meeting for transparency purposes.

**Important note for facilitators:** it is important that participants feel at ease and have all the tools for effectively participating to the debate. Thus, adequate information and material needs to be sent to all in advance, so to allow stakeholders to prepare and the decision-making process to benefit from informed debate and work. For the same reason, it is very important that shortly after the meeting the recommendations for the decision-making process are drafted and sent to all participants for joint revision, so to ensure all key-elements have been captured.

## 4.2 PARTICIPATION ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES

Participation is not a static process. It is always evolving, as the objective of a public authority should always be that of increasing the level and possibilities for the largest number of stakeholders to

contribute to the decision-making process. The figure below shows the possibility for stakeholders located on a quadrant to move to the next, if their level of relevance (thus competences/expertise) or interest increase. This section details some potential actions to be implemented in order to facilitate this circular movement within the graph, allowing for a greater degree of civil participation within the community.

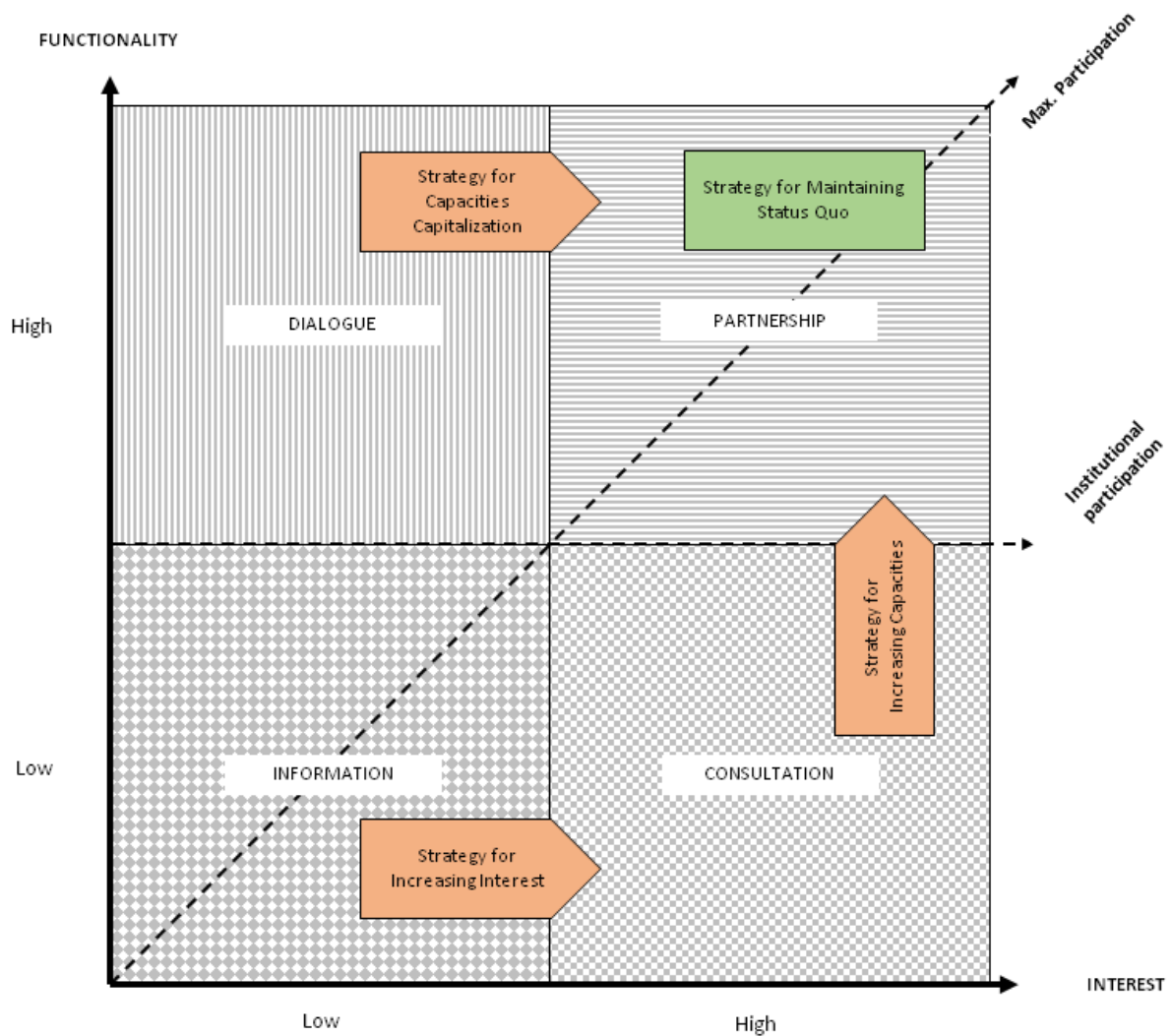


Figure 15 - Strategies for increasing the level of participation of stakeholders

#### 4.2.1 Strategy 1 – From Information to Consultation

The strategy aims to increase the interest of the stakeholders towards the topics on the political agenda of the public authority, so to stimulate stakeholders' insights and feedbacks, in all the stages of decision-making, from priority setting to policy tuning, even if their relevance for the public authority remains low.

