



**PRINCIPLES, GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS
ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN
DECISION-MAKING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**



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INTRODUCTION

Public participation in decision-making processes at the local level has become a fundamental principle of good governance. It contributes to quality and transparency of decisions, greater citizen trust in local government, better understanding and greater acceptance of decisions by citizens. Public participation ensures the avoidance of delays in the process of making decisions and their implementation, as well as related additional costs.

Local government has a crucial role in creating a stimulating environment for public participation in decision-making at the local level because it is closest to citizens and it provides services that have considerable impact on the quality of life in the local community. Although the right of citizens to participation is defined in international and domestic legal documents, successful decision-making processes require the development of practical procedures for implementation of legal provisions in practice.

The document “*Principles, Guidelines and Protocols of Public Participation in Decision-Making at the Local Level*” is supposed to provide practical help to local governments and employees in local government units in planning and implementing the process of public participation¹. It can be used in developing and passing decisions, plans and programmes, in development of local policies and in their efficient implementation.

The document was produced with the goal:

- to ensure greater public participation in decision-making processes at the local level;
- to make such processes as transparent as possible;
- to help local government units to implement public participation processes as effectively and efficiently as possible;
- to strengthen public trust in local government, as well as accountability of local government to the public;
- to harmonise public participation practices within and between local self-government units;
- to promote mutual learning and exchange of good practices among local self-government units.

The document “*Principles, Guidelines and Protocols of Public Participation in Decision-Making at the Local Level*” is composed of three sections, which constitute one whole.

The *Principles* represent the basic framework for all public participation processes in decision-making at the local level, relying on recommendations of the Council of Europe, European Commission, as well as on the experience of other European countries that have adopted similar documents. They establish a relationship between local self-government units and the public and define the environment in which both sides are supposed to operate.

The *Guidelines* promote the values defined in the *Principles* by outlining the main steps in the organisation of public participation processes. At the same time, they present minimal standards that should be complied with in the process.

The *Protocols* are a simple reminder and a guide which shows specific steps in the organisation of three different public participation processes.

¹ Here we use the term “public”, which refers in the broadest sense to all legal and natural persons, i.e. to citizens and to organised groups of citizen members of a society. In documents, the term “citizens” is used alternately with the term public.

These *Principles, Guidelines and Protocols of Public Participation in Decision-Making at the Local Level* are designed for representatives of local government and employees of local self-government units. They are compatible with current legislation and international standards. It is recommended that these documents be used to strengthen the internal culture and institutional practices in local self-government units which heavily promote public participation, with adherence to formal procedures.

TEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Public participation in decision-making processes at the local level will be conducted with maximum adherence to the following ten principles:

1. PURPOSEFULNESS

Citizen participation should have real influence on the decisions, regulations and public policies of local self-government.

2. SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

Public participation processes should be conducted in a structured manner, with use of adequate procedures and resources, in order to ensure the effective work of all actors involved and quality results.

3. TIMELINESS

In order to create preconditions for real influence of citizens on the decisions passed, it is essential that the public participate already in the early phases of decision-making.

4. REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSION

The participation of different groups of citizens in decision-making processes is necessary. Those categories of citizens with impeded participation should be encouraged in particular and equal participation opportunities should be ensured for all.

5. EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Citizen participation processes in decision-making will be organised as efficiently as possible, with optimal use of the human, financial and material resources available. Effectiveness of participation will be ensured by creating conditions for the public to truly influence the passing of decisions, regulations and public policies.

6. INDEPENDENCE AND IMPARTIALITY

Decision-making processes should be conducted in an independent and impartial manner.

7. QUALITY AND CLARITY OF INFORMATION

Information published by local self-government units should in a clear manner offer all details necessary for quality and timely public participation in decision-making.

8. TRANSPARENCY

Full transparency of the citizen participation process will be ensured in order to provide insight into the nature of participation, the various interests and the principles of decision-making.

