EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY (CDLR)

C.L.E.A.R. TOOL:

FINAL VERSION

Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the Directorate General of
Democracy and Political Affairs
Directorate of Democratic Institutions

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Introduction

This document contains the final draft of the CLEAR self-assessment tool as it results from the two waves of testing held between 2005-2008.

The final editing was carried out by a small working party established at the initiative of the LR-DP Rapporteur, Mrs Greta Billing (Norway).

Once approved by the CDLR, this tool is to be appended to the draft Recommendation on the evaluation, auditing and monitoring of participation and participation policies at local and regional level which the CDLR is to deal with under item 6.3.2.4 of its agenda.

Action required

The CDLR is invited to approve the CLEAR self-assessment tool, making any modification it deems appropriate.

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CLEAR

A self-assessment tool for citizen participation at the local level

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Preface

How to improve citizen participation in public life at local level? More and more local authorities face and address this challenge. The CLEAR tool was designed to help them in their endeavour by providing an instrument for a self-assessment process that helps develop policy responses which are best suited to the particular situation. The tool makes use of the academic insights gained in the field of participation. Drawing on their academic research, It was developed by a team of experts consisting of Vivien Lowndes (De Montfort University, UK), Lawrence Pratchett (De Montfort University, UK) and Gerry Stoker (University of Manchester, UK), at the request of the European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) of the Council of Europe.

A special word of thanks is extended to the local authorities in Europe that participated in the two waves of testing of the initial version of the CLEAR tool. The results enabled its adaption and experience with implementation to be gained and laid down in the user manual. The following local authorities took part:

- Genk; Mons; Saint-Gilles (Belgium)
- Byala; Harmanli; Kardjali; Montana (Bulgaria)
- Copenhagen; Odense (Denmark)
- Hameenlinna; Imatra; Tampere (Finland)
- Arnhem; Dantumadeel; Deurne; Utrecht; Zoetermeer (Netherlands)
- Askim; Heroy; Kristiansand; Øvre-Eiker; Vadso (Norway)
- Bacau, Bucuresti; Hunedoara; Sibiu; Teleorman (Romania)
- Bratislava; Kezmarok; Vel'ke Kapusany; Zavazna Poruba (Slovakia)
- Barcelona; Cordoba; Madrid; Malaga; San Sebastian (Spain)

The Council of Europe is convinced that the CLEAR tool -with the self-assessment process it proposes- can be of great help to local authorities to launch a debate on the state of participation in the local community and give guidance on how to improve it. It hopes that making it available will encourage and help local authorities to continue and strengthen their efforts to engage with and involve citizens in public life at local level.

**General introduction – (analysing) citizen participation
at the local level**

Participation of citizens is at the very heart of the idea of democracy. Effective democracy depends on citizens having a say and being heard. A commitment to enhanced public participation lies at the heart of the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the participation of citizens in local public life [Rec(2001)19]. The aim is to see consultation and participation embedded in the culture of all local authorities in all member states.

Why is participation an important policy option? Firstly, participation is crucial to help sustain the legitimacy of decisions and deliver 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 taken into account.

A second key argument for finding new ways to engage with people is that governments need to listen and learn in order to design better policies and services. How does one know if public services are meeting people's needs unless they have been asked in a coordinated and sustained way? Democracy is largely a question of aggregating various interests and opinions, of deliberation and of negotiating between different interests and opinions so that deals and compromises can be struck. 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.

Finally, 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 manner in which 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.

In a nutshell, participation through various forms of voting and consultation gives life to democracy. It provides a way of allowing people to influence decisions that they are particularly concerned about and allows for input into the decision-making process more focused and specific than through the electoral participation alone. Representative and participatory democracy are not alternatives, but complement one another.

The local level in many respects is the ideal setting for engaging the public beyond the ballot box as the immediacy and closeness allow a more intense and developed exchange between governors and governed to develop.

The health of our democratic cultures and practices varies considerably across Europe, but in all countries finding better ways of engaging the full range and variety of citizens in local decision-making remains an attractive and enhancing goal. Encouraging participation remains a welcome and appropriate response by public authorities to tackle the challenges of our complex and changing societies.

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

The CLEAR framework describes these potential obstacles as well as the possible boosters. The CLEAR tool uses these insights to help local authorities understand their local situation and develop adequate policy responses.

The CLEAR tool exists to help local authorities and other organisations or groups at local level to better understand public participation in their localities. It is a diagnostic tool: one which helps identify particular strengths and problems with participation. Once identified, comprehensive strategies for enhancing public participation can be drawn up to address the obstacles. Building community capacity or a sense of citizenship are not challenges on which policy makers can necessarily expect easy or quick results. However, the CLEAR framework does show that increasing local participation is possible: all key factors it identifies and which drive up participation are open to policy makers' influence.

Local authorities can strengthen citizen participation. They can strengthen community life and cohesion, support social infrastructure and empower citizens to participate. The CLEAR tool with its questionnaire helps analyse different dimensions of participation.

The first part of this document contains the CLEAR self assessment tool. The second part of the document is a "users guide to CLEAR". It shows how the CLEAR framework can be used to analyse participation and explains how to use the CLEAR tool.

Box 1: The Council of Europe and citizen participation at local level

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The Council of Europe has a long tradition of encouraging local democracy and participation. Through the Council of Europe, governments look at ways to facilitate citizens' right to have their say and increase the role they play in local affairs.

Cornerstones of its work so far are the established legal standards, such as the:
- the Charter on Local Self-government (CETS 122)
- the Convention on the Participation of foreigners in public life at local level (CETS 144)
- Recommendation (2001)19 on the participation of citizens in public local life
- Recommendation (2009) on evaluating, auditing and monitoring participation and participation policies at local and regional level .

The CLEAR tool was developed by the European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR). CDLR and the Council of Europe Centre of Expertise on local government reform are involved in a wide range of activities on democratic participation and public ethics at local and regional level.

For more information consult the website www.coe.int/local An electronic version of the CLEAR document is available.

Through the Congress of local and regional authorities European territorial authorities are themselves active to strengthen local and regional democracy and participation. Further information on these achievements and activities can be found under: www.coe.int/congress.

PART I – The CLEAR self-assessment tool

1.   From analysis to policy responses

The first step to improving citizen participation is to understand its determining factors. The CLEAR framework, which is the foundation of the CLEAR tool, brings together the theoretical and empirical insights of a large body of research on participation.[1]

The CLEAR framework summarises into five key factors the various insights and understanding research of public participation. has produced. It argues that participation is most successful where citizens can do, like to, are enabled to, asked to and responded to (see Box 2).

Box 2: five factors affecting citizen participation

> Participation is most successful where citizens:
>
> **C an do –** that is, have the resources and skills and knowledge to participate;
> **L ike to –** that is, have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;
> **E nabled to –** that is, are provided with the opportunity for participation;
> **A sked to –** that is, are involved by official bodies or voluntary groups;
> **R esponded to –** that is, see evidence that their views have been considered.

The CLEAR tool helps to analyse the five factors in a given municipality in order to enable the development of targeted policies for improving participation. Table 1 gives a summary. Starting from the five key factors determining citizen participation, it identifies the underlying variables which can be measured and analysed. Following the analysis, it developing policy responses on the basis of suggested policy targets and ideas for policy responses.

Please consult part II of this document – the user's guide - for further explanations on how to use the CLEAR tool.

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[1] For more details on the CLEAR framework and its conceptual and empirical basis, see: Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G. (2006) 'Diagnosing and remedying the failings of official participation schemes: the CLEAR framework' *Social Policy and Society*, Vol 5, No 2 pp281-91; V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker (2006) *Locality Matters: Making Participation Count in Local Politics*, London: IPPR

Table 1: Overview of the CLEAR tool – from analysis to policy responses and improve citizen participation

Key factor	Analysis			Developing Policy Response	
	Description	**Key Variables**	**possible Policy targets**	**Possible Policy Responses**	
Can do	**The resources to participate count** The individual resource that people have to mobilise and organise (speaking, writing and technical skills, and the confidence to use them) make a difference in participation	Educational attainment Employment and social class Demography Resources Skills/knowledge	Capacity building, training and support of volunteers, mentoring, leadership development	Community development, training and development and practical support through the provision of community centres and resources targeted at those groups or communities that may need help to find their voice.	
Like to	**Sense of belonging and attachment is a precondition for participation** To commit to participation requires an identification with the public entity that is the focus of engagement	Identity Homogeneity Trust Citizenship	Civic renewal, citizenship, community development, neighbourhood governance, social capital	Build a sense of community or neighbourliness. People have to feel part of a community to be comfortable with participation; so strategies of building social or community cohesion may be an important part in creating the right environment for participation	

Enabled to	**Participation needs opportunities and channels** The civic infrastructure of groups and umbrella organisations makes a difference because it creates or blocks an opportunity structure for participation	Types of civic organisation Activities Civic infrastructure	Investing in civic infrastructure and community networks, improving channels of communication via compacts	Strong civic institutions can give the confidence to express their views. They may need to be monitored, challenged and managed so that they provide channels for the representation of a wide range of interests rather than a privileged position for a few. Investing in civic infrastructure and community networks, improving channels of communication is an important part of the policy agenda for municipalities committed to participation
Asked to	**Citizens participate if asked** Mobilising people into participation by asking for their input can make a big difference	Forms of participation Strategy Reach and diversity	Public participation schemes that are divers and reflexive	Public participation schemes that are diverse and reflexive provide the best option in terms of making the 'ask' factor work. Different groups will require different forms of mobilisation. See Table Y for more details
Responded to	**Citizens' participation depends on the degree of responsiveness they expect** When asked, people say they will participate if they are listened to (not necessarily agreed with) and able to see a response	Listening Balance and prioritisation Feedback and education	A public system that shows a capacity to respond – through specific outcomes, ongoing learning and feedback	A public policy system that shows a capacity to respond - through specific outcomes, ongoing learning and feedback

2. Questionnaire

This chapter sets out the key instrument in the CLEAR-tool: the basic questionnaire which proposes the questions to be asked when using the tool.

