



Overview Report

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KDZ Centre for Public Administration Research

Strengthening Participatory Democracy and Human Rights at Local Level in Georgia



Study Visit Austria

23rd to 26th of May 2023

Introduction

The project [Strengthening Participatory Democracy and Human Rights at Local Level in Georgia](#), has been implemented with financial contribution from the Austrian Development Agency, from December 2020 until December 2023 by the Directorate General of Democracy and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities within the [Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023](#). It aims at strengthening democratic public participation and human rights protection at municipal level by ensuring real impact of civil society organisations (CSOs) and citizens on the decision-making processes as well as establishment and implementation of effective co-operation mechanisms between local authorities and the civil sector. It also aims to strengthen the capacities of local authorities and the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) to protect and embed human rights standards and practices in their policies and strategies, to incorporate a gender perspective, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

Within the project, 15 municipalities from different regions were selected to pilot innovative civil participation tools and mechanisms. The project supports mayors, city councils and civil society with capacity building and awareness raising, through interactive workshops and trainings on Council of Europe civil participation tools (UChange, CivicLab, Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit), on school participatory budgeting methods and the organisation of Citizen Assemblies. Youth camps, information campaigns, and training of local experts and trainers among others guarantee the sustainability of the mechanisms put in place.

Study visit to Austria

In the framework of the project, 15 representatives from 8 Georgian municipalities and CSOs were invited to participate in a study visit to Austria from 23 to 26 May 2023. The four-day visit aimed to give the Georgian delegation the opportunity to discover examples of successful implementation of civil participation mechanisms such as citizen assemblies, children's conference and pupil's budget, democracy workshop and education programme in Bregenz, Rankweil, Salzburg and Vienna. The participants were able to exchange with representatives from Austrian municipalities, CSOs, Parliament and with beneficiaries to learn about best practice in participatory democracy. They also got a better understanding of the legal framework and regulations in place in Austria related to civil participation, allowing them to better plan, promote, implement, and monitor these civil participation tools and mechanisms in their respective municipalities in Georgia.

Austrian municipalities have a long-standing experience in the development and implementation of civil participation, which made them an obvious choice for the study visit. The 15 participants come from 8 of the Georgian municipalities selected in December 2020 to pilot the adaptation and implementation of Council of Europe standards in participatory democracy and innovative civil participation tools and mechanisms. They represent both the local authorities (mayor or focal point for civil participation in the municipality) and civil society organisations involved in advocating and supporting civil participation in political decision making.

The study visit was jointly organised with [KDZ Centre for Public Administration Research](#) based in Vienna. KDZ is a competence centre and knowledge platform for Public Management Consulting, European Governance and Urban Policy. As a non-profit organisation, it aims to support a sustainable modernization of the public sector and offers research, consulting and training for public administration. Projects empowering more citizen participation include the [SDG Check for Municipal Investments](#) (methodology), the [Western Balkan Civil Society Empowerment for a Reformed Public Administration](#) and the [BACID programme](#).

Agenda of the Study Visit in Austria

DAY 1 – 23.05.2023: VORARLBERG

9:00 am	Welcome and opening by Cornelia Perle Senior Program Advisor Council of Europe	Montfort Hall in the Landhaus of the Vorarlberg State Administration
09:15 am	Welcome by Harald Sonderegger , President of the regional Parliament	
09:30 am	Introduction Civil Participation in Austria Alexandra Schantl KDZ	
09:45 am	Good Practice of Citizen Assemblies in Vorarlberg Presentation by Michael Lederer , FEB with questions & discussion	
12:00 pm	Lunch break	
13:00 pm	Travel to Rankweil	
Children and Youth Participation Rankweil		
14:15 pm	Presentation by municipality on Local Children's Conference by Carmen Feuchtnner	Townhall Rankweil
15:30 pm	Presentation by students and teachers of Sports Middle School Rankweil on Pupil's Budget	Sports Middle School Rankweil
17:00 pm	Presentation by association "Offene Jugendarbeit" (Open Youth Work) on youth participation	Premises of OJA
18:30 pm	Dinner	
20:30 pm	Return to Bregenz	

