



# WP3 - Deliverable 3.4

## Report on impacts of participatory decision-making

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Abstract	The present deliverable - D3.5 “Report on impacts of participatory decision-making” - realized within the Task T.3.3 “Societal Active Engagement - Creation and implementation of physical urban agoras” intends to present the impacts on the Pilot Cities concerning the decisions that emerged from the UrbanWINS participatory process, namely what was done in a different way as opposed to what would have happened if the decisions had been taken only by the Municipalities.
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# Contents

1. Context	2
1.1. UrbanWINS project	2
1.2. Project work package context	2
1.3. Objective of the deliverable D.3.4	3
2. Deliverable methodology	4
2.1. Theoretical approach	4
2.2. Methodology	6
3. Results	7
3.1. Impacts of the UrbanWINS participatory approach in the decision-making process	7
3.2. Participatory approach background in Pilot Cities	8
3.3. Overall assessment of the incorporation of participatory approaches in the decision-making process	9
4. Final remarks	11
5. References	12



# 1. Context

## 1.1. UrbanWINS project

UrbanWINS (“Urban metabolism accounts for building Waste Management Innovative Networks and Strategies” - project no. 690047) aims to develop and test methods to design and implement innovative and sustainable strategic plans for waste prevention and management, in various urban contexts, based on innovative, inter-disciplinary and participatory approaches. This will enhance urban environmental resilience and will guarantee progress towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns together with improvements in the recovery of waste and the use of recovered materials. Specifically, the development of strategic plans will be built on the basis of improved knowledge of the factors that influence the metabolism of cities and of a deep understanding of how those factors can be transformed in positive drivers of technological, non-technological and governance changes. The methods mentioned are being extensively tested in 8 EU Pilot Cities: Cremona, Torino and two cities part of the Metropolitan City of Rome (Italy), Leiria (Portugal), Bucharest (Romania), and Manresa & Sabadell (Spain).

The project is conducted by 27 partners from 6 different countries (local authorities, research bodies & universities, companies, NGOs), under the coordination of Comune di Cremona (Italy). UrbanWINS is a 36-month project and has a total budget of approx. 5 million EUR.

## 1.2. Project work package context

The current deliverable represents a component of WP3 - “Urban Agoras for societal transformation - waste prevention and management” that focuses on stakeholder mapping, mobilization and engagement in a participatory process that aims to foster the stakeholders’ emancipatory skill building in waste prevention and management, in the framework of urban metabolism. The process thus developed in WP3 was key to supporting the activities of UrbanWINS, especially the participatory development of a Strategic Planning framework for urban waste prevention and management (WP4) and the participatory testing of the Urban Strategic Action Plans in eight Pilot Cities (WP5).

The main tool used for the innovative engagement of the stakeholders in the development and implementation of the waste strategies is represented by the Agoras. The Agoras were online and physical spaces where EU urban stakeholders were encouraged to meet and debate the strategic plans for waste prevention and management.

The specific objectives of WP3 included:

- the creation of a participatory approach ensuring that people are effectively involved in the process of co-constructing strategic plans for waste prevention and management;



- the creation of a participatory technical skill building of the teams through “hands on” training;
- the identification and engagement of stakeholders in the urban Agoras, where best waste prevention and management initiatives and tools were debated;
- the evaluation and understanding of the level of waste prevention and management literacy of the different social actors;
- the creation of the online urban Agoras for the collaborative participation of all interested EU citizens;
- the creation of the physical urban Agoras for stakeholders from various sectors to support the collaborative development of strategies based on mutual learning in each city.

The involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process allowed to integrate different types of knowledge and to articulate different points of view, hence contributing to a more representative and holistic approach. The creation of such an inclusive participatory process, in which the equity among participants was assured, resulted in the skill building of stakeholders and contributed to the sustainability of the process.

In order to reach the proposed objectives, WP3 included three components:

1. the mapping of the EU, national and regional stakeholders;
2. the creation of the online urban Agoras based on various sectoral, thematic and impact criteria, hosted by the project platform, with the main purpose of implementing a model of collaborative governance by continuously interacting with the physical urban Agoras in a continuous flux of mutual feedback with the contributions of the involved stakeholders;
3. the creation and development of the physical urban Agoras in each Pilot City, in order to promote the societal active engagement of the stakeholders at the local level.