0. The context of citizen participation in the municipality

Before going into the analysis of the five key factors, it is necessary to have a look at the context in which citizen participation is taking place in the municipality. This first section is, in effect, a stage 0 in the diagnostic process. It provides the opportunity to gather contextual information on the nature of participation in the area and some indication of the initiatives that the municipality is already taking to encourage more active citizen engagement. It asks a variety of overview questions ranging from the size and the general characteristics of the municipality and the most important issues to turnout rates, groups and forms of participation.

0.1   What is the population of the municipality?

0.2   What are the main service responsibilities of the municipality?

0.3   What are the key features of the locality (e.g. rural/urban, economic activities, regional position, etc.)?

0.4   What is the turnout at local elections (average over last 4?) compared with the national average (give actual numbers as well)?

Very high	Higher than average	Average	Less than average	Very low
1	2	3	4	5

0.5   Which form of participation are citizens most likely to use in seeking to influence municipal decision makers? (Rank order?)

Sign a petition
Protest (demonstration etc)
Contact the media
Contact a municipal employee (functionary)
Contact a local politician
Respond to a municipal consultation
Other

0.6   Which forms of political engagement are decision-makers most likely to respond to?

Petition
Protest (demonstration, boycott etc)
Media pressure
Contact with a municipal employee (functionary)
Contact with a local politician
Results from a municipal consultation
Other

0.7   Which groups does the municipality consider to be most disengaged or excluded from the political process? (e.g. young people, elderly people, single parents, people with disabilities, ethnic minority groups)

0.8   Which groups does the municipality focus its participation initiatives on? (e.g. population as a whole, users of particular services, young people, elderly people, single parents, people with disabilities, ethnic minority groups)

0.9   How active do you consider political participation in your area to be compared with the national picture?

Very high	Higher than average	Average	Less than average	Very low
1	2	3	4	5

0.10   What are the main issues that trigger participation in the locality?

1. Can do

This section is concerned with the socio-economic arguments that have traditionally dominated explanations for variations in local participation rates. It is the argument that when people have the appropriate skills and resources they are more able to participate. These skills range from the ability and confidence to speak in public or write letters, to the capacity to organise events and encourage others of similar mind to support initiatives. It also includes access to resources that facilitate such activities (resources ranging from photocopying facilities through to internet access and so on). These skills and resources are much more commonly found among the better educated and employed sections of the population: those of higher socio-economic status. The questions are designed to help municipalities explore the strengths and limitations of citizens from this perspective.

Educational attainment

1.1 What is the educational attainment of school leavers compared with the national average? (e.g. in the UK, this could be measured by the number of students gaining 5 grade A-C GCSEs)

Very high	Higher than average	Average	Less than average	Very low
1	2	3	4	5

Employment/unemployment

1.2 What is the unemployment rate compared with the national average?

Very high	Higher than average	Average	Less than average	Very low
1	2	3	4	5

Social class

1.3 What is the proportion of the workforce in the following occupations (and how does it compare to the national average)? (e.g. in the UK this would be distinguished by the social groups A B C1 C2 D E)

Unemployed	
Unskilled work	
Semi-skilled work	
Skilled work	
Professional work	

Another way of asking this question would be: what is the proportion of professional and skilled workers (ABC1s) to semi- or unskilled workers (C2DEs), compared with the national average?

Demography

1.4 What is the age profile of the population in the municipality?

1.5 What proportion of the population belongs to an ethnic minority group?

1.6   How many significant ethnic minority groups are there in the municipality (i.e. that the municipality recognises and addresses in its communications with citizens)?

1.7   Are there other demographic factors that may be significant for participation (e.g. family structure, student concentration, commuters)?

Resources

1.8   Do citizens have easy access to appropriate resources for political participation?

The following might be considered particularly relevant:

    Easy access to a meeting venue (community centre, village hall etc)
    Easy access to photocopying or other reproduction of materials
    Easy access to a computer with appropriate software
    Easy access to broadband internet

1.9   Do other resources exist within the community that can act as a channel for political engagement? (e.g. local newspaper, radio station, TV station etc that shows an interest in local political issues)

1.10   Do people have the time for participation? What are the major factors restricting people's time availability?

Skills/Knowledge

1.11   Do citizens have the necessary skills for participating in political life (e.g. the ability to write letters, speak in public, organise meetings etc)?

1.12   Do citizens have the competence to utilise the resources in their community (e.g. to use computers, the Internet etc)?

1.13   Which skills are in short supply?

1.14   To what extent are these skills and resources differentially distributed across the community? (i.e. do some groups have more access to resources and more skill to use them than others)

2.   Like to

This factor rests on the idea that people's felt sense of community encourages them to engage. The argument is that if you feel a part of something then you are more willing to engage. Evidence from many studies confirms that where people feel a sense of togetherness or shared commitment they are more willing to participate. This concern about a sense of attachment to the political entity where participation is at stake has been given new impetus in recent years in relation to debates about social capital. A sense of trust, connection and linked networks can, according to the social capital argument, enable people to work together and co-operate more effectively. Sense of community can be a strong motivator for participation. Conversely, an absence of identity or commitment to a locality can militate against participation.

The questions in this section focus particularly on the sense of identity and community that exists in the locality and associated stocks of social capital (in terms of trust and reciprocity).

Identity

2.1   What is the main focus of identity for people? (either select 1 from the list below or rank into order of importance).

A neighbourhood within the municipality
A community of interest/identity that spans several neighbourhoods (e.g. ethnic or cultural identity)?
The administrative unit of the municipality (e.g. town/city)?
An area bigger than the municipality (e.g. region/sub-region)?
Nation state

2.2   How well do people in the same neighbourhood tend to know each other?

2.3   How much do citizens identify with the municipality (i.e. 'felt identity)?

2.4   How attached are people to the area in which they live?

Very attached   Unattached
1   -   2   -   3   -   4   -   5

Homogeneity

2.5   Is the community a stable one with a strong sense of history and tradition? (this might be measured by examining the length of time that people have lived at the same address or by a more informal sense of how homogenous the community is).

2.6   To what extent is there similarity of identity across the community (i.e. are people largely the same – and if not, where are the main cleavages)?

2.7   Are values and priorities the same across the community – and if not, where are the major cleavages?

Trust

2.8. Are people in this community most likely to be helpful to others or are they more likely to put there own self interest first?

Helpful   Self interested
1   -   2   -   3   -   4   -   5

2.9. Will most people in this community try to be fair or will they try to take advantage of others given the chance?

Fair   Take Advantage
1   -   2   -   3   -   4   -   5

2.10 How much do citizens trust one another? (e.g. would one citizen lend a small amount of money, such as a bus fare, to another?)

High trust   Low trust
1   -   2   -   3   -   4   -   5

2.11 How much do citizens trust the municipality to make decisions that are in the interest of the community as a whole?

High trust   Low trust
1   -   2   -   3   -   4   -   5

2.12 How much do citizens trust the national government to make decisions that are in the interest of the community as a whole?

High trust   Low trust
1   -   2   -   3   -   4   -   5

Citizenship

2.13 Is there a strong community spirit that supports community action?

2.14 Do people feel a sense of responsibility towards the community?

2.15 Are there groups or sections of the community that are likely to feel excluded?

2.16 Is there a sense in the municipality that the voices of some groups are more legitimate than others?

## 3.	Enabled to

This factor is premised on the research observation that most participation is facilitated through groups or organisations. Political participation in isolation is more difficult and less sustainable (unless an individual is highly motivated) than the mutually reinforcing engagement of contact through groups and networks. Collective participation provides continuous reassurance and feedback that the cause of engagement is relevant and that participation is having some value. Indeed, for some, engagement in this manner is more important than the outcome of such participation. The existence of networks and groups which can support participation and which can provide a route into decision-makers, therefore, is vital to the vibrancy of participation in an area.

