



30. January - 30. October 2015

# Project Democratic Ownership and Civic Participation in Europe

Dissemination booklet



**Project: Democratic Ownership and Civil Participation in Europe**

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**Version 1.0**

Šmartno pri Litiji, 2015

# AN INTRODUCTORY WORD FROM THE PROJECT COORDINATOR

In this publication we gathered materials to assist at promoting the participation of citizens in the democratic life of the EU, ranging from local democracy by empowering people to participate fully in EU policies.

Partners have entered into a project DOCPIE with the different experiences, but all with the desire and promise that we will gain new skills and knowledge about civic participation, which will be spread among people. We know that if people are not active at the local level they are not active at European level, too.

Volunteers in association LAZ are very active in the local community and we are perhaps too little aware of the impact of European Union policy and it is also a lack of interest. By participating in projects in town twinning and other transnational projects in the past years, we become to feel the European dimension. Linking genuine contacts with other Europeans, learning about the richness of the diversity of European culture has a positive impact on our view of the EU, as the broader scope of the operation, as well.

How to motivate people to be more involved in decision making processes at EU level is a major challenge. Information about the possibilities and methods of participation are available at every step, but, as shown by project survey, do not touch the people to such an extent to make use of the possibilities of participation. However, any effort to promote the civic participation count. With four design events, which brought together participants from more than 13 countries and with more than 20 events, which were partners implement in their local environments and numerous press releases, we have reached a significant number of citizens who might go to the next European elections, signed the initiative or otherwise actively express their civic right.

*Gabrijela Babič, DOCPIE Project manager; President of the Association LAZ, Slovenia*

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## ABOUT PROJECT

### 'EUROPE FOR CITIZENS' PROGRAMME

Considering the European citizenship as an important element in strengthening and safeguarding the process of European integration, the European Commission continues encouraging the engagement of European citizens in all aspects of the life of their community, thus enabling them to participate in the construction of an ever closer Europe. In this context, the Europe for Citizens Programme adopted for the period 2014-2020 is an important instrument aimed at getting the Union's 500 million inhabitants to play a greater part in the development of the Union. By funding schemes and activities in which citizens can participate, the Programme is promoting Europe's shared history and values, and fostering a sense of ownership for how the Union develops.

The aim of this programme is:

- To contribute to citizens' understanding of the EU, its history and diversity
- To foster European citizenship and to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at EU level
- To raise awareness of remembrance, common history and values
- To encourage democratic participation of citizens at EU level, by developing citizens' understanding of the EU policy making-process and, by promoting opportunities for societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering at EU level

General features of the Europe for Citizens Programme:

1. Equal access
2. Transnationality and local dimension
3. Intercultural dialogue
4. Volunteering - expression of active European citizenship

The Programme is implemented through two Strands and a horizontal Action:

- Strand 1: European remembrance: Raise awareness of remembrance, common history and values and the Union's aim.
- Strand 2: Democratic engagement and civic participation: Encourage democratic and civic participation of citizens at Union level.

Measures in this strand are:

1. Town Twinning
2. Networks of Towns
3. Civil Society Projects

The two strands are complemented by a horizontal action:

- Horizontal Action: Valorisation: Analysis, dissemination and use of project results.

More about: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/europe-for-citizens\\_en](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/europe-for-citizens_en)

## PROJECT DOCPIE - DEMOCRATIC OWNERSHIP AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE

According to recent studies, the European Elections turnout rate has dropped by 9 points in 30 years. A public opinion service of the European Commission (Eurobarometer), released in 2014, showed even more alarming trends - sixty percent of Europeans “tended not to trust the EU” and even more respondent, sixty-seven percent of them, considered that their voice does not count in the EU.

In the recent years European institutions brought to force important measures to engage citizens in the decision making process. On 1 December 2009, the **Treaty of Lisbon** entered into force. It provides the Union with the legal framework and tools necessary to meet future challenges and to respond to citizens’ demands. The treaty was designed to ensure a more democratic and transparent Europe with a strengthened role for the European Parliament, effective and efficient decision-making process with a stronger voice for citizens. New instrument, the European citizens’ initiative, allows one million EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies. Despite the effort of the EU institutions, the latest results of the European Parliament elections indicate, that the mistrust and the gap between the Union and the citizens is growing wider each year. European Union is, paradoxically, at this very moment facing some major issues, such as further development of the political and banking union, economic growth and strengthening the EU role in the world. To address these issues democratically, Union needs its citizens to actively participate in the discussions about the above mentioned projects. Without the voice of its citizens, democratic development of the European Union is not possible.

Spirit of this time is not in favour humanism. Lack of civic bonding among the citizens and towards EU is a growing trend, which has been invigorated by the **economic and financial crisis** and is currently embodied in the **increasing mistrust for EU policies, strategies and actions**. Due to negative effects of the crisis, over 5 million young people are unemployed, social welfare state is on the verge of collapse and traditional value system is endangered. Current data on political trends show a rise of extreme-right movements and marginalization of vulnerable social groups, such as homosexuals and migrants. Since they don’t contribute directly to the economic growth, there are numerous cases where intellectuals and culture professionals are being stigmatized. It has become clear, that **even the core values of the European Union (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human right) are to some extent threatened** by the economic and financial crisis.

Project **DOCPIE - Democratic Ownership and Civic Participation in Europe** has been funded by the European Union programme “Europe for citizens”, which provide support for innovative projects that foster European citizenship and improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at EU level. DOCPIE has brought together **15 organizations from 13 member States in 5 events** and has been aimed to research the current trends and views on EU and its future in diverse target groups, including students and senior citizens, develop guidelines for the creation of ownership of EU identity and citizenship, raise awareness on active citizenship and volunteering and create bridges of cooperation between the participating towns in order to enhance the idea of a common European identity and integration, while remembering our common past. The main goal of the project has been to empower members of the civil society and non-governmental organizations with knowledge and experience to make European union a better place to live.

During the European Union Week 2015, from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of May, the first public DOCPIE event took place in **German town of Dresden**. Representatives of all 13 countries came together at the “**Volunteer academy**” to attend **presentations, workshops and discussions on the role of volunteering and EU initiative “European voluntary service”** for development of active European citizenship. The volunteering opportunities in Germany, Europe and all over the worldwide were presented. Participants were informed about the civic engagement in Europe through voluntary work, internships and traineeships. During the event they had the opportunity to get to know the network with German and other European NGOs that focus on voluntary work and civic engagement. Visit to the city of Dresden provided good opportunity to remember the common European past. During the final month of the 2. World War, the city was completely destroyed by allied bombers as a part of the retaliation attacks against Nazi army. According to the historians, some 25.000 civilians were killed and buried under the ruins of the city buildings.