DAY 2 – 24.05.2023: SALZBURG

08:17 am Travel from Feldkirch to Salzburg by train

12:03 am Arrival in Salzburg

12:30 pm Lunch break

Citizen Assembly on spatial development

14:00 pm Presentation by **Christian Hörbinger**, department spatial planning on Citizen Assembly in City of Salzburg on the topic of spatial development Room ‘Salome Alt’ Schloss Mirabell

16:00 pm Visit to participatory housing project Friedrich-Inhauser-Strasse Friedrich-Inhauser-Strasse 7/9

18:00 pm Free time in Salzburg

DAY 3 – 25.05.2023: VIENNA

08:07 am Travel to Vienna by train

10:32 am Arrival in Vienna

12:00 am Lunch break

Democracy Workshop of the Austrian Parliament

13:45 pm Arrival at Palais Epstein

14:00 pm Welcome by **Katharina Stourzh**, Head of the Parliamentary Cooperation Division and Presentation of the Democracy Workshop by **Simone Jordan**, Advisor in the Division of Democracy Education Palais Epstein

15:00 pm Visit of the “Demokratiewerkstatt” Plenary of the Austrian Parliament

City walk “Grätzloasen”

16:00 pm Short introduction by association **Lokale Agenda 21** on citizen involvement in public spaces Walk through 8th Vienna District

19:00 pm Dinner with members of the initiative **European Capital of Democracy**

DAY 4 – 26.05.2023: VIENNA

Vienna Climate Team: citizens and administration join forces for more climate protection

9:00 am	Presentation and discussion with Katharina Schwarzfurtner-Lutnik and Tijana Matic	Room 114 / 1st floor Rathausstraße 14 – 16
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District Mariahilf: Project Gumpendorferstrasse

11:00 am	Welcome by district chairman Markus Rumelhart	District Council of 6. Vienna District
11:15 am	Presentation and discussion with Anna Vukan from the City of Vienna on participation process in replanning main street together with citizens	Amerlingstraße 11

12:30 pm	Lunch break including closure and debriefing
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Citizen's Councils Vorarlberg

The delegation was received by Mr Harald Sonderegger, President of the regional Parliament Vorarlberg, who invited the delegation to the plenary session room of the regional government ("Vorarlberger Landtag-Plenum") where they had the possibility to discuss questions about the political system, with a focus on state government and municipalities, as well as the interplay between the levels of government in Austria and Georgia. After that, the Office of Citizen Engagement and Voluntary Work (FEB), represented by Mr Michael Lederer, shared their experiences from the citizen's councils in the region.

The Citizen's Council (Bürgerrat) is a deliberative process established in the regional constitution of Vorarlberg. In a first instance, all participants can propose issues of public interest to be discussed by the citizens' council. Then, they develop solutions to the problems identified and propose recommendations that are discussed with the broader public in a "citizen café". Afterwards, these recommendations are presented to the public authority. A small group of participants is furthermore assigned to follow up with the government on the implementation of the recommendations. See also this [explanation video](#). FEBs recommendations to the Georgian peers for successful participatory processes are:

- Have a clear mandate
- Find the meaning & purpose of the process & define the scope well
- From the beginning, think about the result - what can be used and how?
- Find partners & accomplices
- Transparent communication is key
- Use the existing potential: resources, talents, contacts, premises, etc.

Further information:

<https://vorarlberg.at/-/buergerraete-in-vorarlberg>

<https://www.buergererrat.net/at/vorarlberg/>



Children and Youth Participation Rankweil

Young people keep communities alive: Their active participation creates the basis for good cooperation and long-term positive development in the region. Youth participation is practiced in many ways in Vorarlberg, for example by having a say in the design of youth projects, but also in communities, associations, youth work and in schools. For several years, Rankweil has been building up opportunities for young people to participate with the association “Welt der Kinder” (World of Children).

