Stage 3 – LEADERSHIP FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

Module 20 – CIVIL PARTICI-PATION IN DECISION-MAKING (The Toolkit)

The Leadership Academy is a learning and action programme for mayors, senior officials and elected representatives of local government.

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**Centre of Expertise
for Local Government Reform**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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1 MODULE OVERVIEW

1.1 BACKGROUND

- "Civil Participation 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"[1].

- "Participation by all individuals and groups of civil society in decision-making at all levels of government is one of the prerequisites for the improved and proper functioning of democratic society and for guaranteeing democratic security. It allows for open dialogue on critical issues, resulting in better decisions by the authorities and improved governance.

- Civil participation is all the more important today when, in many countries, democracy is in crisis. Civil participation complements and supports representative democracy. Citizens who feel that they have a say in the general policy debate and in everyday decisions, are more likely to accept the decisions taken and, more generally, to trust their elected representatives.

- It is therefore crucial that individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society at large are involved in the conduct of public affairs and feel empowered to do so"[2].

- Local government organisations, to ensure an efficient and effective use of available resources, need to engage all stakeholders to ultimately deliver real public value. This process embodies the transition from government principles to governance.

- Deploying effective civil participation mechanisms to deliver good local governance means that citizens' engagement should be fostered inclusively, honestly and transparently. This in turn builds a strong relation between citizens and local government based on mutual respect and trust.

1.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To increase awareness on the role of civil participation for efficient and effective local governance.
- To improve understanding of the requirements, benefits and relations intrinsic to civil participation.
- To acquire knowledge on the Council of Europe Toolkit for Civil Participation.

1.3 LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Participants acquire the understanding on the role of civil participation and the competencies necessary to engage citizens in developing policies and priorities, monitoring municipal performance and improving the quality of municipal services.

1.4 DURATION

- 370 minutes (1 full day)

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[1] Council of Europe, CDLR. (2008). C.L.E.A.R. Tool – Final version [CDLR(2008)42], CoE: Strasbourg p.6 Available at: https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2564749&SecMode=1&DocId=2010906&Usage=2 (last accessed January 2017)

[2] Council of Europe, Draft revised text by the Secretariat, taking into consideration the proposals by the CDDG at its meeting on 14-15 November 2016 Guidelines for Civil Participation

2 MODULE STRUCTURE

2.1 INTERACTIVE INTRODUCTION

- Participants brainstorm in small groups on their understanding of the practice of participation;
- The role of civil participation and the competencies necessary to engage citizens in developing policies and priorities, monitoring municipal performance and improving the quality of municipal services are presented.

2.2 LESSONS' LEARNT ON PARTICIPATION

- Participants share and discuss within the plenary session their experiences with Civil participation.

2.3 GROUP EXERCISE 1 – IDENTIFYING CORE CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE 7 PRINCIPLES

- Participants work in small groups to identify the challenges they foresee or have experienced in implementing each of the 7 principle of participation.
- Participants share the insights of their work during a plenary session.

2.4 GROUP EXERCISE 2 – IDENTIFYING KEY ACTIONS TO OVERCOME THE IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES ON THE 7 PRINCIPLES

- Participants, on the basis of the previous exercise, work in groups for the identifications of key actions to overcome the identified challenges.
- Participants share the insights of their work during a plenary session

2.5 GROUP EXERCISE 3 – COMMUNITY EVALUATION

- Participants are divided into groups of 3 for an interview role-play.

- o The interviewee represents a Mayor;
- o There should be 2 interviewers – these are senior colleagues invited by the Mayor from other municipalities.
- The interviewers should assess the community (for each dimension) by seeking evidence through questioning the Mayor and preparing a short report (i.e. notes).
- Participants use the community evaluation questionnaire.
- Participants share the insights of their work during a plenary session.

2.6 GROUP EXERCISE 4 – IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

- Participants work in their groups to identify (up to 30) stakeholders.
- Participants use the stakeholders Database.
- Participants share the insights of their work during a plenary session.
- Participants select the community/case in which they should work in the next sections.