## 1.3. Objective of the deliverable D.3.4

The deliverable D.3.4. Report on impacts of participatory decision-making, is accomplished within the Task T.3.3 “Societal Active Engagement - Creation and implementation of physical urban agoras”. The deliverable reports the impacts on the Pilot Cities procedures to implement the Pilot Actions, and the constraints that emerged in the implementation, since these Actions were defined by dynamics external to the Municipality.



## 2. Deliverable methodology

### 2.1. Theoretical approach

Nowadays, the change in the role of citizens has gained space in the current movements. Citizens no longer have a role only as final recipient of public services, there is an overall demand for the citizen to assume greater responsibility as "Self-sustaining Active individuals" (Clarke 2005:448 in Gofen, 2013). This transformation occurs simultaneously with the attempt to reduce barriers and establish mechanisms for citizens to participate in the design of public services (Bryson 2004 in Gofen, 2013). This associated with the search for sustainability implies the involvement and participation of the local communities, aimed at the development of a common vision, the identification of priority actions and the construction of partnerships (Vasconcelos, 2001).

Moreover, the rational model for decision-making responds well to structured problems, but when it is used to solve semi-structured or complex problems, such as waste management, controversy often occurs. This results from the fact that decisions are not exclusively technical but integrate numerous political decisions and value judgments, that, when they are not accounted for within the process, they frequently emerge later on generating controversy (Lake 1987) - (Vasconcelos, Complex projects). A great amount of this controversy in the public decision-making results from the difficulty in timely integrating in the decision process the concerns and interests of the stakeholders who are potentially affected directly or indirectly by these decisions. Simultaneously, there is also resistance from the political technical arenas towards these expanded engagements. On one side, politicians consider it as a sharing of their invested power, on the other technicians see this interference - public participation - as a challenge to their technical expertise (Vasconcelos, 2005). This contributes frequently to feed the conflict and radicalize positions, making the implementation rather difficult.

So, nowadays local authorities are facing a set of challenges resulting from the pressure generated by citizens. Greater levels of education, more information available and higher environmental awareness call for closer proximity of governments to the citizens, generating a stronger interaction between regional and local governments and the civil society. These challenges call for a transformation in the government system as well as in private organizations, using corporate governance to introduce accountability for the "New Public Management" and "Good Governance" (Rohdes, 1996). The move from a representative to a participative democracy requires new approaches with methods that bring new ways to the decision-making process at the local level and constitute a value added to the more traditional processes, allowing the construction of social, intellectual and political capital, while integrating bottom up approaches. (Vasconcelos, 2001). This claim to adopt a participatory posture is justified by the need to involve the users in the decision-making process to assure that the proposed policies respond more adequately to the needs, account for different types of knowledge and assure an efficient and effective implementation (Vasconcelos, 2005).





The involvement of a diversity of local actors with various interests often brings to political agendas, new unseen issues and reformulated old ones. Also, it is considered essential to assure the long-range sustainability and this can be measured in the following phases (Vasconcelos, 2001):

1. in preparing the Action Plan;
2. in identifying the vision, objectives, priorities and goals to be attained;
3. in defining partnerships to carry on needed actions;
4. in developing procedures to monitor and report on the evolution.

Although planners must have the power to propose decisions, they simultaneously have to integrate the desires and demands of citizens. However, participation should be carefully implemented with appropriate methodologies, ensuring interactive processes and effective deliberation, to achieve a more substantial role in public decision-making (Vasconcelos, 2005).

Following Howell et al. 1987, in the Vasconcelos 2007 conclusions the decision-making process shows many benefits brought by effective citizen involvement, particularly:

- **Participatory democracy** - Public policy with consent emerged from public decision-making process, with citizen input into the decisions, contributes to the democratization of political process;
- **Comprehensive communication** - Citizens become more knowledgeable about environmental, economic and social costs and technical experts better understand local attitudes and values;
- **Effective decision-making** - Participation contributes to the effectiveness of the decision-making process, extreme positions on an issue are balanced, and all relevant options are explored;
- **Political legitimacy** - Direct involvement in the decision tends to promote a better acceptance and legitimacy of decision.