The following three examples of youth participation in Rankweil were presented to the delegation by Ms Carmen Feuchtner:

1) “Children learn about their rights and contribute with their ideas” in the Municipality of Rankweil

The association „Welt der Kinder“ implements the children’s participation projects in the municipality of Rankweil, the costs are carried by the region (75%) and the municipality (25%). The association also trains facilitators in the municipality, to ensure that municipalities continue the processes. Examples of activities:

- *Children's participation seminar:* children gain insight into their rights, adults listen to their concerns, help to clarify responsibilities and show room for manoeuvre for adults and children.
- *Children's conferences:* In children's conferences, all children from 3rd grade (primary school) present their ideas what to improve in the community to the mayor. After the exchange with the mayor, the children receive answers about next steps, timelines and ways to contribute to solutions themselves from the mayor.



Takeaways from the discussion:

- There are no written methodological instructions for the implementation of this processes yet, but it is in progress and will be shared with the delegation.
- As there was great interest from the delegation above all in the Childrens Conference, it is being considered to make this training possible within the framework of the CoE follow-up project. An online meeting with the association will take place to clarify the possibilities and details.

Further information:

www.weltderkinder.at

Impressions of the worldwide network of Welt der Kinder:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKjQl5n7K5zegvWlAt1aquA>

2) Sports Middle School Rankweil: "Pupils Budget" where pupils have a say

The "Pupils Budget" or "School participatory budgeting" is a multi-stage process in which pupils develop proposals and vote for the best one to improve the immediate environment of the school with a predefined budget. This voting is done through a democratic process in which students pitch their ideas to their peers, then a voting is held to select the best ideas.

The delegation received a presentation about the School participatory budgeting process by the pupils of the 9th grade of the sports middle school in Rankweil and their headmaster. The Georgian guests discussed together with students and headmaster the challenges and highlights of their process.

In the case of the sports middle school Rankweil the budget available was 3.000 Euros (funded by the region). The pupils to steer the process are from the 9th grade, so that those pupils who implemented the process can also still benefit from the project results during their last years of school. The project was accompanied by the school social worker.

Success factors, identified by the students, were constant information (transparency!) to their peers and the motivation of the project team. Everyone took part, including the teachers.

A challenge was the collection and evaluation of the written ideas from the students ("Often on the paper there were no ideas or only nonsense ideas").

Takeaways from the discussion:

- The delegation pointed out that a similar project at a public school would also be possible in Georgia. Interest in a student exchange was expressed on both sides: students and director showed great interest, therefore (bilateral) contact via CoE with the school was agreed.
- The school class from Rankweil was invited by Dean Consulting/Georgia to participate in an online youth conference in Georgia

Further information:

<https://sms-rankweil.at/>

www.schuelerhaushalt.at

3) Open Youth Work Rankweil: Active involvement of a youth team

Finally the Georgian delegation visited the youth centre Rankweil. The leading association Open Youth Work Rankweil (Offene Jugendarbeit Rankweil, OJAR,) is freely accessible to all young people over the age of 12, without membership fees. In addition to recreational activities, the OJAR offers:

- a regular open service in the youth centre (with billiards, table soccer, sound and light desk, bar, creative offers, etc.)
- inexpensive tutoring in the LernBar for the 1st to 4th grade of middle school and the polytechnic school (pre-vocational schooling)
- music rehearsal rooms for youth bands (14-26 years)
- projects for young people to learn about political participation and civil engagement.

Takeaways from the discussion:

The delegation asked about behavioural guidelines in the youth centre, e.g. in case of violence. The answer was that there are house rules and in case of gross violations, a house ban of 1-2 weeks can be imposed ("not being allowed to come to the youth centre is the biggest punishment for the young people"). Usually there are no problems, and the young people stick to the "house rules". One supporting factor for a peaceful functioning is that social skills are taught in special workshops and seminars for the young people.