The questions in this section focus on the existence and membership of groups to support political participation, and the existence of a 'civic infrastructure' that can encourage the development of such groups and ensure that they remain connected with local decision-makers.

Types of civic organisation

3.1	What sorts of organisations exist and are active in the locality? (if it is possible to quantify these then even better)

Youth
Environment
Conservation
Animal rights/protection
Peace
Humanitarian/human rights
Social welfare (e.g. housing)
Medical (e.g. patients associations)
Sports/Hobby
Parent/teacher
Residents/neighbourhood
Ethnicity based
Cultural
Religious/church based
Other ……………………

3.2	Which of the above organisations have the most membership?

3.3	Which have the most influence on municipal decision-making?

3.4	Is the range of voluntary and community organisations in the area sufficient to address the full range of political issues that citizens may wish to engage in?

Activities

3.5	Is the voluntary and community sector in an active state?

Active   Inactive
1	-	2	-	3	-	4	-	5

3.6	To what extent are voluntary and community organisations increasing their membership in the area?

3.7   To what extent are voluntary and community organisations seeking to influence decisions at the municipal level?

Active influence   No influence
1   -   2   -   3   -   4   -   5

Civic infrastructure

3.8   Are there any voluntary or community organisations that exist specifically to support the development or growth of civic organisations in the area (e.g. 'umbrella' organisations such as Councils for Voluntary Service)?

3.9   Do these 'umbrella' organisations have sufficient resources and capacities to reach out to a range of organisations?

3.10   What support does the municipality give to voluntary and community organisations in its area?

        Financial support
        Support from municipal staff
        Use of municipal facilities
        Access to other municipal resources
        Access to decision-makers

3.11   What are the major weaknesses of the voluntary and community sector in the area?

3.12   What role does the local media play in relation to participation?

4.   Asked to

This factor builds on the finding of much research that mobilisation matters. People tend to become engaged more often and more regularly when they are asked to engage. Research shows that people's readiness to participate often depends upon whether or not they are approached and how they are approached. Mobilisation can come from a range of sources but the most powerful form is when those responsible for a decision ask others to engage with them in making the decision. Case studies have demonstrated how open political and managerial systems in local municipalities can also have a significant effect by extending a variety of invitations to participate to their citizens. The variety of participation options for engagement is important because some people are more comfortable with some forms of engagement such as a public meeting while others would prefer, for example, to engage through on-line discussions. Some people want to talk about the experiences of their community or neighbourhood while others want to engage based on their knowledge of a particular service as a user.

This section asks questions about the ways in which the municipality is seeking to engage with citizens, the variety of initiatives that it supports, and the way in which it communicates these initiatives to the public.

Forms of participation

4.1   In what ways does the municipality seek to engage citizens in decision-making processes?

  Invites open comments on services
  Conducts Surveys/opinion polls
  Conducts regular panel survey of citizens
  Opens meetings to public
  Allows public to participate in meetings
  Co-opts citizens onto committees/meetings
  Holds public meetings
  Issues consultation documents
  Arranges area/neighbourhood forums
  Arranges other types of forum
  Conducts focus groups
  Holds citizens juries/panels
  Runs consultation events (e.g. visioning exercises)
  Other……………

4.2   Does the municipality seek to use the internet for engagement by:

  Publishing all agendas, reports and other materials online?
  Providing email addresses for elected members?
  Holding online consultations?
  Using electronic means (email, SMS texts) to alert citizens to consultations?
  Providing online discussion forums?
  Other……………

Strategy

4.3   Does the municipality have a strategy for engagement or are initiatives more piecemeal?

4.4   Does the municipality collaborate with any other organisations in consulting or engaging the public?

4.5   Does the municipality offer incentives to citizens to participate (e.g. honoraria, gifts, IT equipment, service enhancements, discounts on charges)

4.6   Are participation activities normally held at official premises? Has the municipality experimented with unusual locations to encourage participation (e.g. citizens' homes, schools, supermarkets)?

Reach and diversity

4.7   Are these forms of engagement sufficient to reach all the different sections of the community (young/old, ethnic minority groups etc)?

4.8   On what basis are different forms of participation used (e.g. are some used specifically to reach particular groups)?

4.9   Do decision-makers give higher priority to the findings of some forms of participation over others (e.g. those that produce quantitative preferences)?

5. Responded to

This final factor captures the idea that for people to participate on a sustainable basis they have to believe that their involvement is making a difference and that it is achieving positive benefits. For people to participate they have to believe that they are going to be listened to and, if not always agreed with, at least in a position to see that their view has been taken into account. Responsiveness is about ensuring feedback, which may not always be positive – in the sense of accepting the dominant view from participants. Feedback involves explaining how the decision was made and the role of participation within that. Response is vital for citizen education, and so has a bearing on the 'front end' of the process too.

This set of questions asks how different messages are weighed by decision-makers and how conflicting views are prioritised. They also examine how information on decision-making is fed back to citizens.

Listening

5.1   What are the procedures for ensuring that the citizen's voice is considered in decision-making?

5.2   What mechanisms are used to feed the results of particular consultation or participation initiatives into the decision-making process?

Balance and prioritisation

5.3   How are the views of citizens balanced against the opinions of professionals and elected members, especially where they diverge?

5.4   How good are decision-makers at understanding and taking into account the views of citizens?

Very good   Very poor
1   -   2   -   3   -   4   -   5

Feedback and education

5.5   How good is the municipality at explaining to citizens the reasons for the decision and the ways in which citizen views have been taken into account?

Very good   Very poor
1   -   2   -   3   -   4   -   5

5.6   To what extent do citizens understand and accept the decisions made by municipalities?

5.7   What efforts is the municipality making to better communicate its decisions to citizens?

5.8   Does the municipality have a programme of citizen education in relation to participation?

5.9.   Does the municipality provide support to politicians and/or officers in learning how to respond more effectively to participation?

PART II – A practitioner's guide to CLEAR

1. Diagnosing citizen participation using the CLEAR framework

The C.L.E.A.R framework suggests to policy makers that if they wish to increase local participation the solution to a substantial extent is in their own hands: all of the key factors that drive up participation are open to their influence.

According to the CLEAR framework, five main factors affect whether people participate. Firstly when they have the capacity - the resources, skills and knowledge- necessary to do so. These factors determine how easily they "can do". Secondly, people participate when they feel part of a group or community: they like to participate if it is important to their sense of identity. Thirdly, they participate when they are enabled to do so through an infrastructure of civic networks and organisations. Fourthly, they participate when they are directly asked for their opinion. Finally, people participate when they experience that the system they are seeking to influence is responsive.

To be able to make use of these insights, the CLEAR framework develops in greater detail how these five factors work and what the variables influencing them are.[1]

The ideal of participation does not require engagement of all citizens all of the time. However, the question is to know when non-involvement is down to contentment and when it reflects processes of exclusion? The idea of a diagnosis is to understand what needs to be done to ensure that citizens have the choice, the capacities and the opportunities to participate: The approach developed is about enabling public authorities to test their capacity to deliver participation options to citizens that want to take them up.

How to analyse citizen participation? The CLEAR tool has been developed to measure the factors identified in the CLEAR framework. It provides a questionnaire to analyse the five factors on the ground and proposes a deliberative method for interpreting and making use of the insights gained. The CLEAR tool identifies the variables underlying the factors and proposes indicators to measure them. It also suggests policy measures to address each of these factors. The choice of factors to address will depend on the results obtained from the measurement.

The tool is designed to help local authorities across Europe review their overall strategy for local civic engagement in decision-making processes.

An important feature of the CLEAR framework is that its five factors are neither hierarchical nor sequential. The presence of one factor is not a precondition for others and effective participation does not necessarily depend on all of the components being present although, in an ideal world, they would be. Furthermore, the model does not attach a specific weight or importance to any particular factor: there is no assumed balance between the different factors that should be expected or respected in a given locality.Thus, the underlying assumption of the diagnostic tool is that it will serve two purposes:

1. It will help those conducting the self-assessment to identify and understand the balance of factors affecting participation in their localities;

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[1] For more details on the CLEAR framework and its conceptual and empirical basis, see: Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G. (2006) 'Diagnosing and remedying the failings of official participation schemes: the CLEAR framework' *Social Policy and Society*, Vol 5, No 2 pp281-91; V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker (2006) *Locality Matters: Making Participation Count in Local Politics*, London: IPPR

2.   It will provide an opportunity for all those involved in the assessment to reflect upon the relative strengths and gaps in participation in their localities and to consider strategies for addressing these gaps.

The CLEAR tool not only provides a grid for diagnosis, it has a procedural dimension as well. As a self-assessment tool its use provides an occasion to reflect together with stakeholders, the citizens, on participation in the municipality.