2.7 GROUP EXERCISE 5 – EVALUATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

- Participants work in their groups and analyse the identified stakeholders.
- Participants use the Stakeholders Evaluation Questionnaire.
- Participants share the insights of their work during a plenary session.

2.8 GROUP EXERCISE 6 – STRATEGIES FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION

- Participants work in groups to elaborate an action plan to implement participation.
- Participants share the insights of their work during a plenary session

3 WORKING DEFINITIONS[3]

3.1 COMMUNITY

A "community" can be defined as a group of inter-acting people living in a common location. Community is sometimes defined as a tighter and more cohesive social entity compared to 'society', due to the presence within a community of a "unity of will." 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 fulfilment of needs, and 4) shared emotional connection.

3.2 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).

3.3 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 op-posed to the force-backed structures of a state (regardless of that state's political system) and commercial institutions.

3.4 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.

3.5 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.

3.6 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.

3.7 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.

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[3] Definitions 3.1 to 3.7: Council of Europe, CDLR (2008). Annex – Glossary, C.L.E.A.R. Tool – Final version [CDLR(2008)42], CoE: Strasbourg   p.45   available   at: https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&Instra-netImage=2564749&SecMode=1&DocId=2010906&Usage=2 (last accessed January 2017)
Definitions 3.8 to 3.13: Council of Europe, Draft revised text by the Secretariat, taking into consideration the proposals by the CDDG at its meeting on 14-15 November 2016 Guidelines for Civil Participation (pp. 4-5)

3.8 CIVIL PARTICIPATION

Civil participation means the engagement of individuals, NGOs and civil society at large in decision-making processes by public authorities. Civil participation in political decision-making is distinct from political activities in terms of direct engagement with political parties and from lobbying in relation to business interests.

3.9 DECISION MAKING PROCESS

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

3.10 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Non-governmental organisations means voluntary self-governing bodies or organisations established to pursue the essentially non-profit-making objectives of their founders or members as set out in Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14. They may include, for example, voluntary groups, non-profit organisations, associations, foundations, charities, as well as geographic or interest-based community and advocacy groups.

3.11 CIVIL SOCIETY AT LARGE

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

3.12 PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

The term Public authorities refers to government and administration at national, regional and local level, legislative bodies and natural or legal persons insofar as they exercise administrative authority.

3.13 REAL PARTICIPATION

Real participation means that both sides honestly and sincerely strive to ensure that civil society's viewpoint is effectively taken into consideration by public authorities with decision-making powers.

4 KEY CONCEPTS

4.1 CoE FRAMEWORK FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION[4]

The Council of Europe is actively engaged in the promotion of civil participation, as a core value of democracy. Efforts in the field of promotion and strengthening of civil participation across Member States may be drawn from the following documents:

- the Charter on Local Self-government (CETS 122)
- the Convention on the Participation of foreigners in public life at local level (CETS 144)
- Recommendation (CM/Rec(2001)19E) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of citizens in local public life
- Elaboration of the C.L.E.A.R. tool (2008)
- Recommendation (2009) on evaluating, auditing and monitoring participation and participation policies at local and regional level
- Elaboration of the Toolkit for increasing Civil Participation in Cross-Border Governance systems – "European Experience of Citizens' Participation in Cross-Border Governance" (2015)
- Elaboration of the Guidelines for Civil Participation, which upgrades further the principles of Civil Participation (i.e. 7 key principles) (2016)

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

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

4.1.1 Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of citizens in local public life

In 2001, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, identified a set of "basic principles of a local democratic policy" and the related "steps and measures to encourage and reinforce citizens' participation in local public life"[5]. Considering, *inter alia*, that:

- dialogue between citizens and local elected representatives is essential for local democracy, as it strengthens the legitimacy of local democratic institutions and the effectiveness of their action; and

- in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, local authorities have and must assume a leading role in promoting citizens' participation and that the success of any "local democratic participation policy" depends on the commitment of these authorities

the recommendation invites the government of member states to:

