



EUROPEAN  
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# Methods and Tools for Organizing Effective Public Discussions ONLINE

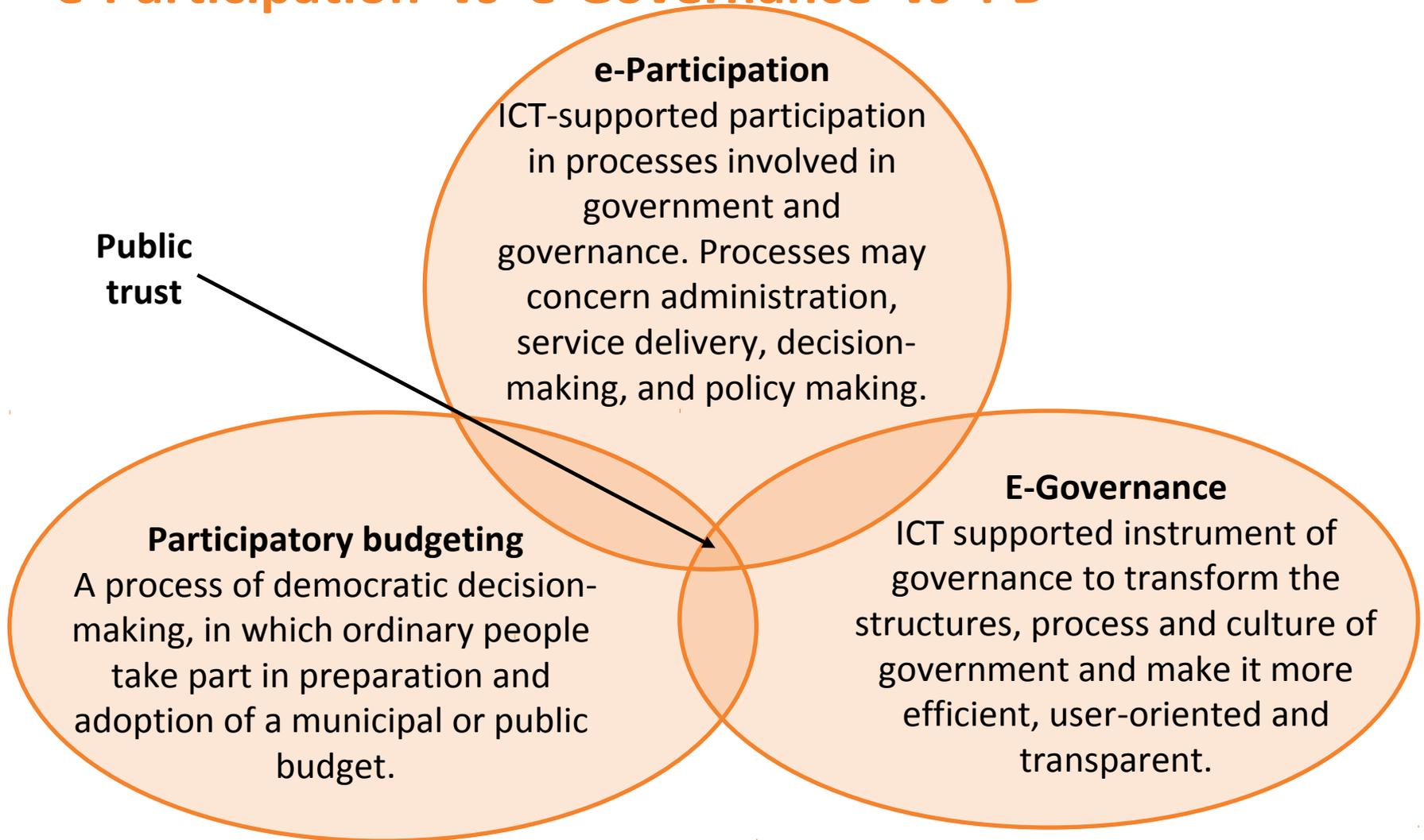
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“Empowering Participatory Budgeting in the Baltic Sea Region – EmPaci”

# Content

1. Enhancing civic engagement online
1. Designing Participatory Budgeting online as consultancy and decision-making process
  - PB solutions
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# Enhancing civic engagement online

# e-Participation vs e-Governance vs PB



# E-Participation

## 'Top Down'

- Government-initiated and lead
- Goes beyond the legal requirements
- Semi-formal
- Openness & transparency
- Implemented on early stages of decision-making
- Citizens as consultants

- Organised in **digital** environment
- Does not exclude offline methods

## 'Bottom Up'

- Citizen-initiated
- Mobilization of democratic change
- Does not guarantee involvement of policy makers
- Implemented throughout decision making process and after
- Citizens as commentators and critics

# eParticipation communication framework

1

## e-information

making it possible for the citizen to know everything there is to know about a specific topic by making all the needed information available.