It is important to distinguish the process of self-assessment from the audit and evaluation tools that have proliferated in the public sector in recent years. The CLEAR tool does not seek to provide standardised objective data. Its aim is not comparison, but to stimulate reflection within a local authority. The results of an analysis with CLEAR do not provide a statistical basis to compare localities or reach some kind of ranking or classification of different municipalities. The CLEAR tool does not provide a benchmark which judges a particular area. However, where local authorities would be interested in comparing results between themselves, the methodology can be adapted to do so, especially when they decide to work together from the very beginning of the self-assessment. Even though CLEAR proposes to focus on the particularities of each municipality, experience has shown that it can be very helpful for municipalities to work together and to exchange experiences. Cooperation enhances learning and has been judged most helpful by local authorities having tested the tool. Usually the focus of the exchange is not on the data collected, even though it can provide orientation. At the centre of attention is firstly the exchange of experience on the process and on how to carry out self-assessment in a municipality. Secondly, quite naturally, the exchange tends to be on policy responses and innovative ideas.

The self-assessment process facilitates reflection and understanding of local political participation among those who are in the best position to do something about it. Potential users of the tool, therefore, include:
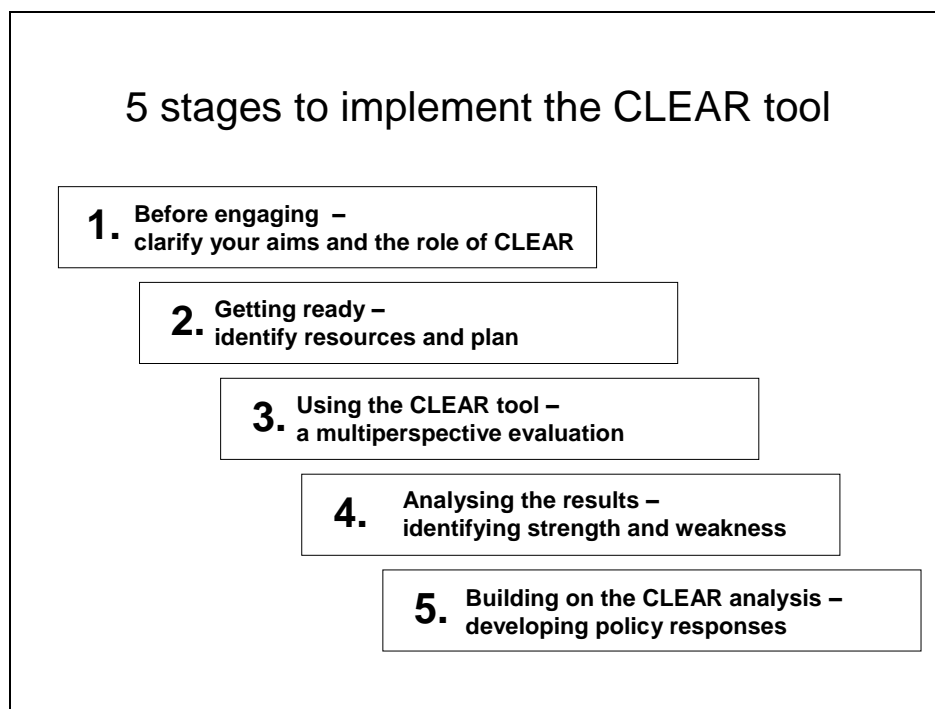
* Elected or appointed officials in local government;
* Other public bodies that have an interest in sponsoring participation initiatives;
* Civil society organisations within a locality;
* Citizens interested in enhancing the participation opportunities within their localities.

The key point is that the tool is adaptable and has to be adapted to local circumstances to enable interested parties to diagnose the strengths and limitations of publicly sponsored participation initiatives in their area.

2.   How to use the CLEAR tool

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance for using the CLEAR tool, based on the experiences of the pilot cities that tested the CLEAR tool. There is no unique way to use the CLEAR tool. Its strength is precisely its flexibility. This is true for the tool itself as well as for the method for implementing it. A self-assessment can take various forms, depending on the context and the precise purpose decided upon. This chapter describes using the CLEAR tool and running an assessment in five main stages.

Figure 1: Organising an audit using the CLEAR tool

5 stages to implement the CLEAR tool

1. Before engaging –
clarify your aims and the role of CLEAR

2. Getting ready –
identify resources and plan

3. Using the CLEAR tool –
a multiperspective evaluation

4. Analysing the results –
identifying strength and weakness

5. Building on the CLEAR analysis –
developing policy responses

STAGE 1: Before engaging - clarifying aims and the role of the CLEAR tool

Before actually starting to use the CLEAR tool it is important for the user to clarify its aims. This step leads the municipality to define the aspects of the existing participation methods and strategies that are to be tested, revised or improved. Table 2 gives examples of different aims.

Table 2: Examples of different aims of a CLEAR self-assessment

Case 1 – identify strategies and channels to involve different groups more actively in public life

Case 2 – understand how citizens perceive opportunities to participate? How satisfied they are, what the see as obstacles, etc.

Case 3 – identify factors that enhance citizens participation in local associations

Case 4 – understand the capacity of the population to participate in e-voting

Defining the aims driving the implementation of the tool, make it possible to decide what sort of strategies to follow and which stakeholders to include into the process in order to obtain the information required. The aims of the assessment also provide the framework for interpreting the collected data.

At the same time, specifying the objectives of the self-assessment allows the municipality to become familiar with the CLEAR tool, with what it can do in order to reach the objectives, what is needed to carry out a CLEAR analysis and to double-check the feasibility of the project.

STAGE 2: Getting ready - resources and planning

In stage 2 the actual preparation and planning can start. A project proposal should summarise all the important features of the project, outline how the aims are supposed to be realised and provide a detailed work plan. Central questions for the implementation of the project need to be answered: Who will use the tool? Who should be in charge of the assessment and who should conduct it? What resources are necessary? How to adapt the tool to the particular case? Who should be involved?

- ***Political support for the project***

As the purpose of the analysis in many cases will be to provide a basis for subsequently taking measures to strengthen citizen participation, it makes sense to anchor the project at the political level. Only when political decision makers are convinced of the benefits of improving citizen participation can the CLEAR assessment achieve its potential impact. Political decision makers should be won for the project beforehand and should stand behind the assessment. Ideally, the mayor or the municipal council themselves should approve the project proposal for the CLEAR self-assessment. That said, especially smaller scale assessments with the CLEAR tool (as a "quickscan", see box 3) can also be undertaken at administrative level, e.g. to underpin or to prepare a larger political project.

- ***A steering group and a project manager to conduct the audit***

Experience has shown that it is useful to create a steering group to conduct the assessment. It neither has to become a formal body nor very big. In fact, it should be limited to a couple of people (4-5) to stay operational. Its purpose is to bring together the core expertise necessary for the assessment. This can also be expertise from outside the local administration. Self-assessment, in the sense that the municipality should asses itself, also means the implication of different stakeholders because they hold important information. It is an option not only to consult them during the audit but to include them in the steering group. At the same time, the group should designate one person to lead the work of the self-assessment.

Usually, the steering group is made of:

- *elected local politicians*. Their role is to take responsibility for the whole process. To run the project may be left to the project manager and people working with her/him.
- *local civil servants*. They know local policies and services; they have access to information, are publicly accepted and can well create partnerships. Using its own staff for the audit/or obtaining support from other parts of the public administration keeps costs down.

It can be complemented by:

- *civil society representatives*. They bring the grass-root knowledge as well as legitimacy and credibility to the process. Their involvement hardly generates any costs.
- *researchers.* They provide strong research skills, are objective and independent and imply moderate costs (especially when from a local academic institution).
- *consultants.* They provide strong project management skills, which enable them also to run the assessment. They also have research and IT skill, are independent and usually motivated. However, drawing on external consultants is more expensive.

The steering group will have the task of conducting the assessment. It should be able to undertake most of the principal tasks itself. A project manager, e.g. the chairman of the steering committee, should coordinate the work being undertaken and function as the contact person for the assessment.

- ● **Provide external services and infrastructure**

The main resource necessary is people to conduct the assessment. The steering group will probably already include the most important expertise. However, it is possible that not all expertise can found in-house or among the (possible external) partners of the steering group. In these cases consultants or academic researcher can be charged with certain tasks. It is necessary to mobilise those who can gather and interpret this information (interviewer, statisticians: this will also depend on the methodology chosen) It might be a good solution to involve a local university or institute. Not only researchers but also students might be able to help with this assessment. In addition to their expertise, these institutions and their members are also part of the local community. Involving them is a form of involving local stakeholders and a way to strengthen social cohesion and a sense of community.

Additionally, some logistics for the work of the steering group, to conduct interviews, analyse data, organise hearings or focus group discussion needs to be provided. Much will usually already be available. However, especially for bigger projects, it is important to take these needs into account already during the planning.

- ● **Adapt the questionnaire**

The tool offers a series of general questions that will vary in their relevance to local authorities according to the institutional and political context. The second stage, therefore, is about developing the tool for application in a particular municipality. This is the first task of the steering group. It should decide, which parts of the questionnaire are relevant to the planned assessment. Following that it should be decided whether the questions are adequate for the context in which they will be used: Some may need to be adapted, some can be left out, others might be added to complete the analysis. The use of certain terms can have different meanings in different contexts. Terms need to be clarified and when necessary adapted to avoid ambiguity or biased questions. Additionally, the questionnaire should be adapted to the audience they are asked to. The wording should be kept as simple as possible.