- frame a policy, involving local and-- where applicable- regional authorities, designed to promote citizens' participation in local public life;
- adopt, within the context of the policy thus the measures within their power, in particular with a view to improving the legal framework for participation and ensuring that national legislation and regulations enable local and regional authorities

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[4] The contents of the module draw upon the Council of Europe Toolkit on civil Participation in Decision Making - ISIG. (2017). Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit, Council of Europe: Strasbourg.
Available at

https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/toolkits#{"25571686":[1]} (last accessed October 2018)
[5]   Council of Europe, CM/Rec (2001)19E. Appendixes 1 and 2. CoE: Strasbourg

to employ a wide range of participation in-struments; and to

- invite, in an appropriate way, local and re-gional authorities to undertake the effec-tive implementation of the policy of pro-moting citizens' participation in local pub-lic life and to improve local regulations and practical arrangements concerning citizens' participation in local public life, and to take any other measures within their power to promote citizens' participa-tion[6].

4.1.2 C.L.E.A.R.: An auditing tool for citizen par-ticipation at the local level

In 2008, the Council of Europe published the C.L.E.A.R. tool[7], in order to aid public authorities in understanding their communities' propensity and capacity to participate, as well as their own re-sources to support this process.

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

- Legitimisation and Accountability - Local authorities are not able to act as effective community leaders if they lack a base of popular support. More generally there is a need to strengthen public confidence in political institutions and the most power-ful way to do so is to seek active citizen en-dorsement of policies and practices. Delib-erative elements of democracy give citi-zens 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 ac-count.
- Learning to respond to citizens' needs - Ef-fective channels of communication are es-sential to achieving the wider social and economic outcomes that local authorities seek to achieve. Participation enables more effective learning and better deci-sions.

- Fostering sense of ownership of local insti-tutions - Participation has an intrinsic value. It is good that people are actively involved in decision making in their com-munities. 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 im-portant. Public authorities at all levels should seek citizens' active endorsement of rather than tacit acquiescence to their policies and programmes.

Aiming to make these general principles accessible for all public authorities aiming to engage their cit-izens in participatory decision-making processes, the Council of Europe developed a set of key ques-tions to function as a preliminary self-assessment. These guiding questions relate to the 5 dimensions of analysis that the acronym 'C.L.E.A.R.' embodies:

- **C**an do – that is, citizens have the re-sources and skills and knowledge to par-ticipate;
- **L**ike to – that is, citizens have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;
- **E**nabled to – that is, citizens are provided with the opportunity to participate;
- **A**sked to – that is, citizens are involved by official bodies or voluntary groups;
- **R**esponded to – that is, citizens see evi-dence that their views have been consid-ered.

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

4.1.3 The Guidelines of Civil Participation

In 2016, the Council of Europe developed further the criteria needed to define civil participation to achieve good local governance. This effort lead to

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[6] Council of Europe, CM/Rec (2001)19E. CoE: Strasbourg

[7] Council of Europe, CDLR. (2008). C.L.E.A.R. Tool – Final ver-sion [CDLR(2008)42], CoE: Strasbourg p.7

the Guidelines for Civil Participation (2016)[8] , defining the key principles of participation. In order to be effectively called so, and to positively impact local governance, a civil participation process must be based on:

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

Citizens' engagement is widely defined within a range of meanings:

- the participation of citizens to elections (thus as the main tool of representative democracy),

- the possibility of citizens to act directly towards modifications in the legislation (e.g. referendum).
- the active engagement of citizens within volunteer associations or informal networks devoted to community actions aimed at improvement of life within a society.

All these forms of engagement imply that citizens are at the core of society (i.e. democracy, rule of the people), and that they exercise their sovereignty through:

- representation (i.e. electing a candidate that is deemed reliable to carry out the changes/improvements desired through decision and policy making (legislation) and not renewing the trust in case he/she is not seen as a reliable representative)
- direct influence on the legislation (i.e. referendum)
- direct action (volunteering, campaigning, etc.)