9. FEEDBACK ON THE RESULTS OF PARTICIPATION

Local self-government will inform citizens of the results of participation by publishing in a timely manner the views, suggestions and requests expressed during the consultation process, as well as the final decisions, with a clear explanation of the decision-making criteria.

10. USE OF CONTEMPORARY COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Use of contemporary information and communication technologies (ICTs) will be stimulated, as an efficient tool of communication with citizens and documentation of the participation process.

GUIDELINES ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

1. PURPOSEFULNESS

Public participation in decision-making should have real influence on the public policies of local self-government. It represents a fundamental principle of European administration of public affairs. Public participation can have a positive impact on local self-government programmes, regulations, acts and services and can thereby contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of administration, but only if public participation is purposeful in nature, i.e. if it is focused on the achievement of specific, clearly defined goals. For effective and sustainable public participation, consideration should be given to the purpose and goals of public participation, which may be achieved in the following ways:

- Clearly determine the aim of public participation. It is necessary to ensure that there are no ambiguities or misunderstandings with regard to the scope of participation, the problems and issues covered, the expected results of participation, the manner in which the results will influence a specific public policy, and the available tools and mechanisms that will be used in the participation process. All this must be clearly defined prior to the start of the participation process.
- The aim of a public participation event and the issues discussed must be transparently announced and explained so that all interested parties can give quality contribution to the decision-making process.
- For effective and sustainable public participation, it is important to define the options and scope for public influence and whether the participation outcomes will be binding or not in order to avoid unrealistic public expectations. It is essential for citizens to understand even before the participation process how the results of participation will be used and in what way they will influence public policies.
- Public participation must not be conducted *pro forma*, i.e. it must not be used as a means of legitimising decisions that were made in advance, nor should it be conducted if genuine willingness to act in line with citizens' recommendations is lacking.

2. SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

In order to ensure that the public participation process flows appropriately and to maximise the effects of participation, it is essential to approach public participation systematically. This primarily means:

- that the very process of decision-making should be clearly structured,
- that all necessary resources should be available to the participants in the process.

In order to ensure structured decision-making, the participation process should be based on clearly defined steps, with use of appropriate mechanisms. These steps are:

- establishing the way in which decisions are made within a group (e.g. by majority or consensus),
- defining the division of duties during the process,
- defining the modality of communication and interaction among participants,
- defining the principles of confidentiality of information within the process,
- defining the modality of presentation of the group's work to third persons,
- precisely documenting the whole participation process, recording different positions within the group and documenting the outcome of the process,
- informing the decision-makers and all interested parties of the outcome of participation.

Precise definition of a structured approach to decision-making through the citizen participation process can be ensured by signing an agreement among the participants in the process.

For an efficient process it is very important to ensure adequate management of all necessary resources. For that purpose, consideration should be given to the following:

- It is essential to appoint a responsible person – a procedure coordinator – who will run all phases of the process, from planning, organisation, to provision of feedback on the process to both the representative and executive bodies of the local self-government unit and citizens. This person may also perform evaluations of the process. The coordinator will make sure that all phases of the procedure are carefully documented and that, in line with the participation plan and local regulations, information on the procedure is made available to the public. A team of people may be in charge of conducting the procedure as well, with clearly defined duties in the procedure.
- During the participation process, it is necessary to provide essential expert support in line with the needs of participants. Support may be provided by persons from the local self-government unit who prepared the draft which is the subject of the procedure or by external consultants who are involved in the preparation of the draft. Depending on the methods used in the procedure, the public should be offered access to experts who can familiarise them with the subject matter. Expert know-how is also needed in the evaluation of arguments offered by the public in the form of suggestions during the procedure.
- Depending on the methods, it would be good to hire a facilitator, a professional person in charge of moderating public meetings, working bodies or other forms of participation, who has a neutral position on the matter being decided. It should be ensured that the facilitator, if present, treats all sides in the participation process equally.
- Depending on the type of procedure, appropriate material resources need to be provided for its conduct, such as suitable premises in which the procedure takes place and support equipment.
- Participants in the procedure must also have quality information available to them, with an adequate level of detail and in user formats.
- Lastly, participants in the participation process should have enough time at their disposal in order to come up with the best possible solutions. Optimal duration of the public participation process needs to be determined. Optimal time is a balance between ideal time needed for quality input of all involved actors, on one hand, and the need for efficient solving and passing of decisions in real timeframes, on the other. In order to maximise the quality of the process, whenever possible, it is recommended that deadlines be set which are longer than the legally prescribed minimums. In cases when timeframes are extremely limited due to special legal requirements or in the case of a budget cycle, citizen participation methods should be selected carefully in order to maximise the effects of participation that takes place in a limited timeframe.