2

## e-consultation

allowing citizens to be part of deliberations regarding decisions that are to be taken on public policies and services.

3

## e-decision-making

including citizens in the co-creation of the public policies and services.

“Tell and sell”  
communication

“Two-way” communication and engagement

# Designing effective online communication strategy

1

## Offering Open government data (e-Information)

Government information should be proactively disclosed and made available online for everyone's access, reuse and redistribution without restriction. Data should be: Complete, Primary, Timely, Accessible, Machine readable, Non-discriminatory, Non-proprietary and License-free.

**Tools: websites and social media profiles of public institutions, online media.**

2

## Deliberation through discussions (e-Consultation)

Digital environment allows participation of large part of citizens (incl. youth) and adds their value to the discussion, widening knowledge and exploring more scenarios. Opinion expressed by larger part of citizens is more representable.

**Tools: social media, professional e-participation platforms, tools integrated into public websites.**

3

## Voting for ideas (e-Decision making)

Shared decision making is based on previous information and consultation phases. Mobilized by governors, semi-formal voting and therefore expression of opinions empowers citizens the most.

**Tools: professional e-participation platforms, can be integrated into public websites.**

# Designing effective online communication - principles

## **Audience-centric communication**

UX principles should be followed when shifting from delivering services based on public institutions requirements and processes to the needs of public. Instead of multiplying the websites of each separate public organization or project, institution must focus on the issues of citizen interest (e.g. website for seniors, childcare, education etc.). Audience-centric communication includes choosing the right language and adjust to the target audience.

## **Meaningful communication and engagement**

Run a dialogue on issues that citizen groups are really interested in. Do not maintain communication as a formality only. Citizens can contribute with useful ideas and proposition if they trust public institutions.

## **Proactive notifications and status updates**

Greater level of satisfaction and civic engagement can be reached through communication of updates and status of specific processes and issues of citizen interests, just like any service provides can publish the wait time within physical branches of service providers. Calendars, timelines, visualized graphs and subscription option (e.g. to the newsletter) work better then formal press releases, as tracking is faster and more efficient for a user. *No need to update everyone on everything by e-mails!*

# Designing effective online communication - principles

## Storytelling

Being a leading trend in government communications, storytelling clusters various discrete elements of information into a coherent story and identifies priority themes and narratives. It stems from the recognition that to communicate everything is to communicate nothing.

Also, promotion of eParticipation as a case study is an issue to share with other municipalities and governments. Used with audio-visuals (interviews, promotion videos, infographics etc.), it will enhance trust of target groups, promote openness and transparency of policy making.

## Cooperation with NGOs, industry and other public agencies

Being in-touch with other stakeholder organisations (especially NGOs active in civic engagement) means attracting more attention online to what is done and planned on municipal, regional and national levels. Dissemination and sharing of each other's information in own webpages and social media makes communication on participation issues more effective and visible online. Sustainable partnerships and projects evolve within such networks.

# Designing effective online communication - channels

## Functional and user-friendly website

The intention of making political activities transparent and decisions – citizen-centric is reflected in design of the platform, where all official announcements and interactions are published. The website should be well-structured, attractive visually and contain clear navigation to where public can engage if interested. Public organisations are responsible for trust building to make decisions sustainable.

## Interactive Social Media

Attractive communication in social media requires the usage of Web 2.0. techniques, incl. multimedia (pictures, infographics, videos), events, calendars, branded hashtags, URL links to external sources, polls, and other elements to attract attention and engage into initiatives. Duplication of the official information from the website is not enough, as social media requires more interaction. Direct communication through commenting and direct messages must be supported to demonstrate openness. Posts with leisure-related content (e.g. quizzes, community events) are more popular than those communicating governing reports, therefore social media should be viewed as addition, which makes formal information delivery more attractive and visible.

