

ALDA

an activist view in support to citizen participation

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Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme



Our position

A functioning **democratic system**, which involves **citizens**, local and national **authorities**, **civil society** and different stakeholders in a collective and thoughtful manner in the decision making process, is the correct and appropriate response in a complex context of today's world.

This implies an **organised**, **prepared** and **vivid civil society**.

Means for democratic governance

Direct democracy (referenda/votations), representative democracy (elections) or the European citizens' initiative do NOT encompass all possible forms of citizen participation in Europe to satisfy the needs for **democratic governance**.

Participatory governance

Deliberative instruments (neighbourhood councils, ad hoc thematic meetings)
Wider participatory tools (on-line, surveys, polls)
Topics: urban development, environment, immigration

Means for democratic governance

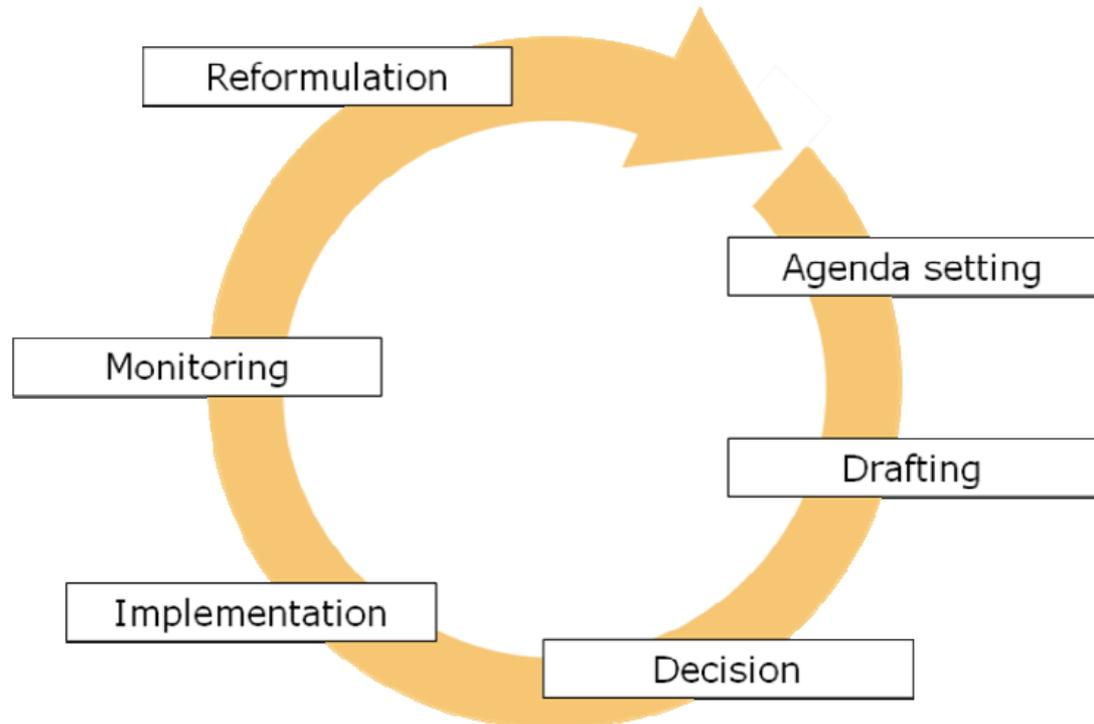
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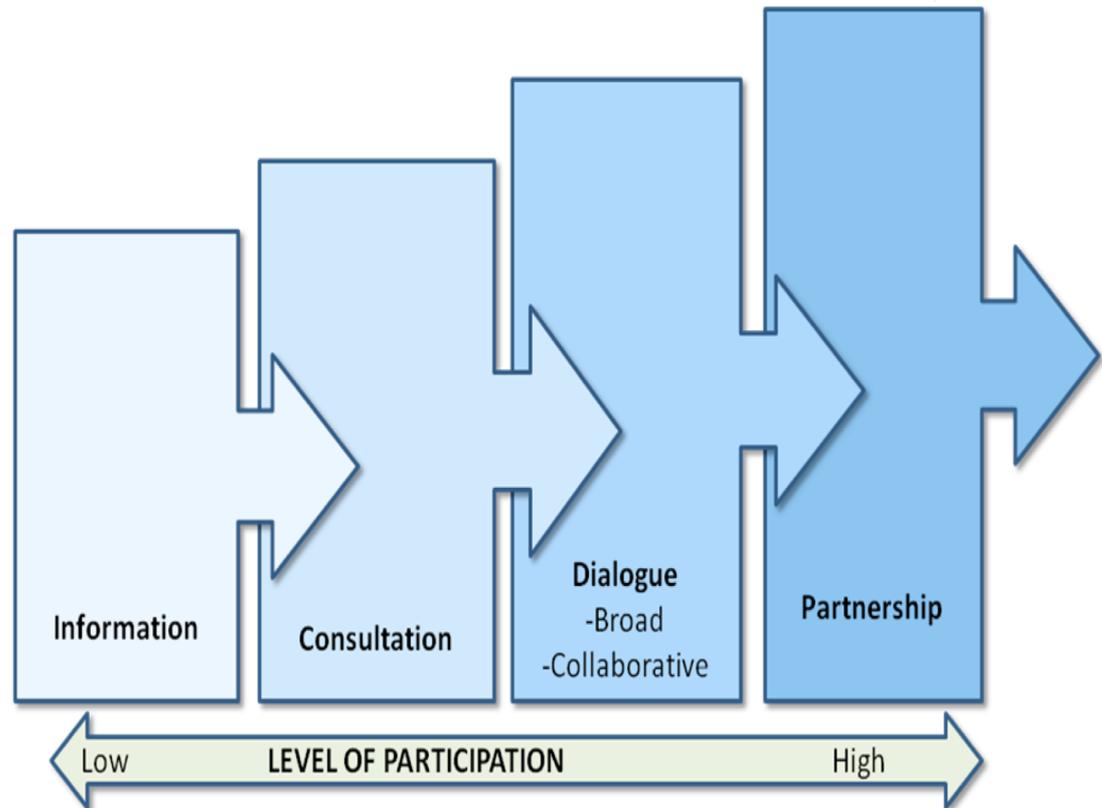
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Steps in the political decision making process According to the Code of Good Practice on Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process