Limited availability of any of these resources may have a negative impact on the quality of the participation process.

3. TIMELINESS

The public should participate in the early phases of the decision-making process. The duration of the different phases and the deadlines in the process must be planned in a careful and timely manner, among them particularly the moment in which the public call for participation is announced, the duration and dates of holding the different events, the deadline for the receipt of comments, the

deadline for their analysis and publication of reports, as well as the deadline for evaluation of the whole process.

Local self-government units shall in a timely manner inform the public of a plan to pass regulations and acts in order to make the participation process meaningful and to facilitate active public participation in the early phases of the decision-making process.

Timely public participation strengthens public trust in processes, provides greater legitimacy of and broader support to the decisions passed, and reduces potential costs in case of subsequent changes to decisions or policies.

4. REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSION

Public representatives should come from all segments of society in order to ensure the representativeness and inclusiveness of the participation process.

Identification of target groups for participation in decision-making, i.e. development of criteria for selection of target groups, is a complex process in which all members of the municipal team in charge of organising public participation events should actively participate, in possible consultation with other relevant administration representatives and experts. Participation processes should include:

- all social groups affected by a public policy,
- all groups that will participate in the implementation of the given public policy,
- groups that have specific interests in relation to the public policy in question,
- individuals and organisations that are able to offer necessary expertise for quality decision-making and that have an interest in taking part in decision-making, although they do not belong to the defined target groups,
- representatives of marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as women, elderly, youth, ethnic minorities, refugees, unemployed, etc.
- representatives of all territorial areas of the local self-government unit that may be affected by the new policies and that have an interest in participating in decision-making.

It is recommended that local self-government units, with the goal of systematic monitoring of target groups and their inclusion in decision-making, create a database of target groups for different decision-making processes. Creation and maintenance of the database is a regular activity and should be defined as a separate duty in the job descriptions of a certain number of employees, for example as the duty of one person in each department/service who is responsible for organising public participation events.

Whenever possible, particularly with regard to important and sensitive issues, it is essential to ensure the adequate representation of social groups in order to obtain different views which ensure the proportionate representation of these views in the total population of the local community. This may be achieved by using the method of random selection of participants in the decision-making process, and polls may also be used to establish the prevalence of certain views and positions on a certain issue, after which effort is made to select participants in the decision-making process accordingly.

Representativeness is important if one truly wishes to obtain a wide array of views and positions of the general population. If citizens believe that there are irregularities related to representation, i.e. that some groups are inadequately represented, that may considerably diminish the credibility of the whole process.

5. EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

It is necessary to implement methods with the help of which the objective of the procedure is achieved and which are at the same time cost-effective in terms of human and financial resources and the time available for the conduct of the procedure. The methods and scope of the procedure shall be proportionate to the effect and importance of the draft policy, regulation or act which is the subject of the procedure. Of course, the costs of the procedure are an important factor that must be taken into account when making a decision on the possible participation mechanisms.

6. INDEPENDENCE AND IMPARTIALITY

The process of public participation in decision-making should be conducted independently and impartially so that the manner of conduct and persons in charge of running the participation process do not prefer certain interests at the expense of the interests of other citizens and interested parties and so that no pressure is placed on the participants in the decision-making process.

All participants in the process should view the process as truly impartial. The facilitators and representatives of public institutions must not be affiliated with specific interest groups that prefer certain solutions.