Therefore, participation has become a must in waste management, complying to more demanding legal frameworks and responding to the awareness of many experts of the gains hereby brought to the decision-making process. Furthermore, the decision makers who open up to share their power, by having greater stakeholders' involvement, frequently become more popular within their electorate.

In summary, environmental issues such as waste management, require a new stance by decision-makers and technicians by assuring adequate spaces and levels of participation in situations where it is justified.

To operationalize this, one can create participation forums. Within these, the expert promotes interaction among stakeholders and creates synergies for the transfer of different types of information and knowledge, which would not have had an opportunity to be exposed in more traditional contexts. Moreover, they allow a wide agenda of issues to be debated



and integrated in the decision-making process, often contributing to solve existing controversies.

This type of participation stance was key for stakeholders to be involved in all project phases within the UrbanWINS project. The impacts of this stance in the Pilot Cities decision-making process are reported in the following sections.

## 2.2. Methodology

In order to Evaluate the impacts of the participatory process in decision-making, a set of questions to be answered by the Pilot Cities was put forth. This included the description of what happened in their cities and a description of the impact of the Pilot Actions that were selected through the participatory process - a process developed for the project which did not follow the municipalities' usual procedures.

The Pilot Cities were hence called to explain the impact of the participatory decision-making process for the implementation of each one of the Pilot Actions, by answering the following questions:

- a) **What constraints emerged out of the implementation of the actions since they were defined by dynamics external to the Municipality:**

Pilot Action 1
Pilot Action 2
Pilot Action 3

- b) **What was different about the procedures that you performed to implement the action? (Comparing if the same action has emerged by a Municipal decision)**

Pilot Action 1
Pilot Action 2
Pilot Action 3

- c) **Did you use this type of process before?**

- d) **What is your general appreciation of the incorporation of this type of process in the decision-making process?**

After collecting these data, a qualitative analysis was made by comparing the different cities and their impact dynamics.



## 3. Results

### 3.1. Impacts of the UrbanWINS participatory approach in the decision-making process

In the UrbanWINS project the eight Pilot Cities were challenged to implement Pilot Actions that emerged out of the participatory process and not from the internal decision of the municipalities. These resulted in the implementation of actions that were defined externally, and sometimes did not follow the internal procedures of Municipalities, such as timelines, legal framework or the way key actors got involved to successfully achieve the actions' implementation.

The following considerations resulted from the analysis of the questions answered by each Pilot City, as described above. In Leiria Municipality, the main constraints faced, regarding the actions' implementation, were in the “Sustainable Regulation” Pilot Action due to legal restrictions. The Municipality had to adapt the usual procedure, since this type of regulation requires the approval by the municipal assembly, which in this case did not happen. However, Leiria Municipality was able to find a legal way to develop the regulation considering the project timeline.

Manresa Municipality also faced some constraints related to Pilot Actions concerning regulations - “Creation of a Local Plan for Waste Management”, in this case due to the municipal elections, by the end of May, which made the approval of the policy strategy rather complicated. Another obstacle related to this action was that, in Manresa, the department in charge of the action implementation had to develop and approve the Sustainable Energy and Climate (PAESC) Action Plan before this Local Plan for Waste Management. The PAESC plan includes the Local Plan for Waste Management as a specific action and a support to the implementation of the future actions under the Local Waste Management Plan.

Beside these constrains, Manresa Municipality adapted the procedures that were usually used to perform these types of Pilot Actions in order to include more participation and more society involvement. In the Pilot Action reported above, i.e. “Creation of a Local Plan for Waste Management”, the Municipality admits that if the action had emerged out of the Municipality, the process would probably have had some participation, but with much less participants, considering that the established participatory process allowed the Municipality to engage a wider range of stakeholders in the design of the actions. If the second Pilot Action, “Environmental information and training for singular producers” - an awareness raising action - had emerged only from the internal work of the Municipality, it would have missed the contributions and the sharing of the points of view provided by the stakeholders involved. If the last Pilot Action implemented - “Dissemination and analysis of resource, waste and sub products flow in order to explore new business models” - had emerged exclusively from municipal decision, the stakeholders involved would had been others and



the approach would have been different. Since Manresa had the UrbanWINS Agoras experience, the Municipality decided to use the same approach in action implementation in order to ensure the participation of the stakeholders.