Presentations, workshops and discussions took place in three other European towns and cities. Next stop of the DOCPIE project was **Greek city Serres**. Between 30<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> of June city hosted activities to foster **regional integration and cooperation**. Participants were familiarized with the EU decision-making, introduced to new ideas of cooperation, exchanged know-how and good practices; felt connected to the other cities and regions of EU and exchanged ideas on how civic participation can transform the face of a city.

**Slovene towns Ljubljana and Šmartno pri Litiji** welcomed international guest on the “**Civil society open university**” event, which took place on 24<sup>th</sup> of September. Over the 4 part event (international conference, workshop, promoting civic participation and gathering public opinion and international evening) the participants were presented opportunities of democratic participation and searching for effective methods and ways to promote citizen involvement in decision-making processes at the level of the European Union.

Historic **city of Verona** provided picturesque background for the last in the series of events. On 9<sup>th</sup> of October city hosted lively discussions (international workshop: **Raising EU identity awareness in 3<sup>rd</sup> age citizens**) on the **importance of European identity in the third period of life**. At last event also a DOCPIE research results were presented.

Participants of the events deepened their knowledge about European Union institutions. They got familiar with the instruments, which enable them to actively engage in the decision

making process on the EU level as well as with the concept of EU citizenship and its derived rights. They also discussed possibilities of cross border and international cooperation among the citizens and institutions from different European Union countries. **Exchange of the ideas, inter-cultural dialogue and mobilization of the groups, that traditionally are far from the centres of power and control were some of the cornerstones of DOCPIE project.** Event organizers took special care to bring together young and elderly citizens, women, ethnic and other minorities, migrants and representatives of the non-governmental organizations, which may not be aware of the possibilities to influence the adoption of the EU strategies and politics.

Publications about the European Union and its policies were available at all events in **Kiosk Europe**. A special “**Europe kids’ corner**” resource desk targeted the youngest audience with information on the general and specific information of the EU’s aim to promote its values and the well-being of its people, as well as common history, cultural and linguistic diversity of the European nations. A series of organized trips to history monuments, museums and art exhibitions shared a different light on common European history and rich diversity of the continent. It is worth mentioning, that bloodbath of the 2. World War inspired French economist and diplomat Jean Monnet to publicly reveal his idea about peaceful coexistence of the nations and is widely recognized as a father of the European Union.

One of the main goals of the project was to **equip people and organization with additional knowledge about the democratic instruments and active participation in the European Union**. This enabled them to help European institutions in preparation and implementation of the policies, strategies and legislation, tailored to the needs of European citizens. Participants benefited on the following levels:

- *extended the knowledge about European Union and its policies*

To actively participate, we need to have a good knowledge about the system, in which people and organizations tend to work. Every event and support action was organized in a way, that expanded the participants knowledge about the EU. As a citizen of the EU, we have many political rights. One of them is active participation in democratic development of the Union. We already mentioned European citizens initiative, but there are other instruments to. European citizens can send a petition to the European Parliament or take part in the variety of consultations in discussions about EU policies and about the future of EU.

- *active citizenship on multiple levels*

Active citizenship is all about connecting people on different levels of society: in your local community, in the town or in the city, in your region or among national states, groups of youth or elderly people... Project activities motivated different target groups to get involved in the decision making process on in their home town and on the EU level.

- *creation of European identity in inclusive and cooperative societies*

Only if we learn from our past, Europeans can build the common and peaceful future of our continent. Event participants had the opportunity to learn about common cultural and historical heritage. Formal and informal meetings are invaluable for strengthening



the existing ties among the people and create some new ones. Such project can generate many positive cultural and economic exchange as well as better cooperation of NGOs from European countries.


Organizers also conducted an **on-line survey** which resulted in an initiative for more **productive and easier citizens access to the European Union decision-making process**.

DOCPIE project ended in October 2015. Conclusions of the activities is summarized and published in a **booklet** you read.

## PARTNER ORGANISATIONS




### P1: Društvo za razvoj podeželja LAZ, Šmartno pri Litiji, Slovenia - lead partner

 Association for rural development LAZ has been active since 2004 and is involved mainly in activities to improve rural life and actively involve and connect rural population of all age groups through varied activities and projects thus promoting active citizenship. Association goal is to improve through rural development the quality of social and economic aspects of life of the habitants of the Jablaniška valley area. Activities of the LAZ NGO are very diverse from development of touristic programs, youth education programs, promotion of the cultural heritage and organization of workshops for rural population in order to raise awareness on different topics (water resource management, ecology, agriculture, handcrafts). The activities are also aimed at different age groups and we are especially encouraging intergenerational transfer of knowledge and cooperation between the seniors and youngsters through

different projects. The membership in organization is increasing and thus the volunteer input of the local population. The organization is trying to address different needs of local people therefore the range of the activities is growing form year to year.

[www.laz.si](http://www.laz.si)

## P2: Asociatia Sportiva Culturala si Turistica - ASCT Turia 1307 Bálványos, Turia, Romania

 ASCT Turia is a non-governmental organization established in order to join forces with the local municipality in their common efforts of fostering local and regional development in fields of common interest such as economy, culture, social, youth, sports, etc. in the area of Turia, RO. The main objectives of organisation are:

- to elaborate, promote and implement programs and projects of economic, social and cultural development in the region (social inclusion, democratic ownership, civic participation, volunteering),
- to improve the local economic potential (in order to drive down youth unemployment),
- to effectively undertake international exchanges of ideas, information and know-how,
- to promote ecologically sound & sustainable agriculture, and biotechnology,
- to preserve natural monuments,
- to create links between citizens from different countries in Europe,
- to encourage political discussion among groups groups that traditionally are far from the centers of power (unemployed, Roma, youth, women).

## P3: Kistarcsa Város Önkormányzata, Kistarcsa, Hungary



Municipality of Kistarcsa strives to provide residents with information that helps them understand and access all city services as well as to promote its facilities to residents and visitors. It maximizes understanding of policies, activities and services by all audience groups.

Since its inception, the Europe for Citizens Programme furthered European understanding, cooperation and active citizenship. It also created and continues to provide a platform for small communities like Kistarcsa to build social, economic and cultural ties that link individuals across thousands of kilometers, and help them embrace their differences and develop tolerance and mutual understanding. Municipality of Kistarcsa is actively seeking opportunities to connect with other communities, in order to establish social, cultural & economic relationships that will celebrate common European citizenship, cultural and linguistic diversity. Municipality of Kistarcsa is officially twinned with P7 - Radomyśl nad Sanem, Poland.