The questionnaire of the C.L.E.A.R tool provides a set of questions to start with. The investigative nature of the process implies that questions and challenges will have to be adapted to the circumstances of individual municipalities. For this purpose it is useful to have a closer look at the five factors, as set out in table 3. Each variable has different facets that may be important to consider and which can be explicitly included into a CLEAR analysis and the corresponding questionnaire.

Understanding these diverse factors makes it possible to carry out an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of strategies to encourage local participation. Understanding what drives participation among their citizens will enable local authorities to develop more appropriate mixes of intervention and the right range of opportunities and encouragements.

Table 3: Background information on each of the five factors to adapt the questionnaire to local circumstances

Factor	Variable	Facets of the variables	Corresponding question in questionnaire
Can do	Educational attainment	▪ What are levels of education in the locality? ▪ Have most people got basic education, or higher level qualifications? ▪ How does the picture differ for different groups of citizens – young people, older people, minority groups?	1.1
	Employment and social class	▪ What is the make-up of the locality in terms of social class? ▪ What is the balance between different occupations – e.g. professional, skilled, semi or unskilled work, self-employment? ▪ What are the main employers in the area? ▪ Is there a problem of unemployment in the area? Is unemployment concentrated among particular parts of your community?	1.2 - 1.3
	Demography	▪ What is the age profile of the population in the municipality? ▪ What proportion of the population belongs to an ethnic minority group? ▪ How many significant ethnic minority groups are there in the municipality? ▪ What languages are spoken in the locality? ▪ Are there other demographic factors that may be significant for participation (e.g. family structure, student concentration, commuters)?	1.4 - 1.7
	Resources	▪ Do citizens have easy access to appropriate resources for political participation? ▪ For instance, are there plenty of accessible meeting venues? ▪ Can citizens get access to computers, photocopiers or telephones to help them participate? ▪ Are these resources available to those who don't have access to them through work or at home? ▪ Do the local media provide information and communication channels (e.g. local TV, newspaper or radio)? ▪ Do citizens have time to participate?	1.8 - 1.10
	Skills/knowledge	▪ Do citizens have the necessary skills for participating in political life (e.g. the ability to write letters, speak in public, organise meetings etc)? ▪ Do citizens have the competence to utilise the resources in their community (e.g. to use computers, the Internet etc.)? ▪ Which skills are in short supply? ▪ Do some groups of citizens have more access to resources, and more skills to use them, than others?	1.11 - 1.14

Factor	Variable	Facets of the variables	Corresponding question in questionnaire
Like to	Identity	▪ What is the main focus of identity for people – the local neighbourhood, the town or city as a whole, or the region they live in? How well do people in the same neighbourhood know each other? ▪ Do citizens identify with the municipality? ▪ How attached are people to the area in which they live? ▪ How important are *non-geographical* sources of identity – like cultural, ethnic, religious or other philosophical identity, social class, or 'communities of interest' (among young people, or gay people, or those with a particular interest – like sport)?	2.1 – 2.4
	Homogeneity	▪ How stable is the population– have people lived at the same address for a long time or is there a lot of mobility? ▪ Does the community have a strong sense of history and tradition? ▪ To what extent is there a similarity of identity across the community (i.e. are people largely the same – and if not, where are the main cleavages)? ▪ Are values and priorities the same across the population – and if not, where are the major cleavages?	2.5 – 2.7
	Trust	▪ How much do citizens trust one another? ▪ Are people generally helpful to one another or do they tend to put self interest first? ▪ Is anti social behaviour a problem? How much do citizens trust the municipality to make decisions that are in the interest of the community as a whole? ▪ How much do citizens trust the national government to make decisions that are in the interest of the community as a whole?	2.8 – 2.12
	Citizenship	▪ Is there a strong community spirit that supports collective action? ▪ Do people feel a sense of responsibility towards the community? ▪ Are there groups or sections of the community that are likely to feel excluded? ▪ Is there a sense in the municipality that the voices of some groups are more legitimate than others?	2.13 – 2.16

Factor	Variable	Facets of the variables	Corresponding question in questionnaire
Enabled to	Types of civic organisation	▪ What sorts of civic organisations exist and are they active in the locality (e.g. youth groups, environmental campaigns, social welfare organisations, parent-teacher associations, sports or hobby groups, ethnic associations, cultural bodies)? ▪ Is there a complete list of such bodies? Which organisations have the most members? Which have the most influence on municipal decision-making? ▪ Is the range of existing groups sufficient to address the full range of (political) issues that citizens wish to engage in?	3.1 – 3.4
	Activities	▪ How active are civic organisations? ▪ Are they increasing in number? Is membership increasing? ▪ Do such bodies seek to influence decisions at the municipal level, or get involved in running local services? ▪ What are the main ways they do this?	3 5 – 3.7
	Civic infrastructure	▪ Are there any 'umbrella' or coordinating agencies that exist specifically to support the development or growth of civic organisations in the area? ▪ Do they have sufficient resources and capacities to reach out to a range of organisations? ▪ What support does the municipality give to civic organisations (e.g. grants, premises or equipment, staff support, access to facilities, opportunities to meet decision-makers)? ▪ What are the major weaknesses of the voluntary and community sector in the area? Do the local media support the work of civic bodies (e.g. publicising their activities)?	3.8 – 3.12
Asked to	Forms of participation	▪ How does the municipality seek to inform citizens about and engage them in decision-making processes (e.g. surveys, consultations, focus groups, citizens' juries or panels, advisory councils, school and youth councils, regular forums)? ▪ Does the municipality seek to use the internet for citizen engagement (e.g. putting information online, online consultations or discussion forums, use of email or SMS texts)?	4.1 – 4.2
	Strategy	▪ Does the municipality have a strategy for engagement or are initiatives more piecemeal? ▪ Does the municipality collaborate with any other organisations in consulting or engaging the public? ▪ Are citizens offered incentives to participate (e.g. honoraria, gifts, IT equipment, service enhancements, discounts on charges)? ▪ Are participation activities normally held at official premises? Has the municipality experimented with unusual locations to encourage participation (e.g. citizens' homes, schools, supermarkets)?	4.3 – 4.6

Factor	Variable	Facets of the variables	Corresponding question in questionnaire
	Reach and diversity	▪ Are existing forms of engagement sufficient to reach all the different sections of the community (young/old, ethnic minority groups etc)? ▪ Are particular forms of participation used to reach specific citizen groups? ▪ Do decision-makers give higher priority to the findings of some forms of participation over others (e.g. those that produce quantitative preferences)?	4.7 – 4.9
Responded to	Listening	▪ What are the procedures for ensuring that the citizen's voice is considered in decision-making? ▪ What mechanisms are used to feed the results of particular consultation or participation initiatives into the decision-making process?	5.1 – 5.2
	Balance and prioritisation	▪ How are the views of citizens balanced against the opinions of professionals and elected members, especially where they diverge? ▪ How good are decision-makers at understanding and taking into account the views of citizens?	5.3 – 5.4
	Feedback and education	▪ How good is the municipality at explaining to citizens the reasons for a particular decision and the ways in which citizens' views have been taken into account? ▪ To what extent do citizens understand and accept the decisions made by municipalities? ▪ What efforts is the municipality making to improve its communication with citizens? ▪ Does the municipality have a programme of citizen education in relation to participation? ▪ Does the municipality provide support to politicians and/or officers in learning how to respond more effectively to participation?	5.5 – 5.8

STAGE 3: Using the CLEAR tool - a multiperspective evaluation

Looking in greater detail at how to use the CLEAR tool, brings up two types of questions: Which methods should be used to collect the information and in which sequence should one proceed. The steering group needs to think carefully about the techniques they will employ and the way in which they will be sequenced. The following paragraphs provide recommendations on how to proceed and which aspects to take into account. Nevertheless, each municipality has the opportunity to choose the methods and procedures it deems most adequate for its purpose.

- **Using several methods to obtain the necessary information**

The information that municipalities want to collect depends on the specific aims they have. Similarly, municipalities differ with respect to the resources available for the diagnosis and with respect to the degree to they usually work together civil society organisations and citizen groups. Different needs and situations require different approaches. The tool does not prescribe or require a single methodology for implementation. Each user can design its own method to suit local needs.

However, in implementing the tool, users should be sensitive to the following points:

1. There are two standard forms of surveying the public opinion and providing a first step to participation: questionnaire surveys and focus group discussions. Inspiration for deliberately open participatory channels for citizen can be found in stage 5 on policy remedies (box 5: different methods for involving citizens).