Cities like Sabadell and Leiria report that the main constraint was the difficulty in gathering participants to implement the actions. Sabadell Municipality underlines that it experienced a significative lack of engagement and visibility from other municipal departments, departments that could have been involved in action development and implementation. Sabadell mentioned that there were no changes in the internal procedures during the Pilot Actions implementation, when comparing it to the same type of action resulting from internal work. However, the Municipality reported that the complexity of the participatory procedure was a challenge for the Municipality and required some adaptations.

Even Cremona reported difficulty in involving the actors needed to implement the part of Pilot Action regarding the development of materials resulting from the processing of fruit, vegetables and other vegetable waste for food purposes. However, it emphasized that the whole Pilot Action implementation had been considered positively by the Municipality and that there were no differences in the implementation procedures compared to the foreseen procedures.

The opposite occurred in Albano Laziale Municipality since, initially, they did not want to implement two out of their three Pilot Actions: “Sustainable Tourism” and “Re-use/barter Area in the Sunday”. Had they followed the usual procedures inside the Municipality, the actions would have been replaced by other ones. In the end, the actions were implemented. In the Pilot Action “Communication Campaign” there were no constraints and it was implemented by the Municipality, according to the participants in the Agoras.

For the Bucharest Municipality the greater challenge was to understand and to commit to changing the way of thinking when it comes to organizing events and to move towards a more sustainable approach. In the Pilot Action “Separate collection of waste generated during public events organized by Bucharest City Hall (“Green Events”)” the main constraint consisted in achieving citizens’ awareness, due to the short time period for its implementation. In addition, to this, it is important to stress that civil society in Romania is not used to “green events”. Despite the action being built based on existing or adapted strategies and plans, it brought several new approaches compared to the usual decision-making and action-planning processes carried out by Bucharest Municipality. Furthermore, the Pilot Action “Development of awareness raising campaigns on waste prevention in 3 Bucharest educational units (“Green Schools”)” had as main constraint the delays in the purchasing process due the large number of procedural steps concerning public procurement that Bucharest Municipality has to follow according to Romanian law.

## 3.2. Participatory approach background in Pilot Cities

To evaluate the effective impact of the UrbanWINS participatory process in each Pilot City it was important to assess if the City has used or frequently uses this type of process. If a





city already uses this type of process, the acceptance and internal procedures in the Municipality could be easier to achieve and conduct.

In Leiria, this type of participatory process had not been applied before. However, Leiria Municipality has some participatory experience, namely it runs a participative annual budget where citizens can propose projects to be financially supported by the Municipality.

Even in Manresa Municipality the waste management department did not have any experience in participatory processes such as this one. The Municipality only had experience in participatory initiatives such as the participatory budget and in some advisory councils consisting of citizens and NGOs.

Although some cities like Sabadell had already used similar processes in other European projects (workshops), they extended for shorter time periods. Another Municipality that had already used participatory approaches is Cremona, as opposed to Albano Laziale that had never used this type of process before. This may have contributed to the constraints reported above.

Bucharest Municipality reported that at a national level the participatory process had rarely been used until 2 years ago, when it was encouraged mostly through participatory budgeting for some activities related to the public interest. The participatory budget is an open and transparent management tool, that allows citizens to directly take part in the Municipality decision-making process on investments and other decisions regarding the community (e.g. street infrastructure [alleys, pedestrian areas, etc.], culture, sports, social or health infrastructure, landscaping and playgrounds).

However, unlike for Bucharest, only in a range of small cities in Romania citizens were actively involved in the decision-making process. In September 2017, the Bucharest City Hall launched a campaign to identify projects of local interest initiated by citizens, in which 20 projects were proposed by citizens and voted by the public. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> initiative of this kind for Bucharest Municipality, apart from the participatory process developed and promoted under UrbanWINS project.

### 3.3. Overall assessment of the incorporation of participatory approaches in the decision-making process

After the participatory process was carried out, the Pilot Cities expressed their opinion regarding the incorporation of this type of process in decision-making, using their experience within the UrbanWINS project as a basis.

Overall, they upheld the participatory process as a good tool to improve the decision-making process. Cities like Albano Laziale maintained that this kind of participatory process would be a good contribution in the decision-making process if it were conducted by people who have a specific know-how.