Further information:

<http://www.ojar.at/>



Citizens' Council on spatial development Salzburg

The "Spatial Development Concept" (REK) is the city of Salzburg's most important strategic document for long-term urban development. It is the basis for subsequent ordinance procedures and planning projects for a period of about 20 years and must be adopted by the municipal council.

Since 2020, the Office of Urban Planning has been working on the new preparation of the REK. In this context, various formats of citizen participation were carried out: An online platform, information events, an exhibition and workshops were organised, a citizens' council was established, and the project was accompanied by "Young Experts" committee (youth participation) in 2022. The project for the redrafting of the REK is currently ongoing and further formats of citizen participation are planned in the further course of the project.

The Georgian delegation received a presentation of the whole process by Mr Christian Hörbinger from the Office of Urban Planning Salzburg, focusing on the citizens' council on spatial development.

Takeaways from the discussion:

- *Why was the REK developed together with citizens?*
It was a political objective to involve citizens and thus promote transparency and citizen ownership (participation went beyond the legal minimum required by the Spatial Planning Act).
- *Are there guidelines for citizen participation in the city of Salzburg?*
No, the methodology is event driven. The combination of participation instruments has proven itself successful. The methods are co-directed by the city, but certain services are outsourced (e.g. moderation), as the processes themselves are very resource intensive.
- *Who brought together the results of the participation formats?*
The merging (focal points for action and guiding principles) was done by the city administration and then presented to the municipal council (resolution 2021).
- *Are participation processes like Citizen Council implemented in the city as a whole?*
Not yet. The pioneers are the city planning and gardening departments.
- *Are referendums on local level legally binding?*
No, but in case of great resistance it is a "political" decision (note: for a referendum 3.000 signatures are required to initiate it).

Further information:

<https://www.stadt-salzburg.at/rek-neu/buergerinnen-rat/>



Demokratiewerkstatt of the Austrian Parliament

In the “Democracy Workshop” (Demokratiewerkstatt) of the Austrian National Parliament a wide range of workshops is offered for children and young people to learn about, explore, and participate in parliamentary processes. Workshops are organised for elementary schools, high schools, vocational training schools as well as special formats like the apprentices' forum or the youth parliament.

The delegation was welcomed by Ms Katherina Stourzh from the Division for Parliamentary Cooperation of the Austrian Parliament and received a presentation by Ms Simone Jordan on the background, impact and methodology of the Demokratiewerkstatt.

Key aspects of the workshops are:

- Facilitators are trained in this methodology by the Demokratiewerkstatt directly (in cooperation with external partners).
- It is for children, young people (8-18 years) and apprentices (up to 24 years)
- It is an extracurricular activity, schools from all federal states are invited and the workshop participation is free of charge
- Classes/groups consists of up to 30 students with 3 trainers per workshop
- Currently up to 5 workshops per day are held, 3 workshops can be held concurrently.
- Workshop duration is 4 hours, no preparation required
- It is important the workshops are interactive, and the materials and topics are age appropriate

There are 7 different workshop modules available, where children and youth learn to elaborate on specific topics based on information provided by Demokratiewerkstatt-Team, and which they have to present to an audience. These modules, with the respective guiding questions are:

7 Workshop Modules

- | | |
|---|--|
| ♦ Workshop Politicians
“Who represents me in Parliament?” | |
| ♦ Workshop Parliament
“How laws are made” | ♦ Workshop Media
“How to gather information?” |
| ♦ Workshop European Union
“Getting to know the European Union” | ♦ Workshop New Media
“My Role and Responsibility” |
| ♦ Workshop A Journey through Time
“Discover the history of the Republic” | ♦ Workshop Participation
“My opinion counts!” |

Takeaways from the discussion:

- There was keen interest from Georgian participants, that the voting age in Austria was lowered to 16, as a way to involve youth more in democratic processes.
- Surveys showed that students, who participated in the Demokratiewerkstatt activities were more likely to vote in democratic elections at a young age.
- Travel costs from participants from the regions to the Demokratiewerkstatt in the capital Vienna are partly subsidized by the Ministry of Education.
- It is important that the Demokratiewerkstatt is implemented by the Parliament and not by Ministries, so that all democratic parties represented in the Parliament are involved in the exchange with young people.
- The Georgian delegation expressed interest to participate or observe an online workshop or training, if possible. Council of Europe agreed to follow up with Demokratiewerkstatt on such an exchange.
- There is already an exchange also with the Georgian Parliament to introduce such workshops for youth and children in the Georgian Parliament. A potential follow-up with the Council of Europe project is envisioned.