[www.kistarcsa.hu](http://www.kistarcsa.hu)

#### P4: Općina Breznički Hum (Municipality of Breznički Hum), Croatia



The Municipality of Breznicki Hum is a local government unit. It is engaged in local affairs that directly address the needs of local citizens, among others civil society, primary education, improving the natural environment, local tourism and participation of citizens. Municipality is a member of the Prigorje-Zagorje Local Action Group (LAG Prizag) that covers the area of 11 neighboring municipalities with 35.000 inhabitants. The municipality has a well established cooperation with other partners - twinned town Šmartno pri Litiji, Association LAZ and Macedonian EGRI. The Municipality invests great efforts in raising the awareness and knowledge levels of local citizens, associations & children about the need to be involved in civil affairs not just on local level but also on EU level.

[www.breznicki-hum.hr](http://www.breznicki-hum.hr)

#### P5: Polska Fundacja im. Roberta Schumana, Poland

**SCHUMAN.PL** Polish Robert Schuman Foundation (PFRS) is non governmental and non political organization. The Foundation's main aims are to encourage Polish citizens to actively participate, promote opportunities created by the Polish membership in the Community, foster the values of the European Union and to strengthen civil society in Poland. PFRS implements educational and civic programs, focusing on the following issues:

European integration, societal engagement of citizens, promotion of democratic and civic values. The Foundation cooperates with a wide range of institutions within and outside the EU concentrating on promoting political and social initiatives focusing on the development of democracy. In this process, it supports cultural, scientific and educational organizations that actively contribute to the development of closer bonds between Poland, EU institutions and other EU Member States as well as the infrastructure of NGO's active in similar fields of work.

[www.schuman.pl](http://www.schuman.pl)

#### P6: Inštitúcia regionálnych aktivít Novohradu Novohradu, Slovakia



(Institution of regional activities Novohradu)

[www.kalonda.eu](http://www.kalonda.eu)

## P7: Jugend – und Kulturprojekte E.V., Dresden, Germany



Organisation provides a platform for planning and implementing of international projects in the area of youth, citizenship, education & culture. Founded in 2004 it aims to support cultural exchange among European countries and to take part in the social integration of young people and adults, whose competencies regarding culture, knowledge of European history, EU politics & society should be enhanced. With manifold projects organisation is also dedicated to coaching of volunteers, youth workers as well as professionals, in the fields of citizenship, participatory democracy, civic engagement, youth, and culture all over Europe.

Part of organisation's exchange projects is to familiarize participants with Dresden and its history, while raising awareness of remembrance, common history and values of the EU, such as promoting peace & the well-being of its peoples. Results of projects are presented to audiences in form of exhibitions, shows or performances, and are contributing to the cultural life in the city.

[www.jkpev.de](http://www.jkpev.de)

## P8: Opštinska uprava Backa Topola, Backa Topola, Serbia



Partner is a town and municipality in the North Bačka District of Vojvodina, Serbia. The municipality is composed of 23 local communities and has a population of 33,321, while the town of Bačka Topola has 14,573 inhabitants, an ethnically mixed community. A recent community survey revealed that the following were perceived as strong assets of Bačka Topola: availability of recreational facilities; the ease of commute by automobile; the stability and appreciation of home values; the availability of recreational programs; the amount of open space; and the availability and quality of cultural facilities. Municipality is constantly working to improve these assets and make sure that the residents have a good quality of life and enjoy living in Bačka Topola through implementing its smart growth plan. As integral part of the smart growth plan and anticipating Serbia's ascension to the EU, Municipality also seeks to build and further social, economic and cultural ties with communities across the European Union.

[www.btopola.org.rs/sr/opstinska\\_uprava](http://www.btopola.org.rs/sr/opstinska_uprava)

## P9: Omilos Unesco Serron Ellados, Serres, Greece



Club Serres for Unesco is an NGO based in Serres, encompassing the main UNESCO values in promoting non formal education, awareness-raising for social and environmental issues, encouraging active citizenship and social entrepreneurship. It is involved in the promotion of elementary education, nature conservancy and protection of cultural heritage, organization of camps of research and study, production of periodical form with informative documents., translation and/or adoption in the national and local languages of basic texts and documents of UNESCO and United Nations as well as youth exchanges, campaigns on International Days as they are nominated by the General Assembly of Unite Nations and the UNESCO,

awareness-raising activities, promotion of EU identity, organization of seminars, trainings. Basic documents of reference: The statute of “Club Serres for Unesco”, the Chart of United Nations, the Chart of Human Rights, the Statement for the Rights of Child etc.

[www.serresforunesco.org](http://www.serresforunesco.org)

### **P10: Dimos Serron, Municipality of Serres, Greece**



Municipality employs 350 people in five Specialised Divisions having to do with the municipality's technical, financial and management requirements. Its Dept. of Programming, Development, Quality & Efficiency has been responsible for the management of various EU-funded projects, including Structural Funds, & cross-border cooperation programs on topics ranging from technical to cultural, sports, and health. As a member of the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR) it files a biannual report on specific actions undertaken to promote an inclusive, tolerant & non-discriminatory society. Municipality has also established a Volunteering Office which aims at searching, highlighting and promoting the local human capital and cooperation between local organizations, institutes and citizens. Finally, the P10 in cooperation with local actors has developed a Time Bank- a network of exchange of services, knowledge & products among citizens; it supports citizens, promotes volunteering & the ethos of solidarity.

[www.serres.gr](http://www.serres.gr)

### **P11: Veliko Turnovo Municipality, Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria**



According to the Local Self-government and Local Administration Law Veliko Turnovo Municipality is a public body. It is the organization which is responsible for all matters of local importance. The general responsibilities of Municipality are: municipal property, fees and administration; urban development; education; culture; health; social services; public works; environmental protection; protection of cultural, historical and architectural monuments; development of sport and tourism. Veliko Turnovo Municipality has a very good experience in the implementation of different policies and already has proven opportunities and capacity for project elaboration and management. In its structure a “Municipal Development” Directorate is established, whose main role is project development and implementation. In its activities Veliko Turnovo Municipality is guided by an administrative and management team policy toward achieving an effective application of high-quality administrative process.

[www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg](http://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg)

## P12: Comune di Brescia, Italy



The city of Brescia has 193,000 inhabitants and covers a territory of 90 km<sup>2</sup>. The organizational structure of the municipality of Brescia is divided into units of staff, areas, areas with operational coordination, sectors and services in the various aspects involved in the management and development of the city.

The main sector involved in the DOPIE project is the Urban Planning department, together with the Social Services Department. Other departments could be involved. Furthermore, within the DOPIE project, Comune di Brescia cooperates with the University of Brescia (DICATAM department). The university of Brescia has a focus on health and wealth issues. Therefore, the cooperation can be particularly fruitful to develop the specific topic of the event. Università degli Studi di Brescia is in charge of structuring the scientific contents of the event, through a scientific committee.