The different levels of participation of NGOs in the decision-making process
According to the Code of Good Practice on Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process



How does ALDA do it?

Based on bottom-up **participatory methods** which aim at involving citizens in the different steps of the project, from the conception to the evaluation through...

CITIZENS' PANELS, a deliberative tool for active citizenship

... groups of "ordinary citizens" who would not have spontaneously participated in projects of a European nature and paying attention to involve people of different demographic, social and professional background

Citizens Panels Projects

EUR-Action (2006-2007), one of the first EU pilot project based on the innovative methodology **ALL4EU (2008)**, in cooperation with Region Istria, focused on citizen participation in shaping the future European Union

Bandiar (2008) focused on participation of women in political life

E-Panels (2009-2010), focused on ICT for improved participation

GOAL: Granting Opportunities for Active Learning (2011-2012), focused on migration

COHEIRS (2013-2014), developed with ISBEM and focused on health and environment

Main features of ALDA charter on citizen panels All4EU

- group of active ordinary citizens, engaged on **voluntary** basis
- **bottom-up approach**, participatory methods
- **major challenges of the European Union today** (thematic approach)

aims: **providing information, collecting opinions** of citizens, exploring **new methodologies** capable of promoting active interaction, creating **new mechanisms** that allow EU citizens to develop **civic competences**, to formulate their views and opinions in the form of recommendations

The ultimate aim of the citizens' panels is to submit recommendations on the selected theme to local decision makers and EU institutions.

Methodology

Citizens' panels are based on a participatory methods which aim at involving citizens in all the different steps of the process. The employed methodology will be characterized by an **active interaction between all the actors involved** (citizens, civil society, local authorities, EU Institutions), in order to encourage and support the active participation of citizens and to promote the dialogue between them, the local decision makers and the Institutions of the EU.

IT methods and Tools, especially the free ones (blogs, facebook, etc) will be also promoted to encourage and facilitate interaction and participation.

Media should also be involved.

Theme

A **thematic approach** is needed to better use the potentials of these activities and to assure interaction with decision-makers.

The main themes of citizens' panels should be selected among the most vivid ones having an impact on «ordinary citizens» at the European level.