Bucharest indicated that the stakeholders' commitment towards the decision increased considerably, hence considering it a result of the participatory process. Bucharest also reported that in order to attract the most relevant stakeholders in the participatory decision-making process municipalities should initially make a detailed selection of stakeholders using complex matrices and surveys. Only in this way, the outputs would have a positive impact on both the Municipality's activity and the community's agreement. It was also suggested that the participatory process should be announced with a generous period in advance and it should be carried out during a reasonable period of time, so that stakeholders will not lose their interest to committing themselves to the process and, afterwards, to the project's implementation. This highlights the fact that when applying a participatory process, transparency and openness should be a priority. In Romania, these are sensitive issues that affect the credibility of central and local authorities. Therefore, they state that it is important that stakeholders, as well as the municipalities, have the time to understand the concept of a public-private partnership where both sides have a voice and vested interests.

Both Leiria and Cremona stated that the participatory process was very helpful for the Municipality and its citizens, mentioning that it simultaneously increased their points of view. They indicated that, with this type of involvement, the citizens and the Municipality interacted in the definition of policies and measures to run in the short and long term, dealing with the problems that the Municipality also recognizes as important. Moreover, they refer that this participatory approach to the decision-making process allows to find win-win solutions to problems.

Manresa generally considered that the incorporation of this type of process in the decision-making process is good and emphasised that their perception evolved during the participatory process. They were initially reluctant to incorporate this type of methodology, because in other events in which the Municipality had asked citizens for feedback the involvement of citizens was usually low, and the citizens who did take part complained about public services and other urbanistic issues providing useless feedback. Simultaneously, they also reported a negative perception by the technicians and policymakers related to sharing power within decision-making. However, in the case of UrbanWINS, during the participatory process this type of behaviour disappeared. From Manresa's point of view the reason was that the methodology used promoted the search for new solutions. They also stated that despite the complexity of the methodology applied in UrbanWINS, the outputs of the participatory process were good and they mentioned that including these methodologies in the decision-making process was ultimately a good option: namely in situations where the Municipality has to face difficult policy challenges which affect a wide range of stakeholders and, initially, there is not a clear solution.

In Sabadell, the participatory experience did not go so well because its main requirement was the direct involvement of citizens. This proved to be complicated, since the people were not committed to attending the participatory sessions and to following the project. In Sabadell's view, applying this type of face-to-face participation requires finding ways to improve citizen participation and involvement in the definition of city actions.



## 4. Final remarks

On issues such as sustainability, despite the current growth of demand for stakeholder engagement in the design and process to influence decision-making, a genuine commitment and effective involvement, right from the beginning of the process, is still a great challenge. This implies a need to find approaches to maximize the contributions of stakeholders and civil society as a whole in the framework of decision-making processes to increase hypotheses of positive implementation with societal acceptance.

Throughout the participatory process that characterised the UrbanWINS project, the Pilot Cities embraced that challenge and applied new methodologies involving a diversified range of stakeholders for the definition of Pilot Actions. This participatory approach offered an opportunity for the population to share opinions and suggestions given throughout the life cycle of the developed and implemented Pilot Actions.

Overall Pilot Cities had carried out successfully the participatory process and the actions implementation. The main obstacles reported by Pilot Cities are related to legalization and internal procedures, namely in the actions that the objective was to do guides or regulations and in the ones that needed a purchasing process. Other constraints were the need to involve stakeholders and Municipality internal departments in the actions. However, in general, the Pilot Cities were able to manage and overcome these difficulties.

It was verified that the Pilot Cities that have already used this type of stakeholders' involvement and participation in the decision-making process, faced less constraints and gave a better feedback regarding the inclusion of this participatory process in the decision-making process. Furthermore, perceptions of the importance and efficacy of this process evolved during the project. From some cities' perspective, the methodologies used promoted the search for new and consensual solutions. They also contributed some suggestions that could be a good improvement in the participatory process, to better fit Municipality dynamics.

In summary, the impact of the UrbanWINS participatory approach was positive and considered useful, essentially for complex problems, such as waste management and prevention, that affect a wide range of stakeholders. Allowing Pilot Cities to experience this type of process and to operationalize it, contributed to the creation of additional value for both civil society and the Municipality. This shows that the participatory process through the incorporation of public values and suggestions in decision-making processes contributes to empowerment, hence providing an opportunity for the development of holistic solutions to environmental problems and moving to win-win solutions.





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