[www.comune.brescia.it](http://www.comune.brescia.it)

## P13: CRDLS Albania, Tirana, Albania



Organisation's key activities include:

- to promote and organize meetings that deal with the topic of regional and local sustainable development in economic, social, cultural and environmental area, as well as relevant policies,
- to act as a centre for training and sensibilization for interested individuals and groups, within the scope of its activity,
- to establishes relationship with local and foreign peer organization in order to exchange experiences, promote best practices as well as the collection and presentation of case studies of national, regional and local interest,
- to conduct applied and theoretical research, education and consulting activity in the field of regional and local sustainable development,
- to promotes and facilitate research cooperation between Albanian and foreign researchers in the fields of local resources, environmental issues, cultural and territorial impact,
- to assess local development against compliance with European directives and international indicators.

[www.crls.org](http://www.crls.org)

#### P14: Association Civil Centre for Sustainable Development EGRI Kriva Palanka, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia



Organisation was established in 2000 by a group of 15 young and academically educated enthusiasts with a unique objective – to improving the quality of living of the local community.

Objectives and aims:

- support, initiate and implement activities and projects in the sphere of the economic development with in order to improve the living conditions of the local community,
- connect with the regional, cross-border and transnational cooperation, with objective giving support and contribution of the country in its EU-integration processes,
- improving and promotion of the civil sector through education of the human values, with objective improving the living conditions of the local community,
- active inclusion of the young population in the process of democratization of the society and improving of their position in it,
- support, initiate and implement activities and projects in the sphere of sports, culture, and education.

[www.egri.mk](http://www.egri.mk)

#### P15: Budapesti Muszaki es gazdasagtudomanyi egyetem, Budapest, Hungary



Founded in 1782, organisation is one of the oldest leading institutions in higher education and research in Central Europe. Its present activity is based not only on our responsiveness to the needs of a continuously changing world, but also more than 230 years of experience and tradition that provides a guaranteed basis for high-quality education. Organisation holds an international reputation for excellence, attracting students and faculty from all over the world. Its programs are frequented by more than 24,000 students including about 1,100 international students from 70 different countries. As a member of the elite league of the five research universities in Hungary, organisation is committed to differentiated, multilevel, high-standard education, founded on intensive basic training, research, development and innovation, and scientific qualification in all field of sciences.

[www.bme.hu](http://www.bme.hu)

# EVENT CONTRIBUTIONS

## CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN UNION

(Petra Cilenšek, Association for rural development LAZ, Slovenia)

Plato: »The price good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.«

The 28 Member States of the European Union are home to more than 500 million citizens. European citizenship is an upgrade of national citizenship, and not just empty, vague concept. This status is linked to a number of rights and responsibilities. When we think of citizenship we usually consider the relationship between the individual and the state or community. Nationality is not just about rights such as the right to free movement within the EU (free movement of people, goods and services, according to the latest analysis of the Eurobarometer was estimated by almost six out of ten respondents as the most positive result of the EU's )but also a responsibility - to participate in shaping communities, to influence and take action (voting at European elections, voting in referendums, signing a petition / initiative of the issues that we are interested in, etc.). Theorists agree that civic participation is a cornerstone of democracy. If citizens are not interested in what is happening around them, they do not go to the elections, are unresponsive, and passive, and then democracy itself is not even possible. It is of utmost importance to embrace an active role as citizens. Not only at national level but also at the level of the European community, because otherwise we cannot speak of a democratic Europe.

It is very important that we citizens are aware of our rights and duties. The civic participation is strongly linked to the concept of active citizenship. An active citizen is not born but made through, education. Identity of the active European citizen can not be innate, because the European Union, is a formation of the cultural diversity. One of the fundamental values of the European Union is its diversity. Therefore, this identity can only be fostered. Education and information about the citizenship possibilities is one of the most important components of education and training of active citizen. It is important that the individual recognizes the European dimension within the events in the local community, to recognize that Europe is not just Brussels, Europe is himself and Europe is all of us anywhere in the European Union. A good example is a visit to the portal of the European Parliament (Portal on Petitions), where can European citizens address the various petitions to European Parliament.

One of the current petitions is that in which the petitioner, a citizen of Spain, explains that the subway in Bilbao from the outset does not work properly, causing unbearable



noise and vibration in the neighboring houses and on the streets. Residents addressed a number of requests to the leadership of Bilbao subway, but did not receive an answer until the Ombudsman for the Basque country intervened. After two years of litigation, the management finally recognized its responsibility but refused to carry out repairs. City council of Bilbao ordered expert evaluation; the findings (published June 2014) supported the accusations against the leadership of Bilbao subway. The applicant therefore petitions the European Parliament to help the people with their demand for reparations from leadership Bilbao subway.

Children are already taught in school about the opportunities offered by the European Union, on the rights and responsibilities they have as European citizens. Older population requires an insight into the concept of the European citizen through good practices and living examples. According to the latest Eurobarometer survey 69% of respondents would like to know more about their rights. This is a very important foundation for the future, because only educated and well-informed individual is active and can participate and co-create democratic Europe.

Democracy is based on active citizenship. If we want a democratic Europe, we need to be active and possess knowledge! We need to voice out loud our ideas, views and dilemmas and become connected. According to recent surveys 67% of the citizens of the Member States perceive themselves as EU citizens; this is an encouraging indicator for the future. Since the EU are its citizens.

### (Dis) trust in the EU and the impact of civic participation

Confidence in the political context has to do with democracy, its implementation and functioning. Through the observation of the development of the individual and society, through the intertwining of personal development and the development of a citizen, we can see that actions of political institutions are affecting the formation of values such as confidence. When we talk about trust in politics, or trust in political institutions we often think of trust as a support measure for the functioning of these institutions. We talk about satisfaction with the functioning of certain institutions, policies. The definition of trust is a complex concept and can be defined as behavior that is harmless and brings something good. In contrast, the lack of trust is perceived as potentially harmful and intolerable. Undoubtedly, the trust is value determined by the experience.

When reading literature we encounter findings that the trust in institutions, including the EU institutions and the EU itself is influenced by happenings in society, such as social revolutions, attitudes towards the political system and level of prosperity. A significant impact on the trust has the individual's satisfaction with life. The trust at the national level - in government and parliament is of great importance. Confidence is also affected by events on a larger scale (development of common policies, EU cooperation in crisis, and the debate on the European Constitution ...). A significant impact on the relationship of trust also has media. Various scholars agree that the media has one of the strongest impacts of promoting the (dis) trust in institutions.

Elizabeta Kirm in her master's thesis Trust in institutions in EU Member States –time period analysis (Ljubljana, 2008) pointed out that trust is a complex sum of the factors of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy, economic prosperity, informed individual

and his actual interest in developments in the sphere of politics. In doing so, however, she recalls that among the various factors affecting the trust the important are the ones that have relevance to political participation at the national level.

