

Academy on Civil Participation

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

17-19 November 2021

REPORT

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THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ACADEMY

The **Academy on Civil Participation** aimed at providing information, tools and key inputs on civil participation in local decision – making process, whilst strengthening the interaction between local authorities and civil society organizations. It was aimed at developing further awareness about the role of participatory democracy and the possibilities of unlocking potential of the dialogue with citizens and various stakeholders, providing clear indications about what to do in a clear and realistic way.

The **main objectives** of the Academy have been the following:

- present the **concept of participatory democracy** and its added value and the European and global trends on the matter;
- promote **Council of Europe standards and guidelines** on civil participation in political decision-making and practical tools;
- define of the **roles of local authorities, civil society and citizens** in the process, Identifying entry-points for civil society engagement;
- promote better knowledge and understanding of the **practices of participation** through information, consultation, dialogue and partnership.

THE METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED

The Academy is a typical example of **adult education**, in which participants are both learners and resources and knowledge is extracted from their own professional experience, rather than taught from above. In this particular type of education, the trainer is not a teacher but rather a facilitator, who guides the participants to explore the different contents. The theoretical inputs are fully intertwined with the real experience of the participants and the group and individual exercises are key to make lessons emerge and complete the training experience.

The employed techniques were those typical of the **non-formal education** domain, which is a dynamic, learner-oriented method, involving **theoretical inputs, work into groups and practical activities**. This facilitates the learning process and the ownership of the results by the participants, which are actively engaged and not passive learners.

THE ACHIEVED RESULTS

The main results that the Academy expected to achieve and, hopefully, contribute to reach, can be summarized as follows:

- **enhanced understanding** of the concept of participatory democracy, as well as of Council of Europe standards and guidelines and scope for CSO engagement in policymaking;
- **improved knowledge and skills** to overcome participatory challenges at the local level;
- **strengthened mutual understanding and cooperation** between CSOs and local public officials;
- **established platform** for exchange and networking.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED

Official and interactive introduction to the Academy

After the official greetings from the Council of Europe and a quick outline of the main standard and toolkits for civil participation by Mrs. Cornelia Perle, the Academy took off with a dynamic **presentation of the agenda** of the 3 – day event, by the facilitators of ALDA+, Marco Boaria and Anna Ditta.

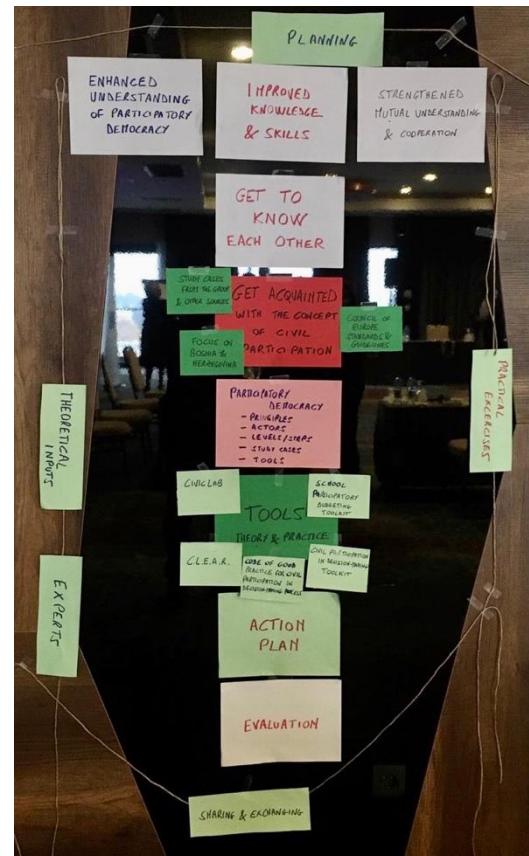
Expectations (on anonymous papers) from the participants were collected to check if they matched with the proposed agenda and to ensure that everybody was on the same line.

A practical presentation of the agenda was delivered by the facilitators, with the purpose to clarify and agree on all the points foreseen and to link them to the expectations of the participants.

Objectives and steps of the training are visualized respectively in horizontal and vertical sense.

The methodologies employed (theoretical inputs, experts, sharing, etc.) encircle the agenda, as cross cutting elements that are employed throughout the training

The official agenda is annexed to the present report.



Theoretical insights on participatory democracy

Right after the presentation of the agenda, the Academy got to the heart of the training with a first very insightful theoretical presentation, "Civil participation in decision – making process in Bosnia and Herzegovina", by **Prof. Adis Arapovic**, from the University of Sarajevo (full PPT available as an annex to the present report).

