

REPORT
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE WINTER SCHOOL ON PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY TOOLS

NOV 2021- APRIL 2022



Training Schedule

October-December 2021:

Online introductory session
Five-day training event in Tbilisi

January-April 2022:

Needs assessment with focus groups per country
5 focus group meetings (1 per country)
1 st of 3 Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit online sessions with all 24 WS participants: Introduction and Re-Cap on the Toolkit focused on specific policy area
CivicLab and UChange face-to-face workshop of experts in Georgia
2 nd of 3 Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit online sessions for country groups (assessment of a past practice with the toolkit's specific methodology): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bosnia and Herzegovina • Republic of Moldova
Online sessions for Georgian specialists in CivicLab and UChange Online Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions for Georgian experts who attended face-to-face workshop in CivicLab and UChange
3 rd of 3 Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit online session for country groups (planning for implementation of the Toolkit's methodology on a new case): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bosnia and Herzegovina • Republic of Moldova
Face-to-face workshop in Georgia on Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit
Face-to-face workshop in Albania on Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit
Winter School Closing 2-day Winter School face-to-face event in Tirana

Trainings after the official closure:

3 Online sessions - Design of Effective Public Consultations Plan for Public Space Planning (May 2022)
3 Online sessions on School Participatory Budgeting (May 2022)

Activities planned as follow up:

Council of Europe School on Participatory Democracy in Western Balkans – Cres/Croatia in partnership with the University of Belgrade (October 2022– March 2023)
Annual meeting/conference with alumni of Winter School (2023)



PRACTICAL OUTCOMES OF THE WINTER SCHOOL TRAINING

The training, which combined online and in-person events, equipped both civil society practitioners and government officials with indepth knowledge to apply tools developed by the Council of Europe in engaging citizens in policymaking. The interest in the indepth training was very high, some participants are already applying the tools in their work, and others are planning to apply the tools and to train colleagues in their use. Some of the outcomes are outlined below.



CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN
 DECISION- MAKING

Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit

- **Albania** and **Georgia** each have a team of trainers (having undergone ToT) in the Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit. Participants from **Republic of Moldova** and **Bosnia and Herzegovina** have undergone online training in the Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit and identified projects/initiatives for its application.
- In **Albania**, the **Academy of Women Councillors** used the toolkit on women's empowerment.
- **Tirana** municipal council is using the toolkit in consultations on the forthcoming municipal strategic plan – and has already deployed it to assist in the identification of civil society organisations (CSOs) to engage in the strategic plan. It will be used in stakeholder identification and in the selection of an engagement strategy for the plan. In **Albania**, the toolkit has been introduced to 61 municipalities (including mayors and city council heads). After the introduction, **the Agency of Local Self-Government Support in Albania expressed an interest in using the toolkit in different municipalities** in Albania, and **Partners Albania plans to use the toolkit questionnaire** after adaptation to the Albanian context.



- In **Georgia**, the toolkit was introduced to more than 70 representatives of municipalities (including mayors and city council heads). In **Ozurgeti**, the toolkit has been deployed to help reach stakeholders in consultations on budget planning.
- The toolkit is being translated and adapted to the Georgian context and **Gori** municipality – with a good record already in citizen participation – has been selected for support from the Council of Europe for implementation. In **Gori**, the toolkit might be applied to the development of a strategic communications plan to improve communications between citizens and public authorities.

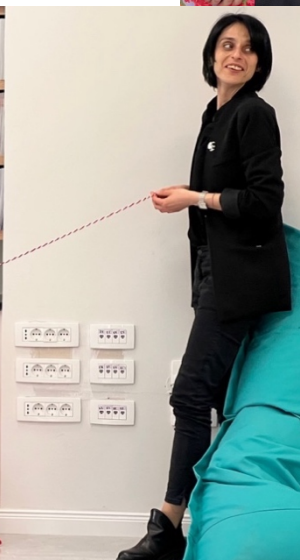


- In **Rustavi**, a new recreation zone was planned, using the toolkit to build up demographic profiles, and to assess the human, social, economic, and political capital to overcome bias and existing assumptions.

- In **Republic of Moldova**, the participants have used the toolkit to conduct a community evaluation in Chisinau to support a project on empowerment and participation of Ukrainian refugees to support their interaction with authorities and their scope for civic participation, and to monitor and support the observance of their civic rights.

- In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, to date, the youth strategy of Gorazde, led by the city council, has involved CSOs and the youth council, but there have been neither monitoring and evaluation nor mechanisms for feedback on implementation. For the 2023-2028 youth strategy, a self-assessment will be conducted using BePART, and the municipal authority has stated that the Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit will be applied in the preparation of consultations to develop the youth strategy.

- One of the participants from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is now working on the development (with four municipalities, including drafts under consideration in Gradiška in Republika Srpska and Municipality Center Sarajevo) of regulations on public hearings (building on the participation principles from the Toolkit).
- The participants from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** would like working groups at the municipal level to be trained in the Toolkit, e.g. working groups on respectively health and education.