E.g. COHEIRS

Composition of citizens' panels

The expected number of participants involved in each local **citizen panel is 40.**

The panels should include a **wide range of profiles and focus on the whole spectrum of society:** volunteers, teachers, NGOs representatives, representatives of the sport sector, disadvantaged people, etc. Special attention should be paid to involve **young people.**

Selection of participants

Participants of the citizens' panels will be selected in two different phases:

a) *Selection of citizens' panels activators*

Citizens panels activators are "leading citizens" selected by partners among civil society and local authorities representatives who are already active at the local level, from different walks of life; special attention should be given to the involvement of leading citizens of different demographic, social and professional background.

b) *Selection of participants of the citizens' panels*

Participants of citizens' panels are selected on **voluntary basis**; their selection follows two different strategies in order to involve the highest number of citizens with different walks of life:

- **through the activators**, who are asked to involve 10 persons each, for a total number of 30 persons for each establishing panel
- **through an open call**, publishing the event on an extensive basis at the local level, trying to involve at least 40 ordinary citizens

Role of citizens' panels activators

Citizens' panels activators have a key role to play:

- **information providers**
- **facilitators**
- **motivators**
- **bridges between local authorities, European institutions and citizens**
- **guide**
- **communicators**
- **resources people (use their network)**

8. Role of partners

Partners have a fundamental role to play **to support and facilitate the setting-up and the work of the citizens' panels** (logistics, advice, etc). The coordinator will promote international events.

9. Citizens' panels and Politicians

Politicians and elected representatives may be involved in the process and in citizens' panels meetings as **resource people**. The framework and aims of their interventions and contributions should be clearly defined.

10. Citizens' panels and EU institutions

Representatives from EU institutions shall be informed and invited to participate both in local and transnational activities, in order to allow citizens to directly interact with them.

Functioning of the citizens' panels

A **neutral place** should be found for the meeting :

- municipalities may provide their meeting rooms
- educational institutions
- NGOs sites

Meetings should preferably take place during the week-ends or in the evening to reach the highest number of people.

The **functioning and coordination are decided by the citizens panels** directly.

Transnational activities

Transnational activities are of special importance for the citizens' panels. They represent both an incentive to take part in local activities and an opportunity to exchange views and opinions with other citizens' panels from other countries.

It grants a real **European dimension** to the work of the panels and will allow the drafting of common recommendations to EU institutions, starting from those drafted at the local level.

Assessment for this project: your perception?

1. The inclusive nature of the measure

Three complementary requirements to assert this criteria of inclusiveness.

Do all persons interested on the subject of the measure have the possibility to express their opinions ?

Do people who would not spontaneously take part in the consultation, but whose participation could have a benefit to the outcome of the measure, have been included or have been encouraged to do so (truly representative of different national views)?

Do people who are not directly included in the consultation process have been informed about its content and outcomes, in order to enlarge the benefit and the impact of the measure (visibility criteria)?

Assessment for this project: your perception?

2. The quality of information and the discussions

Did the participants receive balanced information?

Did they have an equal opportunity to participate?

Were the debates interactive and gave food for thought?

Were the expressed opinions well argued?

Were the participants ready to change their mind when convinced by other arguments?

Were the debates respectful?

Tools to measure this criteria: neutral participation of expert views; efficient moderation; degree of complexity of the subject

Assessment for this project: your perception?

3. The civic impact (internal impact)

Targeted: people engaged in the consultations; the larger public sphere.

Does the perception of the topic/the object of the consultation (e.g. the EU, Roma minorities, migrants) evolves?

Does the understanding of the topic/the object of the consultation increases?

Do the consultees change their views after deliberating?

Do participants feel more competent in discussing about the topic?

Tools to measure this criteria: surveys, interviews

Assessment for this project: your perception?

4. The impact on decision-making (external impact)

2 types:

The direct impact on decision-makers: Did the propositions and opinions expressed during the consultation are taken into consideration by decision-makers?

The indirect impact on decision-makers: did media and opinion leaders considered the outcomes of the consultation ?

Crucial element: this criteria should correspond to a minimum level of impact or the the right of citizens to receive regular feedback from the authorities targeted by the project.



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Blagodaram na vnimanieto!