Prof. Arapovic focused on key topics such as the purposes of the local self-government, the definition of what is civil society, the mechanisms to ensure civic participation ("trust and interest bring people together"), beyond the elections, and the opportunities and challenges of the digital participation.

An interesting Q&A session took place and some hints were provided by prof.

Arapovic to respond to the most difficult question that kept on being made also in the following days: how to attract citizens? ("Come and express your wishes for the New Year!" at the occasion of the approval of the budget for the upcoming year. Accessible and catchy language is key!



Civil participation from the participants' point of view: positive and negative aspects



This theoretical insight was good food for thought for the participants, that were asked, through an **individual exercise**, to highlight positive and negative aspects of the civil participation, respectively on a green and red colorful paper.

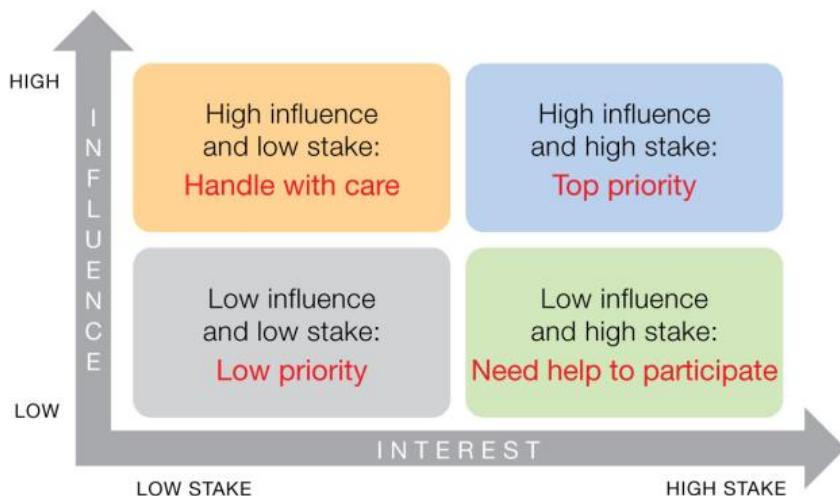
A **collective brainstorming** was then made by the facilitators, connecting the answers of the participants with the lesson of prof. Arapovic and with the official definitions and principles outlined by the Council of Europe toolkits and documents.

The answers were posted on a wall of the room to remain visible and available for further reflections during the following days.

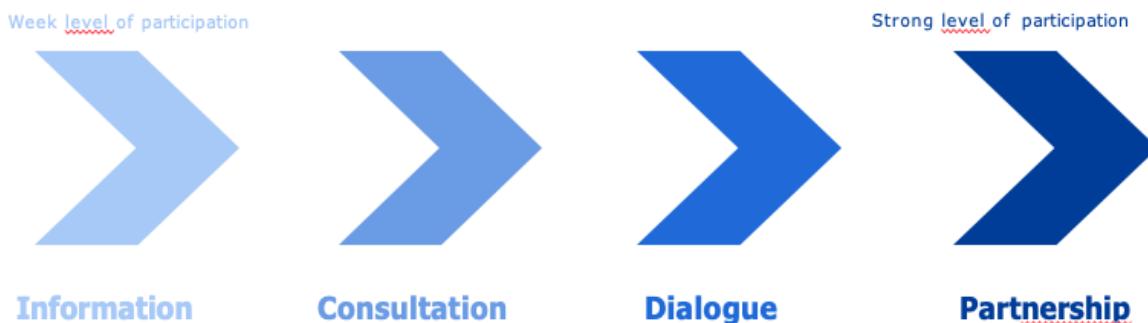
The actors of the civil participation: who are they and why it is key to map them

Once clarified, through theory and exercises, the meaning and principles guiding the participatory democracy, it is crucial to focus on who are the actors of the civil participation, both from the side of Local Authorities and the side of civil society, organized or not.

Moreover, mapping the stakeholders means to detect their connection to the issue at stake, their capacity to influence the situation, their interest to do so. Based on these different elements, our mapping will reveal that not all the actors are equal and different actions shall be undertaken to involve them. The facilitators briefly presented the CLEAR methodology of the Council of Europe and few other tools to map the stakeholders (stakeholder matrix, Venn diagram), and then proposed a group exercise, where the participants had to develop a stakeholder mapping about a participatory process they implemented or joined. Some interesting hints emerged from the practical experience of the participants.



The four levels of civil participation



The facilitators gave a quick overview of the four different levels of participation, from the most basic one, information, to the most advanced ones, dialogue and partnership.