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

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

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8   Council of Europe DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING, Revised and approved by the CDDG on 11 May 2017 with a view to their transmission to the Committee of Ministers for adoption Council of Europe,
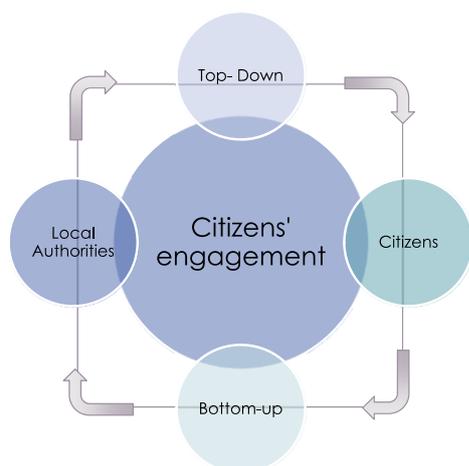
These concepts are neither opposed nor mutually exclusive, but rather represent two ends of a circular process, initiated by citizens, whether through representation (i.e. voting) or direct participation. Although both perspectives ensure citizens' feedback, the successful integration of citizens' instances in policy-making - stemming from direct participation - carries a value added in terms of trust and sense of ownership.

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

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

This means that not all citizens represent, always, relevant stakeholders that should be engaged in the decision-making process "no matter what".
In order to achieve effective civil participation, public authorities must be aware of the stakeholders of its community, but also understand that it is not obligatory nor desirable to engage all stakeholders at all times.

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

4.2 CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING – THE FUNDAMENTALS [9]

Civil participation in political decision-making should seek to provide, collect and channel views of individuals, directly or via NGOs, providing a substantive exchange of factual and evidence-based information and views that inform the decision-making process and ensure that real public needs are met.

Civil participation should be guaranteed by an appropriate, structured and transparent legal or regulatory framework. Any limitations and restrictions to participation as regards any topic or in respect of anyone should be clearly prescribed and narrowly defined in full respect of the European Convention on Human Rights and the relevant case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

All phases of decision-making leading up to a final decision being taken by the authority invested with the power to do so, should be open to civil participation in full respect of representative democracy.

Access should be provided to all information except where classified for reasons clearly specified by law or restricted for reasons of data protection in line with the relevant Council of Europe Conventions[10].

Adequate information should be provided in a timely manner at all stages allowing for substantive input as from the earliest possible stage of the decision-making process and while decisions are

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[9] Council of Europe, Draft revised text by the Secretariat, taking into consideration the proposals by the CDDG at its meeting on 14-15 November 2016 Guidelines for Civil Participation (p. 5)

[10] Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (CETS 205). Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Official Data and its Additional Protocol (ETS 108 and ETS 181).

still reversible. Key information for decision-making processes should be recorded and made available including, as applicable, announcements of public events and opportunities for participation, contact information, agendas, background documents, petitions, legal and policy advice, submissions made by third parties, minutes of meetings, and feedback.

Public authorities should plan and manage civil participation and clearly define the objectives, actors, process, timeline and methods used.

They should provide up to date, comprehensive information about the decision-making process and procedures for participation.

They should also make available appropriate resources, means and material requirements as may be necessary without in any way trying to influence the outcome and ensure that the burden on individuals, NGOs and civil society at large is not disproportionate, effectively preventing participation.

The timeline allocated to civil participation should provide sufficient opportunity to properly prepare and submit constructive contributions. Recourse to shorter than normal participation procedures or procedures involving a limited number of actors should be the exception, duly motivated and used in well-defined circumstances only.

Civil participation in decision-making should not be limited to one modality. The scope and method of participation should be commensurate to the issue at stake. Public authorities should solicit the widest possible input, including from marginalised, disadvantaged and other vulnerable groups.

Public authorities should not make decisions until the end of the civil participation process, except if exceptional circumstances so require and subject to clear justifications being given.

Any legal and regulatory framework for civil participation should include effective provisions and mechanisms to review complaints and provide redress if required.