Independence may be ensured by appointing a coordinating committee or a team in charge of running the participation and decision-making process composed of representatives of different institutions or independent organisations. The practice of compulsory declaration of any relationship between participants and certain interest groups or proponents of certain solutions or policies may be established as a standard. In addition, the independence and impartiality of the process may be strengthened by hiring a facilitator who enjoys a high public reputation and who is viewed as truly independent of specific interest groups.

7. QUALITY AND CLARITY OF INFORMATION

All information on the public participation procedure should be available on time: announcements containing information on the procedure before its commencement, information on its conduct during the procedure, as well as information on its outcome.

The basic step in the preparation of public participation procedures is to make a public announcement and a call for participation. All information must be clear and concise, written in straightforward and easy-to-understand language. Account should particularly be taken of the following:

- Non-technical summaries should be prepared for all complex technical studies so that citizens who do not possess the specific technical know-how can participate in decision-making. The obligation to produce non-technical summaries is defined by specific laws and should be complied with.
- In order to ensure and motivate the participation of groups with special needs, it is necessary to adapt information and material for the public to the target groups, for example creating versions of announcements, calls and minutes in Braille or in audio formats for the visually impaired.

- Use of standard formats for announcements and calls for participation can help citizens to establish more quickly whether the decision-making process is relevant to them or not. Standard formats should contain the following information:
 - a summary,
 - a clear description of the specific public policy, problem, issue or decision on which the public participation procedure is conducted,
 - precisely defined purpose and aims of the public participation procedure,
 - a description of how the participants can influence the decision, including a description of the aspects which the public cannot influence, with appropriate explanations,
 - clearly formulated questions on which citizens will declare themselves, possibly listing the options available,
 - a deadline for the delivery of comments and suggestions,
 - precise information on the deadlines and on the manner in which feedback will be provided,
 - the contact details of the person that citizens can go to with additional questions, as well as an e-mail address or mailing address to which they should send their comments and suggestions,
 - additional information and documents educating the public on the issues in question and on the modalities of participation in decision-making.

8. TRANSPARENCY

Transparency and accountability of local self-government bodies and representatives of the public are essential in participation procedures. Representatives of local self-government bodies should ensure the full transparency of the citizen participation process in order to provide insight into the nature of participation, the different interests and the principles of decision-making. The public needs to know what is going on and how decisions are made, whereby strong emphasis is placed on the accountability of all actors involved in the participation process.

Information and full documentation related to the participation process which is in the possession of the local self-government unit and other public institutions involved in the participation process is considered a public good and will, in line with the law and under equal conditions, be easily available to all citizens. All information that is published or provided upon the request of the interested parties should be complete, accurate, updated and relevant and representatives of local self-government units will use all available technologies and formats to make such information easily available to citizens.

9. FEEDBACK ON THE RESULTS OF PARTICIPATION

For a truly meaningful public participation process which provides the opportunity for real influence, it is essential to agree with the decision-makers, already in the planning phase, that the results of the procedure will be taken into account before making decisions. Decision-makers thereby show respect to participants who invest their time and effort in decision-making. Therefore, it is necessary to take into consideration all received comments and suggestions and include them in the decisions as much as possible. If the comments cannot be integrated into the decisions, such cases must be clearly explained.

Analysis of the comments received should be performed by the working group charged with organising the whole process of public participation in decision-making. Members of the group can consult with persons (experts) who worked on the draft of the document in question (policy, decision, etc.), as well as with other relevant actors. A systematic approach to the analysis of public comments requires the

definition of clear criteria and arguments for the acceptance or rejection of comments. For a full analysis of the participation process, it is important to document all circumstances in which public participation did or did not have influence on the final decision.

Feedback to everyone who participated in the decision-making process should contain an explanation of the accepted and rejected comments and a list of all actors (individuals, organisations) who delivered comments and agreed to have their names revealed. Information of this kind should be announced through channels that are accessible to participants, such as internet sites, e-mail, bulletin boards in the local communities, public media, etc. Alongside the announcement, gratitude should be expressed to everyone who participated in the decision-making process.

