Best Practices

Digital platform for citizen participation

A digital platform for citizen participation is an online tool integrated into a municipality's website (or that of another local or national authority). This tool serves to inform residents about ongoing and upcoming projects and to actively involve them in shaping those projects. Citizens are invited to share their feedback, voice concerns, suggest alternatives, propose changes, or enrich the initial plans with their own ideas.

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Objectives

The digital participation platform taps into the knowledge and expertise of residents to co-create a wide range of local initiatives — including those that foster inclusive and intercultural living together. It encourages community engagement, strengthens local democracy, and empowers citizens to take an active role in shaping the future of their municipality.

Methods

A digital platform for citizen participation acts as a comprehensive toolbox offering various approaches and participation methods, enabling residents to engage at different levels.
•**Information**: Municipal website updates, emails and messaging, project tracking, event announcements, etc.

•**Consultation**: Surveys, polls, questionnaires, and feedback forms.

•**Involvement**: Public discussions, optional choices, voting and prioritisation, scenario analysis, comment features, etc.

•**Collaboration**: Sharing and exchanging ideas, suggestions and inspiration, collaborative mapping, joint deliberation, etc.

•**Co-creation**: Spontaneous proposals, neighbourhood or citizens' councils,...

•**Co-management**: Participatory budgeting, etc
These methods can be combined within a single project to best suit the context and goals.

Budget

Licenses for digital citizen participation platforms are available from different providers at varying prices, depending on the needs and ambitions of the municipality. Alternatively, the local IT department can install and maintain an open-source platform on the municipality's own server infrastructure.

Materials

A dedicated page on the municipality's website and standard IT equipment.

Periodicity

Permanent

Evaluation indicators

• Number of ideas submitted
•Number of registered participants
•Number of active participants
•Number of proposals or measures taken into account or implemented by the municipality

Practical advice - DO's

•Appoint a political lead and an operational coordinator.
•Use the platform regularly and for as many relevant topics and occasions as possible.
oLaunch targeted initiatives for specific streets or neighbourhoods and distribute flyers or mailings directly to the affected residents.
•Promote the platform through all available channels (e.g. social media).
oConnect the platform directly with the municipality's social media pages.
•Acknowledge and value community participation.
•Actively follow up on received proposals and put them into action.
oDefine an internal process for follow-up:
-At what threshold of support (e.g. number of votes) will a proposal be reviewed for technical feasibility?
-Submit technically feasible proposals monthly to the municipal executive board.
-Provide responses to citizens within 1–2 months.

Practical advice - DONT's

•Never launch the platform without planning for long-term follow-up and maintenance.
•Don't be discouraged by the fear of "trolls" leaving negative or unhelpful comments. Experience shows that people who take the time to participate usually contribute thoughtful and constructive ideas.

Contact person/Possible partners

•Go Vocal (formerly CitizenLab): https://www.govocal.com/fr-fr
•DECIDIM: https://decidim.org/

Additional information

Examples of implementation:

•Ministry for Digitalisation: https://www.zesumme-vereinfachen.lu/fr-FR/

•City of Ettelbruck: https://biergerbedeelegung.ettelbruck.lu/fr-FR/