Post-election study of European elections 2014 (Brussels, October 2014) showed that the three most frequent reasons for not voting in the European elections are: lack of trust in politics or dissatisfaction with it in general; respondents are not interested in politics; belief that their vote will not be considered. The results showed that compared with the analysis of elections in 2009, trust in the EU institutions decreased – it has declined in the 15 Member States (especially in countries hit hardest by the economic crisis: Spain, Italy, and Greece). In 2009, an average of 50% of respondents expressed their trust in EU in 2014, this percentage was 43%. For a more detailed consideration among those who responded to trust in EU 55% took part in the elections and 35% did not participate in the elections. However, if you look at the study from the opposite perspective the results showed that 52% of respondents do not trust in the EU. Interesting is also the fact that 54% of respondents are not interested in politics. But this is an average, and it has to be noted that there are major differences in responses between Member States.

Even the latest Euro barometer in spring 2015 shows similar trends. 40% of European citizens trust the EU institutions, which is the highest rate after the year 2011. For comparison, the trust in the national institution is only 31%. The trust in the EU gradually increases -with respect to prior periods of the public opinion measurements, but still remains at a low level, which can greatly affect the very legitimacy of the Union. Distrust is can lead to a crisis of democracy. From the other perspective 46% of EU citizens do not trust in EU (national institutions such as the government and parliament are not trusted by around 62 and 63%).

The European Union with its institutions must continue to strive for greater citizen participation, encouraging their citizens into thinking, education, searching experiences, especially those which are defined in these surveys as individuals who are not interested in politics. The promotion and presence in the media is also very important, especially highlighting good practices of civic participation. Initiative Water is a human right is great example that our vote counts, only it has to be expressed actively.

We must not discard factors such as satisfaction with the performance at the national level, personal satisfaction and well-being of individuals. Therefore it is only right that the EU through its programs and modus operandi creates a stable environment for the functioning of Member States, the prosperity of countries and promotes transparent systems. If the citizens are satisfied with their lives in country of origin, they will be more satisfied with life in the EU. The satisfaction is also related to the trust in the functioning of both the national state and the European Union.

*The European Commission defined active citizenship as participation in civil society, community and/or political life, based on of the mutual respect, non-violence, human rights and democracy*

## GETTING STARTED: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE DECISION-MAKING IN THE EU, THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND ITS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CITIZENS

(Nataša Šip, communication officer at the European Commission Representation in Slovenia)

When I talk to people and organisations in my daily work, this is what I hear: “Brussels is too far away. My voice will not be heard. I’m not qualified enough. The Commission is not democratic, they don’t want to know what people think.” On the other hand, I meet people with great and bold ideas. We regularly receive citizens’ questions and complaints. There are many ways to get involved in all stages. On the ground, the Commission has its Representations working in the 28 capitals (+ 7 regional offices) to facilitate the communication and dialogue with the citizens. So here’s a small advice: don’t be shy, just get started! In order to be more successful, here are a few things you should know and understand about the EU and the European Commission in particular.

### Who takes decisions: ABC of EU institutions

The starting point: The European Union is based on the rule of law. This means that **every action** taken by the EU is founded on **EU treaties** that have been approved voluntarily and democratically by all EU member countries. In other words, EU cannot act if there is no legal base for this in the Treaties. Certain policies are harmonised at the EU level, while others are not, so it’s worthwhile checking policy areas of your interest.

Secondly, we often relate Brussels to the European Commission. But who in fact is “Brussels”?

- the EU’s broad priorities are set by the **European Council**, which brings together **national and EU-level leaders**. It gives the political steer, but has no powers to pass laws. There are 3 main institutions involved in EU legislation:
- the **European Parliament** represents the EU’s citizens and is directly elected by them;
- the **Council of the European Union** represents the **governments** of the individual member countries. The Presidency of the Council is shared by the member states on a rotating basis.
- the **European Commission** represents the interests of the Union as a whole.

The majority of legislative acts, known as *regulations, directives and decisions*, are taken by a qualified majority vote. In principle, the **Commission proposes new laws**, and the **Parliament and Council adopt** them. The Commission and the member countries then implement them, and the Commission ensures that the laws are properly applied and implemented. So, there is in fact a lot of “Brussels” back home, in the capitals.

The role of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION in a nutshell.

The European Commission promotes the interest of the EU as a whole. Specifically, it:

1. **Proposes new laws:** it’s the **only** institution that can table legislative proposals,
2. **Manages EU policies & allocates EU funding** (it proposes and then manages it)

3. **Enforces EU law:** Together with the Court of Justice, ensures that EU law is properly applied in all the member countries.
4. **Represents the EU internationally** (Speaks on behalf of all EU countries in international bodies, in particular in areas of trade policy and humanitarian aid, and negotiates international agreements for the EU).

The Member States have primary responsibility for the correct and timely application of EU Treaties and legislation, and the **Commission monitors the application of Union law**. The Commission may **take action** if a Member State fails to incorporate EU directives into its national law and to report/communicate to the Commission what measures it has taken; or is suspected of breaching Union law. If no solution can be found at an early stage, the Commission can **open formal infringement proceedings** and eventually **refer** the Member State to the **European Court of Justice**.


### What Does This Have To Do With Citizens?

1. **Before proposing legislation** the Commission takes stock of existing laws and conducts an **impact assessment** to evaluate the potential economic, social and environmental consequences of any new initiative. New situations and issues developing in Europe and possible implications for the new legislation are also taken into account. The Commission **must also consult interested parties and other institutions** for their views and seek the opinions of **national parliaments and governments**.

When the Commission starts working on a new policy initiative or revises existing legislation, it usually opens a **public consultation**. Individuals, businesses and other organisations with an interest in or expert knowledge on a given topic can help shape the Commission's draft proposal before it goes to the Council and European Parliament for discussion and adoption. You can participate also on-line. Open public consultations are published at the portal Your Voice in Europe: <http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/>.

For civil society organisations this is the best moment to start. It is much more difficult to influence the process at a later stage. Above all, Commission's proposals can be importantly improved if there

# ABC of the EU institutions




## European Parliament

The only directly-elected EU body. Represents the EU's 500 million inhabitants.  
Plays a key role in electing the President of the European Commission.  
Shares power over EU budget and legislation with Council of the European Union.

### 751 MEPs


#### Seats per country from 2014

21	17	21	13	96	6	11	21	54	74	11	73	6	8	11	6	21	6	26	18	51	21	32	8	13	13	20	73	
BELGIUM	BULGARIA	CZECH REPUBLIC	DENMARK	ESTONIA	IRELAND	GREECE	FRANCE	SPAIN	CROATIA	ITALY	CYPRUS	6	8	11	6	21	6	26	18	51	21	32	8	13	13	20	73	
												LETUONIA	LITHUANIA	LUXEMBOURG	HUNGARY	NETHERLANDS	AUSTRIA	POLAND	PORTUGAL	ROMANIA	SLOVAKIA	SLOVENIA	FINLAND	SWEDEN	UNITED KINGDOM			



## European Commission

The EU's executive body, responsible for proposing and implementing EU laws, monitoring the treaties and the day-to-day running of the EU.