2. The CLEAR tool provides an occasion to reflect together with the stakeholders, the citizens, on participation in the municipality. They represent the complex reality of a municipality and own private information difficult to obtain. Consultation procedures have the advantage of generating a more holistic understanding of the opportunities, strengths, weaknesses and challenges that the municipality faces. Social cohesion is not only created through policy output but also through the method of creating it. Citizen participation is a valuable feature of good and efficient governance, so why not apply it to the analysis of participation? The ways how citizens can be "asked-to" participate can play a central role in the way to conduct the CLEAR audit itself.

3. Neither a single source nor a single method will by itself provide the whole picture reliably. Several methods and several sources can provide insightful information. It is likely that only when several sources and methods are crossed and used as complements, an inclusive and valid overview can de established. This technique has proved useful in the testing of the CLEAR tool conducted by local authorities. A CLEAR analysis is ideally a multi-perspective evaluation.

When considering how to implement the CLEAR tool, users will certainly be confronted with the following questions:

- *Which sources of information to use?*

What data is already available that can be used to answer the questions and what data will it be necessary to collect fresh? For some questions it may be particularly useful to seek proxy measures – those that give a good indication of the general picture (e.g. measures of educational attainment are normally a good proxy for socio-economic status). Existing data sources often provide information that can be used for this purpose. Available data can considerably accelerate the audit. For other questions it may be more useful to seek judgments and opinions from a variety of stakeholders. The tool probably requires some new data collection but this aspect can be a relatively small and low cost part of the assessment.

- *Rather rely on quantitative or qualitative information?*

The tool does not anticipate a particular technique or approach. Some questions lend themselves to collecting quantitative information (e.g. those around skills). Quantitative methods give insights into strength of phenomenon and representativeness. Other questions are more suited to more qualitative techniques such as interviews or focus groups. Inevitably, therefore, users of the tool will need to have a mixed approach: interviews with some stakeholders, perhaps a survey to collect particular information, focus groups with particular citizens, as well as drawing upon existing information sources. The precise mix will depend upon the resources available to the users of the tool and the amount of effort they want to commit to the diagnosis.

- *Who should be targeted with the questionnaire?*

The range of stakeholders in this field is potentially large: from elected politicians and their political parties; through employees of various public bodies; to organised interests, community groups and, indeed, individual citizens with no recognised affiliation. It is up to the sponsoring users of the tool to decide which stakeholders it will want to involve, bearing in mind the aim of the survey identified in phase 1.

- *Which geographic area to include in the audit?*

In some areas it may be best suited for use at the municipal level. In cities it may be more appropriate to think in terms of smaller communities or neighbourhoods or, even, for comparing between neighbourhoods in the same city.

- *Outsourcing of data collection?*

Where data needs to be collected from stakeholders (as opposed to simply being retrieved from existing data) some users of the tool may feel it is most appropriate to collect the information themselves, using their in-house expertise. Others may employ specialist consultants to collect and/or analyse the evidence on their behalf. Both approaches are potentially appropriate. However, it is eventually the responsibility of the commissioning organisation to take on-board the findings and respond to them.

- *Reliable archiving to ensure results can be reproduced*

For the audit to be replicable archive management is crucial. All documents or informative materials have to be securely kept in an ordered way and in durable formats that can minimise the risk of losing data. Transparent methods also enhance the credibility of the audit.

- **Implementation in two stages: quick overview and deep analysis**

The second set of questions on how to use the CLEAR tool is where to start and how to proceed. Of course it is possible to directly work through the entire CLEAR questionnaire with all the means available. This can be recommended if a very thorough analysis is planed anyways.

However in most cases, it can be recommended to proceed into stages. First use the CLEAR tool for a "quick scan" to obtain an overview of the situation of participation and only then carry on with a more detailed in-depth analysis. The advantage of this procedure is that the objectives can be clarified and that the resource can be most efficiently employed on those aspects that need most investigation. As can be seen in the info box on the quick scan, such a preliminary step does not have to be complicated nor delay the audit. On the contrary, it might accelerate it by making it more efficient. In some situations a quick scan can already be sufficient for the purpose of the municipality. Its main disadvantage is that it will not allow involving stakeholders or to obtain several perspectives of the situation. However, it is always useful as a first step.

Box 3: Quick scan - a first step or an economic way of making use of the CLEAR tool

Users of the tool may not want to collect all of the information at the same time. They may want, first of all, to undertake an initial diagnosis in-house, using a small team of civil servants or elected officials - e.g. the steering group- before extending the process to other stakeholders or focusing upon specific communities of geography or interest. The CLEAR tool can thus already be used even when little resources are available.

A quick scan of the situation of participation can be obtained by going through the questionnaire and trying to obtain the best possible answers drawing on available data sources and estimations of the steering group. The better available data sources can actually cover the various aspects of the CLEAR tool, the greater the value of the quick scan.

STAGE 4. Analysing the results - identifying strengths and weaknesses of citizen participation

Interpreting the data collected from the survey is a crucial stage of the self-assessment proposed by CLEAR.

In several cases understanding the implications of the information gathered under the different headings of the CLEAR tool is quite straightforward. A statistical overview of the socio-economic profile of a particular geographic area gives quite direct insights into the can-do factor of the population. However, other questions are more difficult to interpret. Especially open questions do not come with a scale indicating whether the answer should be counted as positive or negative.

Also an easy-to-understand quantitative indicator requires interpretation in the sense that it needs to be assessed against the background of expectations and wishes. For example: is the result satisfactory as compared to an ideal situation or satisfactory as compared to how the inhabitants involvement in local decision-making could realistically be?

There are no universal answers to these questions. The results therefore require interpretation by those conducting the assessment. In contrast to regular auditing tools, the self-assessment approach of the CLEAR tool does not provide a fixed benchmark but suggests that it is inadequate and possibly misleading to provide criteria developed without considering the particular context. It rather invites its users themselves to establish the reference points and ultimately the goals, they consider appropriate for their municipality.

Stage 4 therefore is primarily about a process of creating an understanding of the situation of participation. The assessment is the result of a deliberative process, rather than of the mere computation of data.

What does such an interpretation process look like?

In a nutshell, the process of interpreting the data collected in the framework of a CLEAR self-assessment, is, firstly about defining a satisfactory level and an optimal level for each of the five CLEAR factors. Secondly it is about determining where the municipality currently stands on this scale. Finally, the process requires deliberating on what should be done to improve the situation.

As each of these three stages requires interpretation and deliberation, they should not be undertaken by one person nor behind closed doors. It should rather be an open process taking into account the view of various stakeholders and citizens who are primarily concerned. Associating them to the evaluation provides an opportunity to create a common understanding of the situation within the community and to lay the basis for future acceptance of the measures to be taken. The steering committee, if it already includes different stakeholders, could be an adequate forum for this analysis, as could be the City council, the body representing citizens. Analysing and drawing conclusions from the collected data, can also be the opportunity to go beyond ordinary modes of government and include citizens on a larger scale. Arguably the most consistent approach would be to allow citizens to participate in a deliberation on participation.

Several deliberative methods may be envisaged. From citizens' panels to citizens' juries, various forms of joint deliberation or even co-decision are known all over Europe. With their different names and traditions also go different ways of choosing participants and different degrees of decision-making competence (see also box 5 in stage 5). The important thing is that citizens' have a say in the process and that they are associated to the deliberation.

It might seem that because it is the outcome of a deliberative process, that the result of a CLEAR self-assessment is completely subjective. However the result also has an objective dimension. Firstly, the conclusions drawn are based on data which as such is objective. Secondly, by making the criteria through which the results are interpreted explicit, it is possible to objectively understand the way in which conclusions have been drawn. Results can thus be reproduced and comparisons can be made over time. It is therefore of great importance to spell out and carefully document the criteria used.

How to actually analyse the data?

(i) For each factor develop reference points for data anlysis

The first step in the deliberation process consists of collectively determining references points for each of the five factors in order to be able to interpret the collected information. For each factor an optimal or desirable situation should be described. What would be the optimal conditions "to be able to", "to be willing to", "to have the channels to", "to be asked to" and "to be considered in" participation? A reference point for comparing the existing situation with an ideal situation can be complemented with other reference points. What would be a feasible or satisfactory situation; what would be the minimum acceptable and what would be an unacceptable situation?

This first stage of the deliberation could be to create a scale or a benchmark to interpret the results. The key idea here would be to define each level of each scale, making clear what it takes to attain the next level, e.g. on the "asked-to" dimension to go from acceptable to satisfactory. It could for example be decided to create a scale from one to ten (or e.g. one to five), where one describes a worst case scenario and ten (five) an ideal situation, leaving values between to describe intermediate scenarios. The more detailed those scales are defined (it is not the numbers in the scales that matter most), the easier it will be in the second stage to determine the existing situation of citizens participation and the easier it will be to compare results, for example over time. However, is not indispensable to develop detailed benchmarks. What counts is that consensus is created about a reference point, and that stakeholders agree for example on what would be desirable. It is important to document the reasoning behind the scales and references points in order to enhance the reliability and to ensure that the process can be reproduced.