4.3 CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING - THE CoE TOOLKIT[11]

The Toolkit for Civil Participation in Decision-making aims to channel all the (above-mentioned) insights and recommendations of the CoE into an integrated framework that guides local authorities and practitioners, through a step-by-step approach, in the design and implementation of context-based strategies to increase a community's civil participation.

The toolkit is envisaged, in fact, as a continuation of such outlines and as a step forward towards an effective implementation of the principles of civil participation, as it aims:

- To contextualise the role of civil participation for efficient and effective local governance, as defined by Council of Europe standards and frameworks.
- To support LAs in understanding their current community context and the potential of actual engagement of each stakeholder in the decision-making process.
- To guide LAs in the choice of dedicated strategies and actions for different levels of involvement, at different stages of the decision-making process.

In order to achieve these aims, the Toolkit proposes a three-steps process, as follows:
- STEP 1 - **Community Evaluation** – to contextualise a participatory decision-making process.
- STEP2 – **Stakeholders' Identification and Evaluation** - to identify stakeholders' capacities and willingness to engage.
- STEP 3 – **Stakeholders' Plotting** – to graphically plot each stakeholder on a graph, where his/her interest to engage as well as relevance in the process are clearly identified.

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[11] The following paragraphs have been extrapolated from ISIG. (2017). Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit, Council of Europe: Strasbourg.

Available at https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/toolkits#{"25571686":[1]} (last accessed October 2018)

Finally, the Toolkit offers an overview of strategies to activate the processes of participation for different stakeholders, based on the assessment of their potential to engage, and to enhance the level of participation.

Successful participation cannot be achieved with a standard methodology to be applied for all decision-making processes and towards all stakeholders.

While transparency, availability of information and trust-building must be ensured for and towards all stakeholders (respecting 1 and 3 among the principles of civil participation as defined by CoE[12]), effective participation implies a clear understanding of the context in relation to the potential of each stakeholder to engage. In addition, civil participation in decision-making should not be limited to one modality. The scope and method of participation should be commensurate to the issue at stake[13].

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

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

Both the community contextualisation as well as the stakeholders' mapping process stem from the analysis of the following dimensions relevant for

participation, as extrapolated from the C.L.E.A.R.[14] tool, as follows:

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

4.3.1   STEP 1 - Community Evaluation

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

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

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

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12   Council of Europe, Draft revised text by Secretariat, taking into consideration the proposal by the CDDG at its meeting on 14-15 November 2016 Guidelines for Civil Participation. p. 26-27

13   Council of Europe, Draft revised text by the Secretariat, taking into consideration the proposals by the CDDG at its

meeting on 14-15 November 2016 Guidelines for Civil Participation, p. 28

14   Council of Europe, CDLR (2008). C.L.E.A.R. Tool Final Version

pensity towards participation. That means to assess the overall attitude of the community towards participation, according to:

- **Social capital** --- social vitality of a community (i.e. identity and demography related variables);
- **Economic capital** --- economic health of a community (i.e. variables related to employment, resources, social class);
- **Political capital** --- political engagement within the community at large (i.e. variables related to trust and citizenship);
- **Human capital** --- knowledge/skills of the community at large (i.e. variables related to educational attainment, skills/knowledge of the citizens, resources available for the citizens' capacity building).

(*For specific details on the proposed variables for Community Evaluation, please consult the Toolkit for Civil Participation, Ref Section 3 – The Tool*).

In applying the Tool, Local Authorities are asked to identify, for each variable, if this affects the propensity towards participation: Very positively, Positively, Negatively, Very negatively; or if the variable has no influence at all shaping the level of participation within the community.

There are no given true or false assumptions needed to fill in the grid of the 'Community Evaluation'. Each public authority is called to interpret their own data according to the specific and unique impact that such elements have in fostering or limiting participation.

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

The dimension with the higher score is the one that especially affects the context of participation

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

4.3.2 STEP 2 - Stakeholders Identification and Evaluation

"Civil participation means the engagement of individuals, NGOs and civil society at large in decision-making processes by public authorities. Civil participation in political decision-making is distinct from political activities in terms of direct engagement with political parties and from lobbying in relation to business interests"[15].