The rest of the afternoon remained focused on the “**information**” level.

The facilitators provided some examples of good and bad information, followed by a **group exercise** where the participants have been invited to reflect on a real case of information campaign they conducted/were targeted with, following specific key questions such as: which were the target groups, what were the communication channels used, which resources were employed (i.e. HR), which the outcomes the information produced.

The second day started with a short theoretical outline of the “**consultation level**”. A few examples from the experience of the facilitators were then followed by a presentation of the expert of the Council of Europe, Mr. Volodymyr Kebalo, who thoroughly described the process of participatory city planning using the Council of Europe principles in Ukraine. The presentation included a **case study** from the city of Drohobych (UA).

An interesting Q&A session took place and provide room for reflection on issues such as the complex administrative structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which counts on six levels governance, vs the three levels in other Countries, such as Ukraine. The full PPT presentation Participatory approach: co – create your city” is annexed to the present report.



Following this theoretical “food for thoughts”, the facilitators proposed a **group simulation** to explore in a dynamic way with the participants the concept of consultation.

The class rolled out a role play based on a fictional subject that an imaginary Local Authority decides to submit to the attention of the citizens, opening a consultation. The subject in question was the opportunity of creating a skate park in an abandoned area in the centre of the City, to provide space for youth social aggregation.

Each participant was assigned to a role, with a specific profile and position with respect to the subject at stake.

For preparing the consultation, the group was split between those playing the role of the Public Authority (elected people, officers, Ministries, etc.) and the civil society (individuals, CSOs, activists, etc.). The simulation allowed to stage the dynamics that happen in a real – life scenario, with consultation being torn between particular and collective interests, and the difficulty to reach out to a final decision.



The following training session proceeded with the theoretical introduction to **the dialogue and partnership levels of participation**. These types of cooperation involve a pretty much advanced level of interaction between the LAs and the civil society and they are based on a strong bilateral exchange, as they often start from a need of the Public Authority to require support from the civil society, in terms of information, expert advice, recommendations or inputs. In the case of partnership the PA might also delegate a certain power to the Civil Society, namely in the management of specific public services.

The facilitators outlined some examples of dialogue and partnership, as well as some specific methodologies to collect inputs from the civil society (World Café, Open Space Technology, Focus groups, etc.).

One specific **case study** was presented about the requalification of the neighbourhood where ALDA is based, in Vicenza (Italy). A two – years process (and this ongoing and growing) involved the inhabitants and workers of this deprived neighbourhood in a dialogue to collect inputs for a possible requalification.

The recommendations received have been presented to the Local Authorities and some steps have been taken to intervene on urban planning.

This work has been integrated with specific actions to promote the social identity of the neighbourhood, which is strongly fragmented, and create a sense of community and belonging to the quartier and ownership to the area (no participation with no interest!).



Gruppo Scintilla - vivere meglio adesso
@grupposcintilla · Community

Since 2019....

Group of « resource people »

World café with the citizens

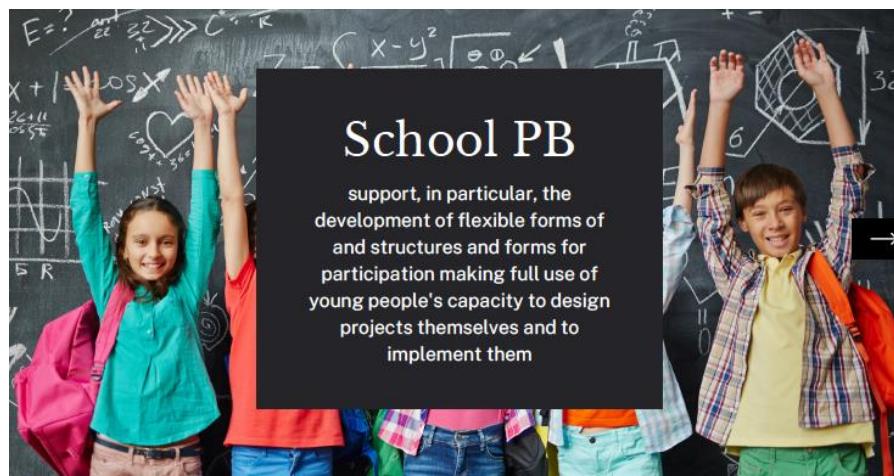
An action plan: « Viale Milano, the place to be »

Two – way dialogue with the public institutions





Social and Cultural Events to create a sense of Community and keep the Motivation high



This session was followed by the presentation of Mr. Volodymyr Kebalo about the **CivicLab - Toolkit for development, analysis and forecasting of decision options in decision – making**. CivicLab is a toolkit conceived to structure and ensure the efficacy of consultation and dialogue, both offline and online. This presentation was followed by the outline of

the “**School Participatory Budgeting**”, aimed to develop school as an important common arena for young people's participation and the democratic learning process.