What about an overall conclusion?
Even though there are now references points for each of the five factors (which has been analysed in the self-assessment process), how important is each of these factors for an overall assessment? It is tempting to assume that all factors in the CLEAR framework should be equally distributed, meaning that a city should, in an optimal situation, perform approximately equally well on each of the factors. Policy responses to a CLEAR diagnosis would seek automatically to build up those areas which register low and, possibly, to diminish the effects of higher scoring components, in order to achieve balance. However, such an assumption misses two fundamental points of the CLEAR framework. Firstly, the five factors are as a first approximation considered independent of each other, forming five dimensions of participation, which allows analysing them one at a time. Their independence implies precisely that they are not complements and that they should all be considered separately. Secondly, the framework is derived from an analysis of participation in different localities and takes, as its starting point, the understanding that all localities are different. Thus it is inevitable that the balance of different components in the CLEAR framework will also vary. Furthermore, both reality and what may be deemed desirable, may vary over time as well as place. It is up to each municipality to determine what the appropriate balance should be for it and to which factor it gives priority in promoting progress.

(ii) Locate the municipality on the developed scales

The next stage of the deliberation process is to add up the values arising from the collected data on each factor. This can be done by constructing an index based on the scores of the answers on the different questions in the questionnaire. Taking the total score and comparing it to what could be a full score indicates where to place the municipality on the scale developed for each of the five factors. There will probably be a need for for a weighting-process since not each indicator is equally important. How to weight will be decided in the deliberating process. Next it has to be decided, at which level of the scale to score the identified characteristics of the municipality; in short, decide how close the municipality is to an ideal or desired point.

This inevitably entails, at least in part, a judgment, resulting from the deliberation process, especially when there is only one reference point. However, the outcome will also be quite objective when it does not only draw on systematically collected data but also uses a well and predefined scale for interpretation.

The importance given to each element of collected data depends of course on political priorities, but it should also depend on the quality and the significance of the information. High quality or particularly significant information should be attributed higher importance then lower quality or less significant information.

Box 4: Consider quality and significance of the information when interpreting data

Quality Information Set:

How good is the information which has been collected? Here, the analysts need to pay attention to such elements as:
   The nature of the answers – how complete and accurate is the information
   collected?
   Interpreting the questions - how relevant were the issues being raised by
   the tool to the circumstances of the locality?
  ·The completeness of the questions – how detailed and referenced was
   the information collected?

Significance Set:

What are the implications of the data collected with regards to the practices, methods and programmes promoting participation? Within this set the analysts need to pay attention to elements such as:
  ·Quantitative answers – how is the numerical data providing a sample of
   the locality's reality?
  ·Qualitative answers – how is the qualitative data providing a useful
   classification of the locality's reality?
  ·Interrelationship between answers – how are quantitative and qualitative
   data being interrelated in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the locality?

If one works with detailed scales to evaluate the data, one could also attribute numbers to each level of the scale, as for example a grade. Distributing grades is equivalent to naming levels of scales differently (such as unsatisfactory, rather satisfactory, satisfactory, more then satisfactory, etc mentioned above). In any way, as with any other scale, it is necessary to define each grade in order to rationalise what it takes to move from one grade to another. An advantage of attributing numbers to the scale would be that one would of course also attribute a number, a "score" or a grade to locate a municipality. Numbers have the advantage that they can be easily plotted.

Creating a CLEAR profile
The research team that created the CLEAR tool and who interpreted the results of the pilot local authorities, which tested the CLEAR tool, plotted the results in a chart which they called the CLEAR profile. This chart is a nice way of visualising the result of the deliberative scoring procedure. However, such graphic visualisation should not be confused with a very different, predetermined scoring procedure, when answers to the questionnaire (or their averages or mathematically calculated indices) are directly plotted. With the CLEAR profile we are talking about plotting *the interpretation* of the results. The results of a CLEAR assessment, presented in text or numbers, are always the results of a deliberative process.

The point of such profiles is to give an overview showing the results of the evaluation of a given local authority (or more than one) and to help understanding the different factors of CLEAR in that locality. The chart below offers an example of CLEAR profiles for two cities.

Graphic 1: Chart of a CLEAR profile
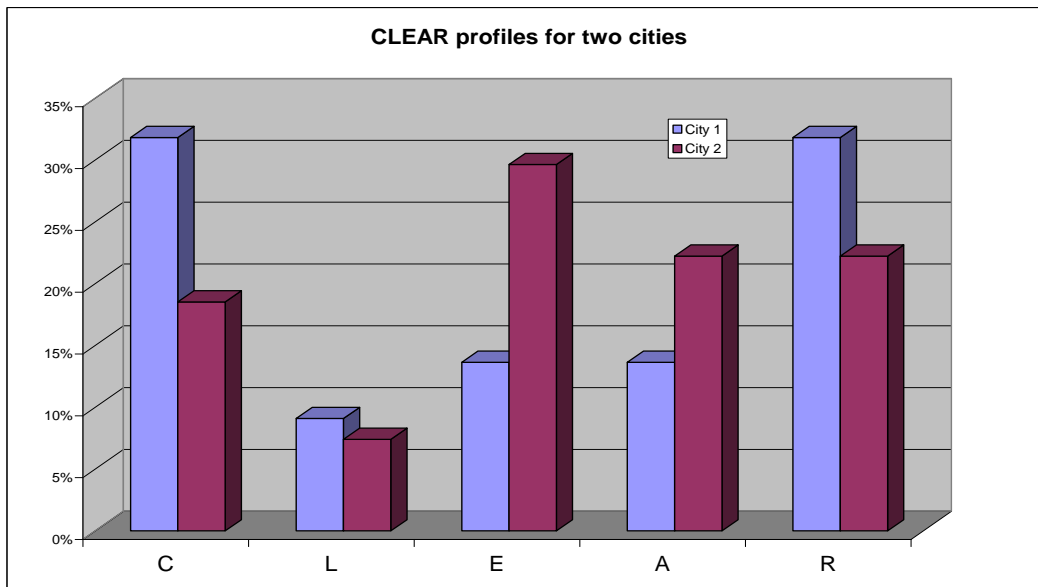
The results of a CLEAR analysis are not made for purposes of comparison. As mentioned above, the tool adapts to local circumstances and the questionnaire has to be adapted to obtain more significance for a particular context. In so doing it loses its significance for purposes of comparison. Secondly, the results of the analysis are interpreted in a deliberative process. Consequently, a simple comparison could easily overlook local aspects that have played a role, for example: the aims for implementing the tool, the stakeholders included in the implementation stage, the methods for collecting data, or the interpretation given to specific terms (e.g. community spirit, trust). Due to the adaptable nature of the tool, it is very important not to underestimate these local circumstances.

However, this does not mean that comparison cannot be helpful. For example, different local authorities could take the opportunity to cooperate on implementing the CLEAR-method. In doing so they would create the opportunity to compare with and learn from each other in terms of what good democratic participation is. They may also be able to save resources by using a common method for implementing the CLEAR tool. However, each municipality has to be aware of and take into consideration the special features of and conditions for democratic participation in its community. Such cooperation is therefore best suited to local authorities which are similar in size and have similar geographical, social and economic characteristics.

In an indirect way comparison plays a role even in a deliberative process involving only one particular municipality. Stakeholders will automatically compare the local situation to what they know about other places and will tend to define what they consider satisfactory on the basis of what other municipalities or the national average can offer. Thus, it is natural to feel tempted to compare how the municipality is doing with respect to other municipalities within the region or country. Municipalities can actually be compared (at the expense of individualisation) when the same questionnaire is used and when exactly the same evaluation criteria are applied. Notwithstanding the difficulties that these conditions entail, as mentioned above, comparison of results, cooperation between municipalities on the implementation of the self-assessment and on finding policy responses can be very useful.

Comparison is not only possible with other municipalities but can also take the form of comparison over time within the same local authority. Being able to assess longitudinal developments and measure progress is important for policy making and policy makers. To compare results of evaluation over time, it is necessary firstly to use exactly the same methods of data collection and, secondly, to stick to exactly the same evaluation and scoring criteria. It is therefore very important, to spell out and clarify the scales used as it is to document data collecting methods and the reasoning behind scaling and scoring.

This method allows comparisons and analysing the impact of policy over time. Using scales with numbers, or applying numbers to scales allows visualising these developments in graphics.

STAGE 5: Building on the CLEAR analysis - developing policy responses

If the locality is happy with the results, then there is no need for any policy response. However, it is our assumption that the process will reveal at least some areas where municipalities feel they should take some action to address gaps or limitations in what they currently observe. Again, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Though, as table 4 indicates, there are a range of responses that municipalities could make if their investigation using the CLEAR framework reveals "gaps" or areas of difficulty. The actual response needs of course to conclude from the analysis undertaken and be adapted to each context. Recommendation 2001(19) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe provides principals that should guide these individual policy responses.