## Council of the European Union

Government ministers who share budgetary and legislative power with European Parliament.

## European Council

Heads of state or government of EU Member States.  
Strategic body that decides the EU's political direction.

Source: European Parliament

is a wide input from interested parties across Europe. It is also useful to approach you governments, MEPs, MPs and regional authorities already at this stage.

At any time, you can also send your comments on how to lighten the administrative load stemming from the EU legislation. You can do it on-line, here: [Lighten the load – Have your say!](#)

2. If you think that a member state does not apply the EU legislation correctly or it has failed to do so, you can **lodge a complaint with the European Commission**. The European Commission can only take up your complaint if it is about a breach of Union law by authorities in an EU Member State.

How can you lodge a complaint? There is standard form available here, together with more practical information on complaints, how they are processed etc.: [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/applying-eu-law/make\\_a\\_complaint\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/applying-eu-law/make_a_complaint_en.htm). You can lodge a complaint in any official EU language.

3. **Citizens' Dialogues** are an informal open forums, held in cities across the EU, to listen to people's views and discuss issues people are concerned about. If you want to talk to a Commissioner, ask him/her a question, this is an open forum for debate.

*Most importantly: don't forget about the European Citizens Initiative, presented in the following contribution.*

## ENSURING MEANINGFULNESS OF THE COOPERATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

(mag. Simon Delakorda, Institute for Electronic Participation)

Citizenship of the European Union provides various forms of democratic influence in the decision-making processes of the European institutions. In addition to participation in elections to the European Parliament<sup>1</sup> can citizens of the Member States initiate a European citizens' initiative<sup>2</sup>, participate in the European Commission's<sup>3</sup> proposals for legislative and policy documents, participate in public debates at national, regional or local level on the current challenges facing the EU (so-called dialogue with citizens)<sup>4</sup> or get in direct contact with the European institutions via email and social networks<sup>5</sup>.

In the light of the latest public opinion surveys in the EU<sup>6</sup>, according to which less than half (42%) of respondents agree with the statement that their voice counts in the European Union the question arises whether diverse processes of democratic participation at EU level actually encourage active participation of citizens in the democratic life?

In this article we will briefly present two examples of democratic participation, in relation to the European themes (the collection of signatures for the European Citizens' Initiative and the project More Europe, More Slovenia). Based on the experience and results, we will highlight aspects of democratic participation, which are important for the citizens' perception as a meaningful and useful.

The aim of the European Citizens' Initiative for universal basic income was to collect at least one million signatures in support of EU citizens from at least seven Member States (in Slovenia at least 6,000 signatures). At EU level have been collected 285,000 signatures in one year. In Slovenia, there were collected 9,255 signatures, almost all through the online collection system. During the collection of signatures, the petitioners were faced with the following problems when communicating with Slovenian citizens: lack of knowledge on the content of the Initiative for a universal basic income, lack of knowledge on European citizens' initiative, mistrust in the manner of collecting signatures and scepticism with regard to the length of the procedure, a sufficient number of collected signatures and the actual taking into account of a proposal by the European Commission. More information on the European citizen initiative on Basic income is available on the website [www.basicincome2013.eu](http://www.basicincome2013.eu).

The purpose of the project More Europe, more Slovenia has been to carry out public consultations with a goal to obtain the views of various target audiences towards the future of the European Union and Slovenia's role in it. To this end, discussions were held at various locations in Slovenia and on the Internet (social networks). In total, public consultations were attended live and online by 2,000 interested individuals and organizations. Proposals of the participants have been collected in the reports of the consultations, to which the relevant government institutions have responded in four cases. The project facilitators faced the following challenges when involving the target public: a small number of

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1 Available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections-2014/sl>

2 Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome?lg=sl>

3 Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index\\_sl.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index_sl.htm)

4 Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-dialogues/index\\_sl.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-dialogues/index_sl.htm)

5 Available at [http://europa.eu/contact/index\\_sl.htm](http://europa.eu/contact/index_sl.htm)

6 Standard Eurobarometer 83 (may 2015). Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

proposals from the public, protest / downside participation of government institutions providing a response and taking in account the results of the project. More information about the project is available on the [www.eu-si.info](http://www.eu-si.info).

Experience with the democratic participation of the people in the framework of the mentioned project shows the importance of well-planned and socially adequate procedures, which are acceptable and friendly for diverse target groups. In addition to relevant content or. issues in connection with quality of life (also at the local level), is very important a clear and comprehensible notion of the actual impact of the proposals, positions and views of interested parties on the final decision. Transparent and inclusive response to public participation must become a natural standard of public administration, political decision-makers and the European institutions. It is also important to recognize that the online tools (online discussions, social networks, video downloads etc.) are merely tools, whose impact is dependent on the confidence of stakeholders in the viability of public involvement. Towards this end the non-governmental organizations can with a constructive approach, expertise and mobilization of people establish a civil society platform for the exchange of views (ie. deliberation) on European issues.

The support of mass media which is providing wider information and publicity is of utter importance. Due to the scope, duration and complexity of procedures for public participation it is important to provide adequate public funding. The cost is relatively small compared to the cost of the adoption and implementation of the poor, illegitimate or harmful decision for public interest.

The current public attitude toward the functioning of the institutions of the European Union is characterized by considerable distrust. The massive and varied use of democratic procedures and tools, therefore, not necessarily strives to greater participation in the democratic life of the European Union. Participation in representative and participatory democracy is in fact built on trust, respect and mutual responsibility between citizens and decision-makers.



## TOOLS OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP – How to be active

Also, the EU and its institutions are aware that citizens must be at the heart of everything that is happening in Europe. EU citizenship is not just an empty concept but a status that enables citizens the rights and opportunities of equal life and work in the community. Citizenship was defined in 1993 by the Maastricht Treaty, which granted all EU citizens a set of rights. Later the citizens' rights were reinforced by the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. In addition to the rights that EU citizens are not discriminated against on grounds of nationality, right to freedom of movement and residence within the EU and other cross-border rights, citizens have the rights and opportunities to be active citizens in the EU. Full participation of EU citizens in the democratic life at all levels is in fact the essence of citizenship of the Union.

More about:

[http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.htm);

[http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index_en.htm)

That citizens can involve, they must be active. Active citizenship means people getting involved in their local communities and democracy at all levels, from towns to cities to nationwide activity.