# Designing effective online communication - channels

## **Press and social media kit**

A press and social media kit provides clear information that the media can use to support reporting on open government reforms. It should include visual elements (photos and graphics) as well as contact details for media spokespeople available for interviews. It should also be updated on a regular basis to include the latest press releases and other relevant reports.

## **E-Participation platform (website)**

Apart from user-friendly website of decision making organisation, special digital platform of open governance with current public discussions and space for expressing citizen opinions on specific issues will promote e-Participation. It can also serve as a repository for reports, case studies, project information, updates, announcements and upcoming events.

## **Offline events**

Online voting, discussions and other eParticipation activities should also be promoted through offline channels to reach larger audiences (e.g. seniors).

# Designing effective online communication – assessment and improvement

## Citizen satisfaction measurement

Identify services that citizens find the most problematic through formal surveys to prioritize the improvement. **Do not ask citizens directly to prioritize**, because *“all aspects are equally important”*. Rather ask to rate each issue/service across the drivers and identify breakpoints at which delays and service shortfalls cause citizen dissatisfaction. Detailed customer journey analysis is necessary to identify specific points of customer service where shortages occur.

Combine citizen feedback with internal data (e.g. employee surveys, customer-relation-management records) to uncover hidden pain points.

## Internal back-office operations improvement

Back-office operations are an equally important part of improving the citizen experience. Speed, simplicity and efficiency in employee’s work impacts the way information is delivered to citizens. In some cases politeness, professionalism and consistency is the matter of establishing cross-functional teams responsible for the end-to-end customer journey, in other cases – vice versa.

# Designing effective online collaboration – tools and methods

- Online surveys – rating of services and initiatives, selection of priorities, informal voting, and many more;
- e-Participation platforms – publishing and discussing initiatives;
- PB platforms – voting for initiatives;
- e-governance platforms (apps) – notifying responsible institutions about necessary changes and improvements on a daily basis (e.g. environmental arrangements, legal violations etc.);
- Social media pages and groups – notifications and discussing;
- Multifunctional online platforms for civic participation – contains several abovementioned tools;
- E-mail – for individual inquiries (less effective, as often processes personal data).

## Summary

- e-Participation framework consists of 3 stages: making the citizens aware, enabling the discussion and empowering citizens by giving them the right to decide, all done online.
- Effective communication with citizens should be audience-centric, rather interactive than just formal and delivered proactively to the right audiences.
- Information should be structured, but at the same time provide larger context through storytelling technique to communicate explicitly.
- Functional and user-friendly website and interactive social media is a must to reach younger citizens. Assessment on service delivery and communication with citizens should be done on a regular basis and serve as a basis for improvement.
- Even if social media and website is managed professionally in the right languages, visibility and reach of information is still limited. Cooperation with NGOs and other organisations helps to engage with citizens through a larger variety of channels.
- e-Participation should be supported by offline activities to reach larger audiences.
- Special digital spaces and tools are designed for data collection and support of e-Participation: online surveys, e-Participation and PB platforms, e-governance apps, social media pages and groups etc.

**Designing Participatory Budgeting online  
as consultancy and decision-making process**

## Designing effective PB process

**Citizen engagement methods and tools should be adjusted to each separate municipality and priorities – there is no universal formula.**

- Own calendar and procedures for PB - organised at least once per year;
- Age limits of voters - above 18, above 12 or even younger;
- Authentication of voters – registered, with electronic signature or no registration;
- Supported priority areas – wide range of topics, infrastructure improvement only or “soft” project implementation;
- Consistency of procedures each round/year of PB distribution.

## Designing trust in PB

- The User Experience (UX):
  - information should be structured and easy-to-navigate through,
  - clear communication around the project phases to make it easy to follow,
  - visualisations – locating projects/ideas directly on a map, enclosing explanatory schemes and pictures,
  - integrated questionnaires/polls – to know more about the users,
  - attractive design elements – “tolerant” and suitable for all,
- Concrete projects with the direct impact on the area - citizens are more interested in decisions that will directly affect their daily lives;
- The level of detail: structured, condensed description of the projects offered (justification, activities, results, costs and budget distribution, action timeline etc.).