Further information:

<https://www.demokratiewerkstatt.at/>

<https://www.parlament.gv.at/en/experience/youth-and-parliament/democracy-workshops/index.html>



The Vienna Climate Team

The “Vienna Climate Team” Project (the name implies the city and its residents) is a participatory project of the city of Vienna, which aims to initiate cross-sectoral and cross-thematic climate protection and climate adaptation projects for a liveable, climate-neutral Vienna. It is based on the concept of participatory budgeting and combines innovative approaches in the area of participation and governance. The pilot implementation of the project started in 2022 in three Vienna districts will be continued in three more in 2023. The goal is to gather experience in the two years and set standards for a rollout to all districts from 2024 onwards. Approximately 13 million Euro is available for implementation in the two pilot years.

The project follows a cycle of approximately one year, in which ideas are submitted by Viennese citizens and initial project outlines are developed in a collaborative process with the city administration. A citizen jury then decides on the implementation of the projects. Target group-specific and cross-media participation elements were developed and implemented in 2022 along the project phases, with the aim of activating and involving people from a wide range of diverse social strata in the Vienna Climate Team process. A particular focus is on activating hard-to-reach and underrepresented population groups (people with language barriers, economically disadvantaged groups, etc.) in this process. This is linked to a cooperative and activating way of working within the city administration across political business groups and departmental boundaries.

Two representatives from the department energy planning, Ms Katharina Schwarzfurner-Lutnik and Ms Tijana Matic introduced the “Vienna Climate Team” project to the Georgian delegation.

Takeaways from the discussion:

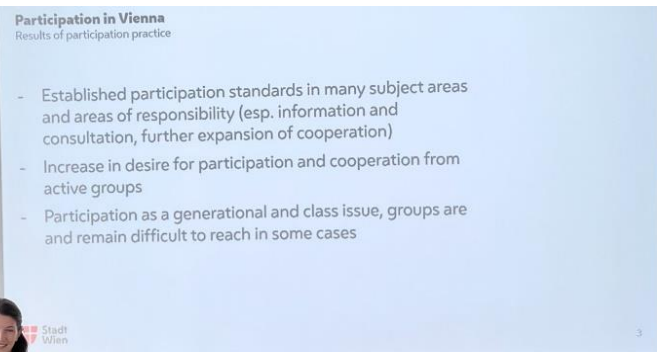
- Governance innovation as part of participation processes is key. Participation takes place outside and inside the administration, civil servants must be included in the process. The Climate Team process was extremely helpful also for citizens to understand costs and boundaries of the administration (e.g. high costs for planting trees in densely built-up districts).
- The Citizen Jury that is chosen by lot and is representative of the district population (by gender, age, socio-demographic and socio-economic factors). Depending on the district the size varied between 12 and 20 members. The selection process was supported by an external opinion research institute to ensure the representation. The citizens received 150 Euro as compensation for the weekend. Choosing a jury by lot that is representative of the population could be challenging in Georgia.
- The citizen jury spent a weekend to discuss the selection of projects. It is important to prepare the citizens for their role, this was done through a game during the workshop. Also, there must be a common understanding of the topics, which were climate and social impact. The method of selection was based on sociocratic principles, meaning the projects were chosen with full consensus (if a project was rejected by one person, it was not chosen).
- Some examples of chosen projects: public toilets, composting sites, repair café, road reconstruction, planting of trees and new public parks.