Active citizenship can be as small as a campaign to clean up your street or as big as educating young people about democratic values, skills and participation. Active citizenship is one of the most important steps towards healthy societies ( Katalin Széger from the Kurt Lewin Foundation about active citizenship).

To facilitate the exercise of their rights, to facilitate the integration and influence policy-making in 7 Standard Eurobarometer 83 (maj 2015): in European Union trust only 40% participants of survey the EU the citizens have at their disposal some tools and mechanisms:

### 1. Elections to the European Parliament

Around 400 million Europeans are entitled to vote and stand for elections to the European Parliament. The European Parliament is the only directly-elected body of the European Union. 751 Members of the European Parliament are representing the citizens.

Elections which are general and direct are held every five years in all 28 Member States of the European Union. The procedures for the election of Members of the European Parliament are governed by European legislation, which lays down rules common to all Member States, as well by specific national rules which differ between Member States. Common rules are laying down the principle of proportional representation and some incompatibility with the mandate as an member of European Parliament. National laws regulate many other important aspects, such as what kind of electoral system is used and exactly how many electoral constituencies. Each Member State has a set number of seats, normally seats are allocated in proportion to the population in each country.

More about: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/20150201PVL00036/Elections>



## 2. The European citizens' initiative

As of 1 April 2012 the citizens' initiative allows 1 million citizens from at least a quarter (7) of the EU Member States to ask the European Commission to propose legislation in any field where the Commission has the power to propose legislation, for example environment, agriculture, transport or public health.

The organisers of a citizens' initiative - a citizens' committee composed of at least 7 EU citizens, resident in at least 7 different Member States - have 1 year to collect the necessary support. A **minimum number of signatories** is required in each of those 7 member states. The members of the citizens' committee must be EU citizens old enough to vote in the European Parliament elections (18 except in Austria, where the voting age is 16).

Citizens' initiatives cannot be run by organisations. However, organisations can promote or support initiatives provided that they do so with full transparency.

Signatures (on paper sheet or online) must be certified by the competent authorities in each Member State. Organisers of successful initiatives will participate in a hearing at the European Parliament. The Commission will have 3 months to examine the initiative and decide how to act on it.

More about: <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative>

## 3. Petitions

Any citizen of the European Union, or resident in a Member State, may, individually or in association with others, submit a petition to the European Parliament on a subject which comes within the European Union's fields of activity and which affects them directly. Any company, organisation or association with its headquarters in the European Union may also exercise this right of petition, which is guaranteed by the Treaty.

A petition may take the form of a complaint or a request and may relate to issues of public or private interest.

The petition may present an individual request, a complaint or observation concerning the application of EU law or an appeal to the European Parliament to adopt a position on a specific matter. Such petitions give the European Parliament the opportunity of calling attention to any infringement of a European citizen's rights by a Member State or local authorities or other institution.

Petition allows Parliament, through its Petitions Committee, to conduct an ongoing reality check on the way in which European legislation is implemented and measure the extent to which the European institutions are responding to your concerns.

You can submit your petition electronically (<http://www.petiport.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/registration/form>) or in „paper“ form. On petitions portal you also can add your online support to open petitions which the members of the Petitions Committee have declared admissible. If you wish to submit a petition in „paper“ form, there is no form to be filled in or standard format to be followed. But however, your petition must:

1. bear your name, nationality and permanent address (in the case of a group petition, it must bear the name, nationality and permanent address of the presenter or, at least, the first signatory);
2. be signed,
3. may include attachments, including copies of any supporting documents you may have.

The petition should be sent to Chairman of the Petitions Committee.

In all cases petitioners are informed at each stage of the petition process, and receive a letter from the chairman informing them of the outcome.

More about: <http://www.petiport.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/main>

#### **4. Debate on the future of Europe**

##### *1. Citizens' Dialogues*

The concept of debate builds on the model of “town hall meetings” or local fora during which politicians listen to and debate with citizens about policies and decisions being taken. Citizens's dialogues are taking part in Member States and are an excellent option to speak free about what is happening in the European Union, how it is tackling key challenges and how you benefit.

At Citizens' Dialogues European Commissioners participated usually together with representatives of the European Parliament and national or local politicians. This gave the Citizens' Dialogues a real European dimension, which is enhanced by the fact that in many Member States, similar debates are now being organised at the national, regional and local level.

The Dialogues are organised as 1.5-2 hour sessions with three discussion topics:

The recovery from the economic crisis, citizens' rights and the future of Europe. Moreover, other issues specific to the country in question and the area of expertise of the Commissioners holding the debate are discussed. In general, the open nature of the debates allow citizens to raise any issue they wished to address.

The series of Dialogues started in September 2012 and is still going on.

More about: [http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-dialogues/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-dialogues/index_en.htm)

##### *2. Debating Europe*

Debating Europe is the platform where you can debate the issues you care about with European politicians and experts.

It is an online debate, where your questions, comments and ideas are taken directly to policy makers and experts for them to respond.

More about: <http://www.debatingeurope.eu/>

##### *3. Agora*

The Citizens' Agora represents a link between the European Parliament and European civil society. It is a unique tool, in both structure and breadth, for discussing with citizens, issues on Parliament's legislative agenda.

The Agora provides room for open debate with a view to building consensus or revealing diverging opinions within civil society on the analysis or the action to be undertaken to address Europe's future challenges.

As the EU develops its next initiatives, European civil society organisations are invited to express their views, bringing forward their analyses and proposals and highlighting the role they are willing to take in future EU actions.

The Agora conclusions, as drafted by the civil society representatives, are submitted to the European and national institutions and widely disseminated by all those involved.

More about: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/20150201PVL00041/Agora>

#### 4. Public consultations

**Your Voice in Europe** is the European Commission's "single access point" to a variety of consultations and feedback opportunities which enable you to express your views on EU policies at different stages throughout the policy lifecycle.

More about: [http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index_en.htm)

- *Direct communications with the EU*

You can always contact EU institutions and staff through e-mails, social networks, „paper“ letters, phone or in person. Representations of the European Commission are in every Member State.

More about:

[http://europa.eu/contact/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/contact/index_en.htm);

[http://ec.europa.eu/represent\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);

- *European Ombudsman*

The European Ombudsman is an independent and impartial body that holds the EU administration to account. The Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the institutions and bodies of the European Union, including the European Commission, the Council of the EU, the European Parliament, the Committee of Regions, the Economic and Social Committee and all of EU agencies. Only the Court of Justice, the Court of First Instance and the Civil Service Tribunal, acting in their judicial role, are beyond his jurisdiction. This covers administrative irregularities, unfairness, discrimination, abuse of power, failure to reply, refusal of information, and unnecessary delay, for example. Any citizen or resident of the EU, or business, association, or other body with a registered office in the EU, can lodge a complaint. You need not be individually affected by the maladministration to complain. Complaint should be submitted:

- within two years of becoming aware of the facts on which your complaint is based;
- after having first contacted the EU institution concerned to try to resolve the matter;
- in writing, including via the online complaint form available on the European Ombudsman's website.