## Designing trust in PB

- Notification about all stages of the programme/initiative;
- Large information campaign should be launched both online and offline, to make PB accessible for everyone;
- PB information campaigns should not coincide with and be associated with formal elections;
- National-level campaign or platform should be launched with references to each individual municipality or territorial entity, where PB is practiced. Promotion of good practices makes it relevant for other territorial entities to practice similar approach to PB.



*PB promotion poster in Kraków*

# **PB solutions**

**Participatory budgeting in Poland**

**Participatory budgeting in Kraków**

**Decide Madrid in Spain**

# Participatory Budgeting (Budżet Obywatelski) in Poland

- First PB initiative in Sopot in 2011;
- PB is promoted on national level, enhancing new municipalities to design own PB procedures;
- Municipalities redistributing between 2-5% of the municipal budget;
- Based on citizen-initiated projects and voting;
- Online voting for city- and district-based projects;
- No centralised system – municipalities decide on procedures.





## Participatory Budgeting in Kraków

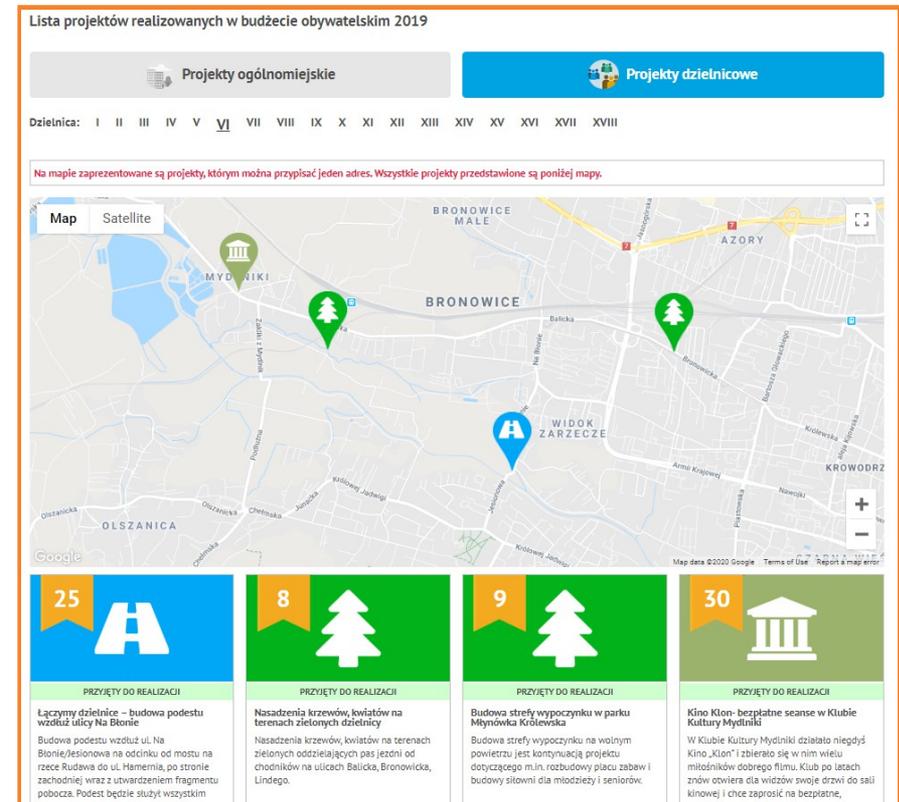
- Integrated in the website of the City Council;
- Has references to other information relevant for city inhabitants (weather, maps, transportation etc.);
- Contains PB priority topics for project applicants;
- Explicit information on project submission (templates, support);
- Voting and commenting features for registered users;
- Mapping of the projects by districts.



*Mapping of citizen initiatives submitted in 2020 in Kraków*

# Participatory Budgeting in Kraków

- 2 categories of projects: city-based and district-based projects;
- Detailed info on submitted projects (budget, timeline, visualisations, justification etc.);
- Follow-up on implementation of selected projects (press releases, archive etc.).



*List of the project under implementation by districts*



## Decide Madrid in Spain

- Multifunctional platform launched in 2016;
- Contains both political participation and PB platforms;

**El sueldo (y TODAS las condiciones) de los políticos lo debemos decidir los ciudad**

6 comments • 2020-03-20 • AsociacionProDemocraciaParticipativa2

El sueldo (y TODAS las condiciones) de los políticos lo debemos decidir los que les pagamos su sueldo.