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

Stakeholders usually pertain to the following categories of actors: Institutional actors (i.e. local and regional authorities, national authorities and agencies, cross-border institutions), Civil society (e.g. youth associations, volunteering associations, NGOs, associations representing the interest of minority groups, etc), Private actors (e.g. professional associations, private investors, entrepreneurs, etc).

In order to engage in sustainable civil participation processes, stakeholders must be clearly identified and systematised (for example in a database) according to their typology (indicating name, contacts, main domain of activity, etc). This kind of thorough classification allows to promoters/policy-makers to engage in a pre-selection of stakeholders, that is, to include as many stakeholders per each identified category and for topics of interest for the process/project at stake.

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[15] Council of Europe, Draft revised text by the Secretariat, taking into consideration the proposals by the CDDG at its meeting on 14-15 November 2016 Guidelines for Civil Participation (p.4)

Once the stakeholders are identified/mapped, a further step must be taken towards their evaluation in terms of capacity to influence the process at stake (i.e. their relevance for the process at stake), and in terms of willingness to engage in the process (i.e. perceived interest of the stakeholder).

As per the Community Evaluation, the four dimensions of analysis are: Social capital, Economic capital, Human capital and political capital. For all four dimensions, relevance and interest variables are identified.

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

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

As the stakeholder is assessed for each variable, according to the knowledge and perception of the elected public authority (as promoter of the decision-making participatory process), the overall dimension scores are automatically weighted so to mirror the relevance of the dimension identified as most relevant in the 'Community Evaluation'. Thus, each stakeholder is evaluated not only based on its own capacities and willingness to engage, but also against the actual context in which it is called to engage.

(*For further details on the proposed variables for Stakeholders Evaluation, please consult the Toolkit for Civil Participation, Ref Section 3 – The Tool*).

4.3.3   STEP 3 – Stakeholders plotting

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

Stakeholder plotting – Taxonomy for stakeholders' identification
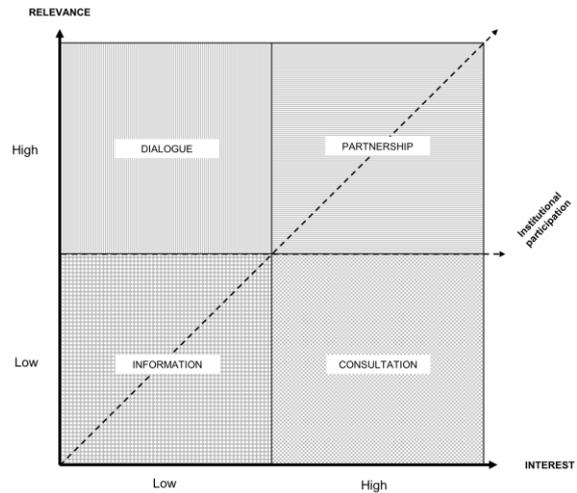
Source: ISIG (2017)

The two dimensions of the taxonomy (horizontal and vertical, interest and relevance respectively), are divided into two variables:

- High interest/relevance
- Low interest/relevance

By crossing these two variables, four possible levels of stakeholders' involvement are defined, as follows:

Stakeholder involvement

Typology of involvement	Variable levels of involvement	
Information	↓	Low interest of *stakeholder*
	↓	Low relevance perceived as a result of their involvement
Consultation	↑	High interest of *stakeholder*
	↓	Low relevance perceived as a result of their involvement
Dialogue	↓	Low interest of *stakeholder*

	↑	High relevance perceived as a result of their involvement
Partnership	↑	High interest of *stakeholder*
	↑	High relevance perceived as a result of their involvement

4.3.4 Participation Implementation Strategies

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

The decision-making process is composed of six different phases[16], as follows:

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

For stakeholders falling in each quadrant, involvement in the process might be foreseen for all phases of the decision-making. Of course, for each quadrant the strategies and actions implemented

to allow stakeholders to participate are different. The following paragraphs summaries the main objectives per quadrant, for each phase of decision-making (*For additional information on strategies and potential methodologies of implementation please consult the Toolkit for Civil Participation, Ref Section 4 – The Strategies*).