The actions directed towards this aim concern awareness raising and delivery of targeted information to stakeholders, such as:

#### Communication plan

- Elaboration of a dedicated communication plan, stemming from an accurate profiling of stakeholders' categories identified as potential target group. This profile might include specific interest, most used communication channels, etc.;
- Elaboration of a graphic coordinated identity for the topic at hand (logo, development of templates for brochures, presentations, etc.);
- Creation of social media profiles (Facebook, Twitter) for the initiative/topic at hand, so to also gather comments from stakeholders/citizens;
- Update on the initiatives related to the topic on institutional website;
- Creation of dedicated mailing list (stemming from stakeholders' mapping) to send dedicated newsletters to stakeholders, per category of interest/activity;
- Planning of periodical press conferences and press releases to inform and update stakeholders and the public on the topic.

#### **Organisation of dedicated open days**

- Open days to raise awareness on the topic, possibly during events that already gather many different stakeholders on their topic of interest;
- Initiatives in schools to raise awareness on the topic;
- Dedicated invitations to representatives of stakeholders' categories on debates on the topic related to their potential domains of interest.

#### **4.2.2 Strategy 2 – From Consultation to Dialogue**

Stakeholders that are already interested on a certain topic are often strongly willing to actively engage and see their insights included in the decision-making process. Thus, it is important for public authorities to avoid the frustration of such engaged stakeholders and to invest in their capacity building so to increase their competences and can contribute further to policy development.

#### ***Capacity building and training:***

- Organisation of open training days on the modes and tools of participation, addressed to all interested stakeholders having expressed their interest in engaging further in public life;
- Although resources of a local authority might to always allow for free training provided to stakeholders, support might be given by those stakeholders already in "Partnership" and willing to economically support the initiative or administer the training themselves, due to their already high competences. Also, EU funds such as those of EACEA programmes could be applied for, as they support initiatives aimed at encouraging active citizenship;
- Development of an on-line platform for feedback sharing and peer-to-peer exchanges for all concerned parties: i) the promoters of the project/initiative (e.g. municipality), ii) "partner" stakeholders (i.e. stakeholders that fall in to the Partnership typology) and iii) "interested" stakeholders (i.e. stakeholders that fall in to the "Consultation typology"), to stimulate peer-to-peer exchanges on the platform between the two typologies of stakeholders, for a knowledge and experience sharing.

#### **4.2.3 Strategy 3 – From Dialogue to Partnership**

To stimulate the interest of "qualified" stakeholders it is important to engage them in one-to-one dialogues and networking, so to identify the relevant incentives to further involve them as partners in the decision-making process.

#### **Individual engagement**

- Organisation of one-to-one meetings with relevant stakeholders, in order to raise their awareness on the topic and investigate their potential interest to further engage in the process.

#### **Group engagement**

- Organisation of networking events, such as dinners, lunches, awareness raising events, for different stakeholders to meet and exchange views and ideas on the topic at hand;
- Organisation of networking events including also “Partnership” stakeholders, so to encourage dialogue with actors already highly involved in the public life;
- Establishment of dedicated advisory boards per topic of interest, ensuring that meetings are not too frequent, so not to impose excessive weight on board members, but also allocating for each a specific responsibility in the drafting process revision.

#### **4.2.4 Strategy 4 – Strengthening of Partnership**

Stakeholders already falling in the “Partnership” quadrant are committed to engage. Yet, it is very important to keep them involved, ensuring they are adequately supported in their role and efforts.

#### **Committees:**

- Establishment of permanent committees engaged in the topic at stake – incentivizing the cooperation within a long-term approach (i.e. permanent basis, beyond capitalizing on the experiences of specific initiatives).

#### **Networking**

- Organisation of networking events, so to allow members of different committees to meet and exchange ideas and create contacts, as an incentive for them to participate as a source of personal and professional growth.

#### **Budget**

- It might be relevant, if the working and travelling commitments are many for the stakeholders within the committees, to provide a dedicated budget to cover at least their travelling expenses, so not to exclude from remaining in “Partnership” those stakeholders that could not afford to participate to all meetings.

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