The last session of the second day was the presentation of Mr. Damjan Jugovic, an expert of the Council of Europe in Sarajevo, about the **"Building democratic participation in the City of Mostar"**, an incredible case of civil mobilization in a very peculiar context, where the citizens could not exercise their right to vote and stand in local elections for a decade.

The aim of this project, funded and supported by the Council of Europe, was therefore to create opportunities for citizens to engage in deliberative processes and participate in local decision making, with the ultimate goal of restoring citizen's confidence and trust in public authorities.

This case study proved to be particularly important for the participants, because it concerns their own Country, although it occurs in a city with a unique political situation.

Moreover, besides being an important exercise of participatory democracy, it produced some concrete outcomes such as the approval by the (eventually appointed) City Council of 32 Recommendations proposed by the City assembly created by the project, and the adoption of an action plan which incorporates these recommendations, last November: <https://mostargradimo.ba/en/news/>

Some participants of the Academy objected that the action plan, despite outlining a clear and specific roadmap and goals, risks to remain on paper if there is no political willingness to bring it forward. There is no easy answer to this point, but it is true that the process led to a concrete deliberation which reached out to the policy makers (this is not always the case) and that there has been a formal commitment from their side about these recommendations. The class agreed to focus on positive examples, despite all recognizing that the process is not over and a civil society's active monitoring is mostly needed.



Follow up to the Academy: going home with an action plan for the future

The last session of the Academy was aimed to: 1) let the participants exchange about their experiences, and 2) think about an action plan for bringing forward in a structured and effective way the civil participation in their own communities.

To do so, the facilitators asked the participants to propose some topics they wish to explore and exchange on. Each participant not having identified a topic decided to subscribe to one of the existing topics. Three thematic working groups have therefore been created and participants have been reflecting on them by using the principles of the participatory democracy and the four levels of participation to articulate and frame the possible actions.

The groups were the following:

- Youth participation
- Urban planning
- Justice System reform



The work into groups was followed by a debriefing in plenary, where some insights emerged. In the urban planning group, for instance, the participants realised, by exchanging reflections, that almost all the actions origin from the citizens (bottom – up), rather than from the Local Authorities, and the “information” step from the LA is always missing.

Lesson learnt: information is key to all levels and types of civil participation. No good consultation exists without proper information and information is crucial to ensure interest and subsequent engagement.

Formal and non-formal evaluation of the Academy

In the last session of the training, the facilitators took some time to realize with the participant a dynamic evaluation of the Academy.

Two methods were employed:

1- Spider networking. Using a rope, each participant has been asked to comment on one aspect of the training, and to pass the rope ball to another participant, keeping in his/her hand one extreme of the string. Once all the participant concluded their evaluation, the rope created a kind of spider net touching all the participants.

2 – Concentric rings. Some concentric rings have been designed on the floor using a tape. The participants had to react to sentences of the facilitators like “I like the methods employed in the Academy”, by positioning themselves in the circles. The closer to the centre, the more they agreed with the sentence of the facilitator.



One official evaluation questionnaire was then submitted to the participants. The aggregated results are available in the annexes to the present report.

Energizers and warm – up games are also important.....

On a cross – cutting basis, throughout the three – day event, the facilitators employed non – formal education methods to **energize and warm up the audience**. This was important to:

- break the ice at first
- warm up and energize participants during intense sessions
- unload and relax after intellectually demanding workloads sessions



FINAL REMARKS AND ...THANKS TO ALL!

We would like to thank you all the participants for joining the Academy for civil participation.

We invite you to reach out to the Council of Europe to express your potential interest in further trainings, or to provide any suggestion or recommendation.

We will duly take into consideration the comments you included along with the evaluation sheet, to organize better and better trainings in the future.

Good luck with your work!



THE ANNEXES

Annex 1: the agenda

Annex 2: the list of participants

Annex 3: the PPT “Academy on Civil participation”, by Marco Boaria and Anna Ditta

Annex 4: the PPT Civil participation 2021, by Prof. Arapovic

Annex 5: the PPT “Participatory approach: co – create your City”, by Volodymyr Kebalo

Annex 6: School PB: youth for change, by Volodymyr Kebalo

Annex 7: Council of Europe Civil Participation Tools and Standards