4.3.4.1   *Quadrant 1 - Information*

Stakeholders falling in this quadrant are characterised by a perceived low interest as well as relevance on the topic at hand. Yet, it is crucial that information is always provided to all in a decision-making process, in line with the principle of openness and transparency of CoE 2016 Guidelines for Civil Participation. At all stages of decision-making all relevant information should be presented in clear and easily understandable language and in an appropriate and accessible format (both online and offline), without undue administrative obstacles and, in principle, free of charge, in accordance with open data principles. This is valid both for the specific stakeholders falling into this quadrant after the evaluation, as well as for the population at large.

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

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

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

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

4.3.4.2 Quadrant 2 - Consultation

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

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

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

4.3.4.3 Quadrant 3 - Dialogue

Stakeholders falling in this quadrant are characterised by a perceived low interest, but a high level of relevance on the topic at hand. Engaging stakeholders through dialogue allows public authorities

to benefit from stakeholders' competences, while ensuring a constant feedback so to increase the level of interest and keep the stakeholders involved. Dialogue differs from consultation as it implies a constant bilateral communication between public authority and stakeholders. In the consultation quadrant, the willingness to engage stems manly from stakeholders and the process organizers make sure stakeholders have the possibility to express their views. On the dialogue quadrant, on the contrary, it is the public authority that mostly feels the need to include the stakeholder's capacities and competences into the decisional process, thus creating incentives and occasions for a mutual exchange with the stakeholder.

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

- Priority setting: involve the stakeholders in the definition of priorities, based on their knowledge and/or influence on the topic at hand;
- Drafting: ensure there is a multilateral revision process of the documents prepared as draft of the strategy/policy;
- Decision: ensure stakeholders endorse the decision made and the steps defined for implementation;
- Implementation: involve stakeholders in the implementation actions, based on their competence/roles within civil society and economic sector;
- Monitoring: involve stakeholders asking their feedback on different stages/methodologies of the implementation process and procedures;
- Policy tuning: involve stakeholders in the revision of the policy, considering their suggestions for improvement when re-defining the amelioration strategy.

4.3.4.4 Quadrant 4 - Partnership

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

such as dedicated committees or scheduled periodical meetings.

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

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

4.3.5 Participation enhancement strategies

Participation is not a static process. It is always evolving, as the objective of a public authority should always be that of increasing the level and possibilities for the largest number of stakeholders to contribute to the decision-making process. The figure below shows the possibility for stakeholders located on a quadrant to move to the next, if their level of relevance (thus competences/expertise) or interest increase. The following paragraphs summaries the potential actions to be implemented in order to facilitate this circular movement within the graph, allowing for a greater degree of civil participation within the community (*for specific details, please consult the Toolkit for Civil Participation, Ref Section 4 – The Strategies*).

4.3.5.1 From Information to Consultation

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

4.3.5.2 From Consultation to Dialogue

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

4.3.5.3 From Dialogue to Partnership

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

4.3.5.4 Strengthening of Partnership

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

5   EXERCISES

5.1   EXERCISE 1 – GROUP EXERCISE 1 – IDENTIFYING CORE CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE 7 PRINCIPLES

- Work in small groups to identify the challenges experienced in implementing each of the 7 principles of participation.
- Report on as many principles as relevant.