- Challenges of implementation were the inclusion of many different departments within the administration. Sometimes during the planning phase, it became apparent that a project is not feasible. In this case, the next project on the list moved up instead for implementation.
- The “Climate team” process can be used for different topics not only climate, but also social issues.
- 2 “Climate team Boxes” were shared with the delegation containing idea cards, games, “treasure map”, tablecloth with district depicted on it, as tools to engage citizens.
- A methodology for introducing the topic of climate to create a common understanding was shared: <https://climatefresk.org/> - it is an international network for workshop methodologies that can also be used in Georgia.

Further information:

<https://klimateam.wien.gv.at>

Engagement Platform: <https://mitgestalten.wien.gv.at>



Zukunftsfitte Gumpendorfer Straße

The Gumpendorfer Straße is an important connecting axis and the hub for neighbourly exchange and local supply in the 6th district of Vienna. In order to make Gumpendorfer Straße ready for future challenges, it is currently being redesigned. The district of Mariahilf and the Department of Architecture and Urban Design in the City of Vienna therefore started a participation process for the reconstruction of this main street.

The delegation was received by District Chairman Markus Rumelhart in the offices of the 6th Vienna district to learn of the still ongoing participation process for the project “Zukunftsfitte Gumpendorfer Straße”. Ms Anna Vukan from the Department Architecture of the City of Vienna then presented their experiences. The **participation and planning process** covers a total of 6 phases:

1. (Online) survey – to get an idea of residents’ ideas and needs.
2. Street interviews and information stands – more detailed collection of residents’ opinions and needs.
3. Workshops with residents, organisations and experts in the district for a common mission statement.
4. Feedback phase with information stands and mini-exhibition – important to be present “on-site” and have face-to-face conversations to collect more opinions and feedback on current ideas.
5. Elaboration of the preliminary design and presentation to district council and public
6. Detailed planning and reconstruction of the street.

Takeaways from the discussion:

- Integrating participation projects in redevelopment of public space is an important factor, politicians should be open to the ideas of citizens.
- Participation must be considered at the start of such processes, not in the middle of it.
- Important: To ask residents also what they like and appreciate about the current state of the public space, not only what can be improved or what they want in the future. One can then build on existing strengths of the district.

Further information:

<https://mitgestalten.wien.gv.at/de-DE/projects/zukunftsfitte-gumpendorferstrasse>



Further projects visited



Friedrich-Inhauser-Straße

The Georgian delegation also visited the housing complex of the Friedrich-Inhauser-Straße in Salzburg and learned how residents were included in the process of the redevelopment of their estate.

Further information:

https://www.heimat-oesterreich.at/de/Unternehmen/Referenzen/Friedrich-Inhauser-Strasse_rf_1386



Grätzloase Vienna

The association Lokale Agenda 21 is responsible for the promotion and implementation of citizen participation processes in Vienna. One initiative is the Grätzloase, a terrace-like extension of a sidewalk. The goal is the creation of public places by citizens where people from the neighborhood can meet and interact. The delegation was able to make an on-site visit and was received with great neighborhood hospitality.

Further information:

<http://www.grätzloase.at>



European Capital of Democracy

“European Capital of Democracy (ECoD)” is an initiative of the Innovation in Politic Institute in Vienna. The award “European Capital of Democracy” comprises a year-long program of events hosted by the title-holding City, which puts citizens’ participation at the heart of its activities. The program year begins with opening festivities inviting all inhabitants of the award winning city, giving them a chance to learn about the year’s activities and find out how they can get involved. Member cities showcase best practice projects from all over Europe, providing inspiration to politicians from throughout Europe. Citizens are invited to play a hands-on role in developing new forms of democratic politics.

The Georgian delegation met with Mr Stefan Sindelar from the ECoD office, who explained the ECoD initiative, the City Network as well as the accompanying Citizen Jury, to which all Georgian participants were welcomed to register and to promote in their communities

Further information:

<https://capitalofdemocracy.eu/>