Table 4: Responding to investigative lessons from CLEAR

Key factor	Policy Response
Can do	Community development, training and development and practical support through the provision of community centres and resources targeted at those groups or communities that may need help to find their voice.
Like to	Build a sense of community or neighbourliness. People have to feel part of a community to be comfortable with participation; so strategies of building social or community cohesion may be an important part in creating the right environment for participation
Enabled to	Strong civic institutions can give the confidence to express their views. They may need to be monitored, challenged and managed so that they provide channels for the representation of a wide range of interests rather than a privileged position for a few. Investing in civic infrastructure and community networks, improving channels of communication is an important part of the policy agenda for municipalities committed to participation
Asked to	Public participation schemes that are diverse and reflexive provide the best option in terms of making the 'ask' factor work. Different groups will require different forms of mobilisation. See Focus on for more details
Responded to	A public policy system that shows a capacity to respond - through specific outcomes, ongoing learning and feedback

The **"can do"** factor can be enhanced by capacity building efforts aimed at ensuring that citizens are given the support to develop the skills and resources needed to engage. Training and development and practical support through the provision of community centres are interesting strategies. These capacity building efforts should particularly be directed to those groups or communities that may need help to find their voice. Skills and resources for participation are not related only to income or social class. Some skills rest on an individual's resources: their education or more broadly their capacity for engagement. The facilities and capacities available in different communities are also important. It is possible for public, voluntary or community bodies to intervene to make up for socio-economic limitations in equipping citizens with the skills and resources for participation.

The most important aspect of analysing **"like to"** is to gain an understanding of the sense of loyalties and identities held in various communities. Recognising and promoting a sense of civic citizenship and solidarity can help develop a positive environment for community engagement. It is not easy to influence or change these feelings, but it is possible. Such is the intention of policies directed at 'civil renewal', which focus upon citizenship education, community development and the engagement of activists and leaders in partnerships for governance and service delivery. Less ambitiously, public policy makers can sign up to the 'precautionary principle', by establishing that interventions will not actually *damage* stocks of social capital – as has so often happened (in urban development, school and hospital reorganisation, land-use planning, etc.)

"Enabled to". There is an important role for local authorities in developing compacts with the voluntary and community sectors to ensure they have routes into decision making. Investing in the governance and capacity of 'umbrella' organisations is also important – councils of voluntary service, race equality councils, tenants' federations and civic societies. Such bodies can enable groups that have a quite different primary purpose (e.g. sporting or cultural) to act as participation platforms on issues of concern to their members, and to provide points of access for decision-makers seeking community opinion. A willingness on the part of decision makers to open multiple umbrellas is vital: no one body can be representative of civil society as a whole. Support to specialist community networks that engage marginalised groups is of particular importance

"Asked to". The variety of participation options for engagement is important because some people are more comfortable with some forms of engagement such as a public meeting, while others would prefer, for example, to engage through on-line discussions. Some people want to talk about the experiences of their community or neighbourhood, while others want to engage based on their knowledge of a particular service as a user. Rather than seeking 'balance' or 'representativeness' within every participation exercise, public bodies *288* need a broad repertoire of approaches to reach different citizen groups The nature of the 'ask' is also important. Participation can be mobilised by the use of incentives (e.g. honoraria), through establishing a sense of obligation (as in the case of jury duty), or by offering bargains/exchanges (where participation is accompanied by investment). The focus of the 'ask' is also important. It could be directed at a particular neighbourhood or a larger cross-authority population.

Box 5 : remedies to the asked-to factor - different methods for involving citizens

Of course, one of the main areas where municipalities might seek to change their profiles is in relation to their promotion and sponsorship of participation. They can ask their citizens to participate. These changes might involve extending the range of opportunities and initiatives or, more simply, changing the emphasis within them. The following table provides details of some of the many and diverse ways of asking the public their opinion.

Form	Description
Consultative innovations	Informs decision makers of citizens' views through a combination of methods to explore public opinion.
Deliberative methods	Enabling a cross-section of citizens to have the time and opportunity to reflect on an issue by gathering opinion and information in order to come to a judgment about an issue or concern.
Co-governance Mechanisms	Arrangements aim to give citizens significant influence during the process of decision making, particularly when it comes to issues of distribution of public spending and implementation practice.
Direct democracy	Decision making Referendums called by citizens that come in two broad forms. Popular initiatives allow the recall of decision made by elected representatives. Citizens' initiatives – allow citizens to set the agenda and put an issue up for public decision There are also referendums which are (only) consultative, i.e. where the outcome is not legally binding.
E-Democracy	The use of information and communication technology to give citizens new opportunities to engage.

Meeting the challenge of the **"responded to"** factor means asking public authorities how they weigh messages from various consultation or participation events against other inputs to the decision-making process. How are the different or conflicting views of various participants and stakeholders prioritised? Responsiveness is about ensuring feedback from elected representatives to the citizens, which may not be positive – in the sense of accepting the dominant view from participants. Feedback involves explaining how the decision was made and the role of participation within that. Citizens need to learn to live with disappointment: participation will not always 'deliver' on immediate concerns, but remains important. Elected politicians have an important role in promoting a better understanding of politics and through their behaviour and performance ensuring a realistic and honest exchange with citizens about what can be delivered and what can not. Citizens' confidence in the participation process cannot be premised upon 'getting their own way'. Ideas of natural justice are important here: participation is necessary to ensure that citizens get their case heard, and that it receives impartial judgement. If something affects you, you should be able to make your case and have it listened to: but you cannot be guaranteed a positive outcome.

Annex

Glossary

Community
A "community" can be defined as a group of interacting people living in a common location. Community is sometimes defines in contrast to society as a tighter and more cohesive social entity, due to the presence of a "unity of will." Communitarism, 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 1) membership, 2) influence, 3) integration and fulfillment of needs, and 4) shared emotional connection.

Political Participation
Political participation can be defined as an *active* engagement by individuals and groups with the governmental processes that affect their lives. This encompasses both involvements in decision-making and acts of opposition. Acts of active engagement include *conventional* political participation (such as voting, standing for office and campaigning for a political party) and *unconventional* acts, which may be legitimate (protesting, lobbying, petitioning).

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.

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

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 it is clear that the term does not include individual, privately orientated activity, it seems difficult to convincingly differentiate them in terms of purpose. Therefore this definition stresses the author, which needs to be civic organisations.

Civic infrastructure
Civic infrastructure is the context in which civic organisation develop. This infrastructure can facilitate their existence and activities, by providing various types of resources (grants, premises or equipment, staff support, access to facilities,…), organisational structures (umbrella organisations), to access media, decision-makers, etc.

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

Social Cohesion

As understood by the Council of Europe, social cohesion is the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means. Close to the concept of social capital, social cohesion distinguished different qualities of social relations and underlines its procedural dimension.

CLEAR framework

Set of conjectures based on the "acquis" of academic research on participation. It summarises various insights and understanding research has produce of public participation into 5 factors.

CLEAR tool

The CLEAR tool is an auditing tool for citizen participation that uses the insights of the CLEAR framework. The tool consists of a questionnaire which operationalises the five factors and their underlying variables, so that the user can measure the factors and variables to obtain an empirically funded diagnosis of participation in their municipality.

CLEAR profile

The CLEAR profile is overview chart summarising a given municipalities performance in the five factors of participation. Like an index, it summarises the auditing results. Though, as each audit needs to be adapt the tool to the particular circumstances and aims of each municipality, the CLEAR profile is contingent on these particular aims and priorities and therefore not directly comparable with profiles resulting from other audits.

Capacity

Capacities are resources, skills and knowledge, which enable an actor to achieve an end. The related term capabilities clarifies the idea of capacities in the sense of resources in a social context. They are ultimately the substantive freedoms he or she enjoys to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value. Capabilities empower individuals to a freedom to chose (and to participate if he or she whished to do so).

Responsiveness

Degree to which administration takes account of citizens' input.

Likert Scale

A Likert scale is a response scale often used in questionnaires, and is the most widely used scale in survey research, where respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement. A five scale Likert item would be 1. Strongly disagree, 2.Disagree, 3. Neither agree nor disagree, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree.

Factor

The term "factor" is used here to name the key "explaining variables" of the phenomenon to be explained: participation. The CLEAR framework is build around five conjectures about participation, which are theoretical and/or empirically found in academic research. The explanans, the explaining element, of each conjecture is what we have named factor. This definition aims at distinguishing this first level of explanation from the second level of explanation, which deals with the question of which *variables* determinate the explaining factors.

Variable

The term "variable" is reserved here to describe the underlying forces that determine each of the five factors (which influence participation). Variables mentioned in the text are part of the secondary explanation, in contrast to factors part which are part of the primary explanation of participation. Though in reality these some times abstract variables cannot always be directly observed. They need to be approximated with observable *indicators*.

Indicators

Indicators approximate the variables or aspects of them. The questionnaire of the CLEAR tool suggests a variety of indicators to measure the forces that shape the state of citizen participation. The context of each situation determines whether an indicator is an adequate measure. Therefore, the CLEAR tool invites its user to derive themselves their adequate indicators, before starting to analyse the situation.