PRINCIPLE	CHALLENGE/S
Principle 1. Respect for all actors as the basis for honest interaction and mutual trust	
Principle 2. Respect for the independence of NGOs even when their opinions differ from those of the authorities	
Principle 3. Openness, transparency and accountability	
Principle 4. Responsiveness, providing appropriate feedback	
Principle 5. Non-discrimination and inclusiveness so that all voices, including those of the less privileged and most vulnerable, are heard and taken into account	
Principle 6. Gender equality and equal participation of all groups including those with particular interests and needs such as young people, the elderly, people with disabilities, minorities, etc.	
Principle 7. Accessibility of the process of participation through the use of clear language and appropriate means of participation, offline or online, and on any device	

5.2 EXERCISE 2 – GROUP EXERCISE 2 – IDENTIFYING KEY ACTIONS TO OVERCOME THE IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES ON THE 7 PRINCIPLES

- On the basis of the previous exercise, work in small groups for the identifications of key actions to overcome the identified challenges.
- Report on as many principles as relevant.

Principle 1. Respect for all actors as the basis for honest interaction and mutual trust	
Challenge:	Action:

Principle 2. Respect for the independence of NGOs even when their opinions differ from those of the authorities	
Challenge:	Action:

Principle 3. Openness, transparency and accountability	
Challenge:	Action:

Principle 4. Responsiveness, providing appropriate feedback	
Challenge:	Action:

Principle 5. Non-discrimination and inclusiveness so that all voices, including those of the less privileged and most vulnerable, are heard and taken into account	
Challenge:	Action:

Principle 6. Gender equality and equal participation of all groups including those with particular interests and needs such as young people, the elderly, people with disabilities, minorities, etc.	
Challenge:	Action:

Principle 7. Accessibility of the process of participation through the use of clear language and appropriate means of participation, offline or online, and on any device	
Challenge:	Action:

5.3   EXERCISE 3 – GROUP EXERCISE 3 – COMMUNITY EVALUATION

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

	COMMUNITY:						
	DIMENSIONS	Extremely Negative	Negative	not applicable	Positive	Extremely positive	score per dimension
	(1) Social capital						0,5
1	Population that has recently moved to the city/town (last 5 years)						
2	Population that has recently moved out of the city/town (last 5 years)						
3	Work commuters to other cities/towns among the population aged 30-60						
4	Population that is a minority						
5	Population that is below 30 yrs. of age						
6	Population with internet access						
7	Active CSOs						
8	Annual variation of local CSOs' membership						
	(2) Economic capital						0,5
9	Per capita average income						
10	Unemployment rate						
11	Youth unemployment rate (= or below 30 years of age)						
12	Female labour force						
13	Households in potential economic difficulty						
14	Households in absolute poverty						
15	Self-employed workers that are women						
16	Self-employed workers that are below 30 yrs. of age						
	(3) Human capital						0,5
17	Population (25-64) with high school diploma						
18	Women (25-64) with high school diploma						
19	Presence of civic education courses within compulsory school curricula in the last 15 years						
20	Professionalism						
21	Population with digital competences						
22	Population actively engaged in volunteering activities						
23	Presence of Life-Long Learning (LLL) possibilities						
24	Accessibility of Life-Long Learning (LLL) possibilities						

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

5.4 EXERCISE 4 – GROUP EXERCISE 4 – IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

Name of institution/association/private body	Main domains of activity	Name and role of contact person	Main competences of contact person	Contact details (email - phone)
Stakeholder 1				
Stakeholder 2				
Stakeholder 3				
Stakeholder 4				
Stakeholder 5				
Stakeholder 6				
Stakeholder 7				
Stakeholder 8				
Stakeholder 3				
Stakeholder 9				
Stakeholder 10				
Stakeholder 11				
Stakeholder 12				
Stakeholder 13				
Stakeholder 14				
Stakeholder 15				
Stakeholder 16				
Stakeholder ...				

5.5   EXERCISE 5 – GROUP EXERCISE 5 – EVALUATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

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

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

RELEVANCE SCORE

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

INTEREST SCORE

5.6   EXERCISE 6 – GROUP EXERCISE 6 – STRATEGIES FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION

- Work in groups to elaborate an action plan to implement participation.
- The action plan should define:

  - The stage of the policy making.

  - The tools and methods for stakeholder's engagement.

  - The strategies for participation enhancements.

- Each group should deliver a presentation including:

  - Description of specific tools

  - Timeframe

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