CivicLab and UChange

- **Georgia** has a team of specialists and trainers (the latter having undergone a ToT) in Civic Lab and UChange. Winter School participants envisage the use of CivicLab as a tool of the citizens' assembly.
- In **Batumi**, one of the participants will train her colleagues at the **Civil Society Institute (CSI)** in CivicLab, and wants to use CivicLab for consultations on public space planning.
- In **Ozurgeti** municipality, a member of the OGP local programme, use of CivicLab and UChange will now be mandatory for the process of co-creation of the OGP Action Plan.
- **Rustavi** has just been selected as a new member of the OGP local programme (following a joint application from the municipality and Rustavi Innovation Hub, the organisation of one of the participants in the Winter School).
- Participants from **Georgia** saw opportunities to use the in-depth training received to apply CivicLab to a variety of topics:
 - The role of libraries in public participation (also proposed to give a copy of UChange game – after adaptation and translation into Georgian – to each public library).
 - Green spaces
 - Inclusion
 - Women's participation
 - Youth participation
 - Evaluation of public participation
 - Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan

CivicLab

...KIT FOR DEVELOPMENT, ANALYSIS AND FORECASTING OF
 DECISION OPTIONS IN DECISION-MAKING



Citizens' Assemblies

- In **Georgia**, with the support of the Council of Europe, participants in **Rustavi** and **Ozurgeti** are planning to **organise citizens' assemblies, for instance on urban renovation plans**. Georgian participants in the closing Winter School face-to-face event in Tirana stressed that a strong information campaign would be needed to explain what a citizens' assembly means. Participants added that experts and an independent portal should be in place, and that a legal basis would be necessary for the citizens' assembly – to ensure clarity and transparency about the status of the policy recommendations and resolutions emanating from the citizens' assembly.
- The participants from **Republic of Moldova** at the closing event proposed that a citizens' assembly could be a useful **format for supporting the integration of Gaguzia and Transnistria into Moldova**.



Public Space Planning

- Plan to **tailor the tools on public space planning** for use in urban planning in **Tirana**.



School Participatory Budgeting

- The **Tirana** Municipality plans to **pilot SPB in three schools**.



FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS ABOUT THE WINTER SCHOOL

"We have made use of CivicLab and UChange mandatory in the co-creation of our OGP local Action Plan."

"The Winter School training gave inspiration to move forward"

"The indepth training of trainers on CivicLab and UChange was really great."



"I have built on the participation principles in the Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit to develop draft regulations on public hearings with four municipalities."

"The interactive experience-sharing sessions on efficient practices of participatory democracy helped to understand how to better develop and implement them in my country"

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS/FUTURE WINTER SCHOOLS

The following recommendations were proposed by the Winter School participants who brainstormed on how they thought the Winter School could be further developed and improved. Their proposals were formulated during a session at the conclusion of the closing event in Tirana.

Concept and Agenda:

- One format proposed was 5-5-5 (5 months-5 countries-5 meetings – 1 per month x 3 days each).
- The Winter School could be a forum of co-operation among young leaders, decision-makers, and politicians.
- The theme PARTICIPATE-CO-OPERATE-CREATE was proposed for the next Winter School, which should seek to make co-operation common practice, and to elaborate new tools to sustain the work of the initial Winter School. The Winter School would be a larger event/forum with very specific workshops for local authorities and CSOs focused on their needs and interests and further workshops for local authorities and CSOs on how they can co-operate more intensively.
- The Winter School could start with an academic lecture on participatory democracy followed by presentations on the context and legal basis of citizen participation for each of the participating countries (this could alternatively be prepared in advance as an introductory report/publication shared with participants).
- The agenda could be designed around an initial needs assessment with selected participants.



Selection process/criteria:

- Joint applications from one CSO and one government representative from same municipality with a focus on a common policy issue, e.g. public space planning.
- Selection process to include online interviews.

Complementary/follow-up activities:

- Face-to-face event could be followed by mentoring/coaching on how to develop projects in the municipality, then a final event presenting the projects and the use of tools.
- Online events could include lectures on participatory tools – open to anyone.
- A study tour to visit municipalities with experience of well-functioning participatory democracy.
- An Alumni programme should be created – and alumni could serve as mentors to help new participants to develop ideas and proposals.

Additional ideas:

- All the events should be filmed for further sharing and for promotion.
- The Winter School should be complemented by networking tools, a Facebook group/page, and an alumni club.
- The online BePART forum could complement the Winter School training cycle if each alumni had a profile on BePART, including case studies and tools developed and applied.
- Include pool of experts as facilitators.



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Participatory democracy

The **Division of Elections and Participatory Democracy** promotes and assists the implementation of standards and mechanisms to engage citizens in political decision-making at all levels in Council of Europe member States. Working together with public authorities on different governance levels and representatives of civil society of all sectors, the Division encourages and supports key stakeholders to initiate processes that allow citizens to make their voices heard and to shape political decisions, additionally to the participation in elections.

▶ [Read more about Participatory Democracy, its underlying values, models and trends.](#)



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MATERIALS

C.L.E.A.R - Assessment tool

Civil participation decision-making toolkit

FOCUS

BePART Forum
Share your good practice examples!

One way to encourage civil participation is to inspire people to take the initiative! By sharing successful examples of participatory initiatives, practical advice and useful contacts, the BePART platform, a joint initiative of the [Congress of Local and](#)



<https://www.coe.int/en/web/participatory-democracy>