It is recommended that an evaluation be performed at the end of every decision-making process with public participation. Technical conditions for evaluation will be met if the basic evaluation questions and elements are defined at the very beginning, so that feedback on the quality of the approaches and methods applied can be systematically collected from all actors, in all key phases. The final evaluation result is a report detailing which approaches were successful and which were not and what the reasons are for the successful and the unsuccessful approaches and methods. This report should also be made available to the public.

10. USE OF CONTEMPORARY COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Contemporary information and communication technologies (ICTs), in particular web-based communication tools and mobile communication technologies, are exceptionally efficient means of communication. These tools and technologies substantially raise the quality of communication, increase the speed of exchange of information, enable two-way communication and interaction with an increasing number of citizens, considerably reduce the costs of communication and heavily contribute to the transparency of work of local self-government and the public participation process. Therefore, ICTs provide enormous potential for support to the citizen participation process in decision-making at the local community level.

Representatives of local self-government units should promote the increasing use of ICTs as a key element in the process of citizen participation in decision-making at the local level. In practice this means that local self-government will actively create and disseminate information of importance to public participation processes in decision-making, in formats and with technical characteristics that are suitable for publication, search, storage and exchange via popular web platforms and mobile communication devices.

PROTOCOL FOR ORGANISING PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS IN WRITTEN FORM

PREPARATION PHASE

1. In a specific decision-making process, check the obligations defined by the law and other legal acts on the participation of the interested public through a written consultation. Determine the procedures and deadlines that need to be complied with in relation to the consultation procedure.
2. Determine the goals of public participation and the content on which the interested public will be consulted.
3. Determine the body responsible for the conduct of the consultation and appoint a coordinator or a team for the organisation of a written consultation.
4. Perform an analysis of the target groups – interest groups and individuals – who will be consulted in the process in question. Identify the interests of the individual groups in the process in question, as well as their positions on the subject of decision-making.
5. Create a comprehensive activity plan for a written consultation which contains: the objectives of the consultation process, the timeframe and deadlines, the bodies and persons responsible for the implementation of activities, the types of information and documents that will be published, the communication channels, the measures for providing assistance to certain target groups to adequately participate in the consultation process, the methodology for analysis of the comments collected, and the methodology for monitoring and evaluation of the process. The plan should also contain an estimate of the financial, human, material and other resources needed for its implementation.
6. Organise an information and education campaign before opening the consultation in order to educate the public and to increase motivation for participation in the decision-making process.
7. Create documents that are made available to the public (draft decisions, regulations, plans, etc.) and write public announcements.
8. Publish in a timely manner all additional information and documents (such as analyses, studies, etc.).
9. If external experts are planned to be hired for analysis of the comments that arrive, meetings should be held with the experts and they should be prepared for the analysis.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSULTATION

10. Publish the documents (draft decisions, regulations, plans, etc.), announce a call for a written consultation and, pursuant to the action plan, register all comments that arrive.

FINAL PHASE

11. Document all comments of the public and update the database of persons and organisations who participated in the process.
12. Analyse the comments collected and among them select relevant comments and include them in the documents.
13. Make a report that contains a description of the whole process, explanations on the accepted or rejected proposals, remarks and suggestions, with explanations for non-acceptance of those that were rejected.
14. Publish the report and, through appropriate channels, deliver it to those responsible in the local self-government, participants in the public events and persons who delivered comments in written form, and possibly also to certain interest groups.
15. Perform an evaluation of the public participation process and define the lessons learned.