  
 93%

  
 7%

**131 votes**

*Citizen voting for salaries of politicians being decided by the citizens*



**SANCIONES POR BASURA FUERA DE CONTENEDORES**

14 comments • 2019-06-07 • Lourdes Garay

MULTAS Y SERVICIOS A LA COMUNIDAD PARA LOS QUE UTILIZAN LOS ESPACIOS ALREDEDOR DE CONTENEDORES COMO PUNTOS LIMPIOS, O DEJAN LA BASURA EN LA ACERA. INCREMENTAR LA VIGILANCIA Y

urbanismo salud medio ambiente

2.8% / 100%

**767 supports**

27,662 supports needed

Support

*Sanctions for garbage left outside the containers*

Discussions under each of publicly discussed initiatives with voting and commenting functions.



# Decide Madrid, Spain

- Opportunity for individuals and organisations to apply with own projects,
- Projects can be viewed by districts;
- Voting on project ideas online, authorisation required;
- Informative campaign organised in city districts,

Participatory Budget 2019				
Results Stats Milestones				
By district				
Arganzuela				
Barajas				
<b>Carabanchel</b>	<b>Carabanchel</b>			
Centro				
Chamartín				
Chamberí				
Ciudad Lineal				
Fuencarral-El Pardo				
Hortaleza				
	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>Available budget €6,475,116</b>
	✓ REFORESTACIÓN PARQUE PINAR DE SAN JOSE	645	€25,000	€6,450,116
	✓ REVERTIR LA DEGRADACIÓN DEL BARRIO	634	€1,000,000	€5,450,116
	✓ Pavimentar ciertas calles de carabanchel y poner bancos	585	€197,000	€5,253,116
	✓ RAMPAS PARA ACCEDER AL PARQUE EUGENIA DE MONTIJO	575	€10,000	€5,243,116
	✓ Plantar arboles en la acera en Avenida de los Poblados.	555	€81,000	€5,162,116
	✓ Terminar carril bici Pau Carabanchel - Aluche	495	€80,000	€5,082,116

Project supported in Madrid in 2019 under PB by districts

**Support in designing PB**

## Citizen engagement platforms

- ‘Consul’ services are used for design and maintenance of *Decide Madrid*, as well as other civic participation enhancing municipalities and organisations in Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Italy and more other countries.
- Another this kind of platform is called ‘CitizenLab’, which has enabled Youth4Change global initiative and other local PB implementation in European cities.



*‘Consul’ clients in Europe*

**Citizen engagement platform installation does not need huge investments in terms of designing and maintaining. There are specialised services that offer citizen tech for organisations and individuals.**

## ‘CitizenLab’ for ‘Youth4Climate’

When in 2019 Youth4Climate **global** movement lead by Greta Thurnberg started mass protests, CitizenLab platform was set for them to collect the ideas on how to tackle climate change. Over 1 700 ideas were submitted in less than 3 months, 2 600 comments and 32 000 votes collected in support in Belgium and abroad. Content was published in several languages, being accessible to different linguistic groups. To ensure effective functioning of the platform and proper analysis of the content to use it further, the content of different languages was processed by automated AI data analysis feature (Natural Language Processing technology).



## 'CitizenLab' for 'Youth4Climate'

- Projects grouped by categories (15 priorities);
- Follow-up on initiatives discussions and implementations sent to users.

The screenshot displays a grid of idea cards on the CitizenLab platform. Each card includes a title, a brief description, a user profile, and engagement metrics (likes and comments). The ideas include:

- Plastiekreductie in winkels opvoeren** (Plastic reduction in shops) by Dries De Groot.
- Stop de verspilling van voedsel** (Stop food waste) by Ranja Van Asbroeck.
- Lesgeven in alle scholen over het klimaat en het milieu.** (Teaching in all schools about climate and environment) by Sofie Fleurman.
- Fiets de prioriteit in de stad, auto het laatste** (Bicycle as priority in the city, car last) by Javier Indestege.
- Bij heraanleg straten minstens 20% groen en bomen voorzien** (When renovating streets, at least 20% green and provide trees) by Curly Maertens.
- Internationale treinreizen niet of minder belasten** (International train travel not or less taxed) by Geert Kooiken.