PROTOCOL FOR ORGANISING PUBLIC HEARINGS

PREPARATION PHASE

1. Clearly define the aim, the specific topic of the public hearing, with an indication of questions that will be discussed (policy aspects which can be influenced and which are open for debate), and the timeframe for the whole process.
2. Appoint a team or coordinator for the preparation and implementation of the public hearing, with a specification of the duties and deadlines, as well as definition of responsibilities for all phases of the process.
3. Make an analysis of the stakeholders and, pursuant to the analysis, select the organisations and individuals that will be invited to the hearing.
4. Set the date, time and place for holding the public hearing, with respect for the local context (avoiding holidays, important events, work hours, inaccessible locations, etc.).
5. Assess and allocate human, financial and material resources needed for organising the whole process.
6. Prepare documents for the public hearing and adapt the material to the target group, pointing out which changes are proposed and how they will affect the general population and/or specific groups.
7. Create a detailed information plan for the target groups (broadcast/print media, radio, TV, public announcements, personal invitations, etc.) and organise an information and education campaign for citizens.
8. Plan how the comments and proposals of the participants will be used and how feedback will be delivered to them.
9. Define the modality of monitoring and evaluation of the public hearing.
10. Prepare a public announcement (date, time, place, topic and purpose of hearing, contact persons) which will clearly indicate why the hearing is important.
11. Inform citizens that a local act that defines their rights and obligations is being passed, with an explanation of how they will be increased or reduced.
12. Make sure to announce all information to the public in a timely fashion.
13. Perform a check of all locations where public hearings are to be held.
14. Hold meetings with experts who will be involved in the process.
15. Provide on time all technical aids (audiovisual equipment, computer, microphones, loudspeakers, flip charts, etc.) and check them.
16. Prepare an attendance sheet for those present, accreditations with the names and titles of the panelists, paper, pens, evaluation forms, etc.

17. Plan space for media representatives and their equipment.
18. Prepare the programme and define the rules of moderating the public hearing (introduction of panelists, duration of presentations, total duration of the hearing, etc.).
19. Arrange who will moderate the hearing (if possible, hire an external facilitator, who is neutral on the subject of hearing) and select a minute keeper.

HOLDING THE PUBLIC HEARING

20. Pass around an attendance sheet for those present to sign, noting that it is possible to retain anonymity, and distribute evaluation sheets.
21. Adapt the speeches of experts and representatives of local self-government to the hearing participants and repeat the summarised information that accompanied the invitation for participation.
22. Give due attention to the comments and proposals of the participants, regardless of disagreements, enabling everyone to take an equal participation in the hearing.
23. Keep minutes and record all comments, proposals and questions of the participants, as well as the conclusions and the steps proposed for their implementation.
24. Inform the participants in the hearing in what way they will receive feedback on how their proposals were received.

FINAL PHASE

25. Update the database of persons and organisations that participated in the hearing.
26. Analyse the comments, proposals, remarks and suggestions that arrived.
27. Make a report on the public hearing that was held containing a description of the whole process and all comments and proposals, remarks and suggestions of citizens relevant to the subject of hearing.
28. Publish the minutes and report on the public hearing through means of public information and deliver them to the proponents of the new policy and elected representatives of local self-government who are due to make the final decision on the subject of hearing.
29. Inform all hearing participants on whether their proposals were accepted, with an explanation if that was not possible. Make sure to thank all participants for their comments.
30. Perform an evaluation of the whole process, including the opinion of participants on the successfulness of the public hearing, and define the lessons learned.

PROTOCOL FOR ORGANISING CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES 2