On the right, a sidebar allows filtering ideas by status (All, Proposed, Being analysed, Not an idea, Duplicate, Postponed, Priority) and topics (Nutrition, Nature, Mobility, Circular economy and waste, Buildings, Education).



## ‘CitizenLab’ for ‘Grand Paris Sud’

Grand Paris Sud with the population of 246 800 inhabitants is an intercommunal structure (agglomeration) in south of Paris, which in 2019 decided to stimulate **citizen consultancy** on the issues of **climate, culture and cycling**. Large discussions on safety and mobility in the agglomeration went on, over 400 citizens took part in the project and suggested projects like pumping stations, safer bike parking and new cycle routes.

Citizen consultancy included:

- Launching a survey regarding creation of a climate action plan and its priorities,
- Promoting and submitting ideas on how to improve cycling infrastructure;
- Map visualising projects via geolocalization function,
- Voting for the best ideas to be supported (grants offered),
- Launching a calendar of cultural activities (on environmental topics) in agglomeration, and more features.

## Launching the platform with new programmes and initiatives

Within "**Stand Up For the Climate**" campaign, citizens, associations, and schools were called to launch projects under environmental topic in Grand Paris Sud platform.

- 2 rounds of selection were implemented, including selection of 16 best project and public voting for the best one,
- Prize fund was created to grant best projects to be implemented
- 5,700 citizens registered on the platform, 5,439 voted for the projects on an impact.

# Other cases of PB collected by CitizenLab

The screenshot displays the CitizenLab website's case studies section. The navigation bar includes 'Platform', 'Clients', 'About', 'Resources', and 'Blog', along with a 'Schedule a demo' button and a language selector. The main content is organized into six cards, each representing a different case study. Each card features a category label, a representative image, a title, a brief description, and a 'Read more' button.

Category	Title	Description
CLIMATE	All eyes on the climate in Grand Paris Sud	Grand Paris Sud consulted citizens on three key aspects of their upcoming annual strategy: mobility, culture and environment.
IDEATION	Collecting citizen input for the city's annual plan in Kortrijk	Clarity, communication and political buy-in made the city's communication platform a success for all those involved.
URBAN PLANNING	Marche-en-Famenne reaches 25% of citizens with its participation platform	25% of the city's inhabitants consulted the participation platform, and 1 in 5 inhabitants weighed in on the renewal of the city's main square via the online consultation.
HOUSING	Idea Sourcing to Solve Housing Crisis in Vancouver	The city re-invested revenue coming from the Empty Homes Tax into affordable housing initiatives, as suggested by citizens.
IDEATION	Improving dialogue between the city and its citizens in Schiedam	Clear feedback and efficient processing of citizen ideas by the city made this participation project a success.
URBAN PLANNING	Lommel uses Citizenlab to involve citizens in urban planning decisions	Lommel turned to its citizens to imagine the future of one of the city's neighborhoods.

<https://www.citizenlab.co/case-studies>

## **Resources to investigate**

## Resources to investigate

e-Participation: <http://empaci.eu/index.php?id=2>

e-Governance: <https://www.citizenlab.co/blog/e-government/framework-will-make-you-understand-e-participation/>

e-Participation: <http://www.digital-development-debates.org/issue-12-power--top-down--more-top-down-participation-please.html>

Citizen-centric e-governance: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/implementing-a-citizen-centric-approach-to-delivering-government-services>

Best Practices in Government Communications: <https://www.resultsmap.com/blog/8-best-practices-in-government-communications/>

Open Governance: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/Open-Government-Guide.pdf>

# Resources to investigate

## Case studies

- Participatory budgeting in Poland: <http://budzetyobywatelskie.pl/info/631/podsumowanie-konferencji-budzet-obywatelski-czyli-jak-skutecznie-dynamizowac-partycypacje-spoleczna/>
- Participatory budgeting in Krakow: <https://budzet.krakow.pl/>
- Youth4Climate (CitizenLab): <https://www.citizenlab.co/case-studies-en/youth4climate>
- Grand Paris Sud (CitizenLab): <https://www.citizenlab.co/case-studies-en/grand-paris-sud-2>
- Other case studies: <https://www.citizenlab.co/case-studies>