PREPARATION PHASE

1. Establish who is:
 - a) the convener,
 - b) the moderator (*if different than the convener*), and
 - c) the organiser of the citizens' assembly (*if different than the convener and/or moderator*).
2. Establish the purpose of convening a citizens' assembly, i.e. establish if the citizens' assembly is being organised for the purpose of:
 - a) a public discussion and providing opinions or proposals on a specific local issue, or
 - b) direct decision-making by citizens on a specific local issue.
3. Establish the persons, bodies and/or organisations that will participate:
 - a) in the preparation of the citizens' assembly (*bodies of the local self-government unit and external experts*)
 - b) in the citizens' assembly (*bodies of the local self-government unit, external experts, representatives of the interested public, external facilitator*),
 - c) in activities following the citizens' assembly (*body of the local self-government unit in charge of implementing the decision/policy*)
4. Establish the aim/s and the agenda of the citizens' assembly and pass a decision to convene a citizens' assembly with an indication of the date, time and place of holding the citizens' assembly.
5. Develop a comprehensive activity plan for organising a citizens' assembly that includes a list of duties (steps), a timeframe and the persons/bodies responsible for their implementation, which are related to:
 - a) preparation and publishing of all relevant information and documents (*various plans, maps, decisions, strategies, studies, regulations, etc.*),
 - b) informing citizens, the interested public and media,
 - c) (*if and/or when possible*) a campaign to inform, educate and motivate citizens to participate,
 - d) establishing the rules of moderation/rules of procedure of the citizens' assembly (*rules of moderating the discussion, etc.*)
 - e) preparation of premises and needed equipment (*projector, loudspeaker, attendance sheets, evaluation form, paper, pens, etc.*)
 - f) monitoring and evaluation of the citizens' assembly and the whole process of citizen participation.
- 5.1. If a citizens' assembly is organised for the purpose of a public discussion and provision of opinions or proposals on a specific local issue/s, the plan should also include activities related to:
 - a) registration and analysis of the key participants and target groups, and
 - b) collecting and processing the opinions or proposals collected.

² Citizens' assembly is a participatory mechanism organized at local community, i.e. neighbourhood or village level, in the countries of former Yugoslavia.

- 5.2. If a citizens' assembly is organised for the purpose of direct decision-making by citizens on a specific local issue/s, the plan should also include activities related to:
- a) the procedure for passing the decision/s or voting (*unless defined by the rules of procedure for a citizen's assembly*) and
 - b) preparation of material needed in case of a secret vote (*extract from the voter list, ballot box, ballots, minutes on the work of the election board/commission, etc.*).
6. Develop an expenditure plan containing an estimate of the financial, human, material and other resources needed for organising a citizens' assembly.

HOLDING A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

7. Ensure the unimpeded course of the citizens' assembly (*establish the rules of operation and manner of moderating the discussion/decision-making, adapt the presentation style of the representatives of the local self-government unit and external experts to the participants in the citizens' assembly, etc.*).
8. Inform the participants about the activities that will be conducted following the citizens' assembly based on their proposals/opinions or the decision passed, and the ways in which they will be notified of the results/impact of the given proposals/opinions or of the decision passed.
9. Collect all relevant information on the citizens' assembly held (*dissemination and collection of attendance sheets and forms for evaluation of the citizens' assembly, as well as keeping minutes or recording the course of the discussion and all proposals and comments expressed by the participants, the conclusions adopted and the decisions passed*).

FINAL PHASE

10. Analyse all proposals and opinions collected or send all proposals and opinions collected to the responsible body in line with existing procedure.
11. Produce a comprehensive report on the participation procedure conducted and on its results and deliver it to the participants in the citizens' assembly (*description of the whole procedure, minutes, explanation of accepted/rejected decisions/opinions/proposals, etc.*).
12. Publish the report on the participation procedure conducted and deliver it to the participants in the citizens' assembly.
13. Perform an evaluation of the whole citizen participation procedure and define the lessons learned.

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ANNEX: Degrees of participation and possible methods of public participation in decision-making

Degree of participation	Description	Possible methods
Information	A one-way process aimed at giving the public timely, comprehensive and objective information in order to facilitate understanding of an issue, options and solutions.	Internet site, open and free access to documents, advertising, information via e-mail, frequently asked questions, information booklet, brochure, pamphlet.
Consultation	A two-way process aimed at obtaining feedback, comments and suggestions from the public on proposed regulations or performed analyses.	Petitions, online consultations, discussions and panels, open plenary sessions or committee sessions, events, conferences, forums, meetings, citizens' assemblies.
Inclusion	A higher degree of a two-way process through which direct cooperation is established with representatives of the public in the decision-making process.	Citizen forums, expert seminars, expert advisory bodies, working group or committee.
Partnership	The highest level of cooperation and joint responsibility and direct decision-making by the included representatives of the public on proposed solutions and options.	Commissions and councils, joint decision-making, strategic partnerships.