The form can be submitted electronically or printed out and sent by post. It is also available in paper format from the European Ombudsman's office on request. You may submit your complaint in any of the 23 official languages of the EU.

More about: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/start.faces>

## AN EXAMPLE OF THE SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION OF TOOLS FOR PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP ECI - EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

From the 01.04.2012 the European citizens have the opportunity to influence the legislation of the European Union via the European Citizens' Initiative. It is a call to the European Commission to propose legislation in all areas that are the regulating responsibility of EU.

A citizens' initiative must be supported by at least one million EU citizens from at least seven of the 28 Member States. It can be supported by all EU citizens, who are old enough to vote in the European Parliament. For each of the Member States, a predetermined number of signatures must be gathered. In Slovenia, it is necessary to collect at least 6000 signatures in order to reach the quota of the country.

So far there have been three successful European Citizens' Initiatives. During the first successful European Citizens' Initiative Water and sanitation is a human right! Water is a public good, not a commodity, 1,884,790 signatures were collected (at the time of submission 12/20/2013: 1659.543 signatures). With the petition European citizens are calling on the European Commission to propose legislation that will enforce the human right for water and sanitation arrangements, as recognized by the United Nations, and will promote the provision of water and sanitation arrangements and basic public services for all. In the framework of the initiative a timetable was set for the assessment of the drinking water Drinking Water Directive.

The second successful European Citizens' Initiative named One of us, at the time of submission 02/28/2014 collected 1,721,626 signatures. It addresses juridical protection of the dignity, the right to life and of the integrity of every human being from conception in the areas of EU competence in which such protection is of particular importance.

The last successful European citizens' initiative until this date has been filed on 03/03/2015. The initiative is entitled Stop vivisection. The initiative, under which 1173.130 European citizens are signed, is proposing a European legal framework aimed at phasing out animal experiments.

More on the initiatives:

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat\\_general/followup\\_actions/citizens\\_initiative\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/followup_actions/citizens_initiative_en.htm)

## INITIATIVE CITY ASSEMBLY - active citizenship at a local level (good practice)

An initiative of the City Assembly was organized in the spirit of mass protests, when citizens of Maribor (Maribor is the second largest Slovenian city) expressed their anger and dissatisfaction with local authorities on the protests in 2012. The assembly promoted political and non-partisan self-organizing city quarters and urban communities. As a step forward after the so-called »Maribor uprisings» and a tool for a more active participation or incitement to participation in management of the Community the idea of citizens' assemblies has been presented to citizens. In 2013 were formed in Maribor the first local assembly's and urban communities, which were moderated and conducted in a spirit of

dialogue. Each person has the same time for discussion; debate takes place in the direction of the joint decisions which are reached by a consensus. Any proposal by a member is taken into account and it is expected that the proposing member will take responsibility for the realization of the idea, which was adopted consensually. The proposing member can be, joined by those who are committed to the realization of the proposal. Assemblies are a reflection of active citizens which want to participate and shape policy and life in the local community. To this date the assemblies are including... citizens of Maribor and are held at rural and urban communities. In this manner the citizens actively affect policy making and life in the Municipality of Maribor.

One of the key elements of the assemblies is decision making by consensus. As they wrote: Usually big public discussions do not lead to results, therefore they must be carefully structured in order that common decisions of the city district's and local community can be made. Resolutions and decisions are agreed upon by simple means - by show of hands, by vote, by the domination of the majority over the minority. Achievement of consensus is the most difficult and most important task of the assemblies! Consensus is a process by which we make decisions, in which decisions must be taken unanimously, ie so that no one has unbridgeable impediments, and no one is not contrary to the decision. The search for consensus requires from each participant to develop and strengthen the argument and avoid the repetition. Moderators give the most attention precisely to the issue of reaching a consensus.

On the basis of the consensual resolutions ways to achieve common goals are being searched for. Only thus can the community actively influence the decision-making and the development of the city, the state of the world, now and in the future.

### Collective agreement

To be able to hear and be heard, the debate must take place in an appropriate environment, be properly moderated and all of participants must be co-responsible for the assembly.

The best policy is that at the first assembly the members reach collective agreement on rolls to be followed:

1. Only one speaker.
2. With a show of hands we express our intention to speak.
3. Moderator passes the word.
4. We are concise.
5. Priority is given to those who had not yet spoken.
6. We do not discriminate.
7. We perform only in role of citizens.
8. There are no monologues, not dialogues, but a discussion.
9. We stick to the agenda.

More: <http://www.imz-maribor.org/>

Appendix: Booklet - Building a better city!

# GATHERING PUBLIC OPINION

## GATHERING PUBLIC OPINION - Procedure and key findings

The survey was aimed to define the level of awareness on European identity and understanding of the EU citizenship rights. The focus was on specifying reasons for participating and not participating in the European elections, European Citizens Initiative, Citizens' Dialogues as well using other means to influence political decision-making in the EU. Finally, the survey was identified actions, topics and conditions that would strengthen the sense of European identity and to encourage people to be more active citizens of the European Union.

Questionnaire was developed by Društvo LAZ in collaboration with the Institute for Electronic Participation, in order to gather the opinion of the citizens in each country, on topics such as EU identity, participation to elections and EU citizenship. The survey was carried out with the help of general invitations via e-mails, websites and social media. Non-probability sample was used for participating respondents, therefore drawing conclusions about the population based on a sample is not possible.

The survey was drafted in first two months of the project, while all partners had the opportunity to review and amend it in order to develop a final version.

At partner meeting during the event in Dresden, we thoroughly reviewed the content of the survey and discuss about specific issues in the survey. Familiarization with the all kind of possibilities of public participation through questioner was a great opportunity for the partners to learn more about European dialogue and European citizens' initiative etc.

The questionnaire was made in English and then each partner translates it in to the national languages in order to facilitate citizen access. It was distributed through online survey tools ([1ka.si](http://1ka.si)) to the project target groups.

The answers were collected by all project partners. As a tool for collecting answers we used FB, official partners' websites, official project DOCPiE website and other web portals. We also used emails and send questioners links directly to our contacts. Together we collect 1000 solved questioners in 13 EU and non-EU member states.

Opinions and suggestions collected from survey will greatly help non-governmental organizations and local municipalities within the project DOCPiE.

### Key Finding summarise:

The two most important reasons why survey respondents (citizens from Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Germany, Romania and Slovenia) participated in elections are: the belief that the participation in election is citizens' moral duty and the belief that the representative democracy on the EU level is important.

12 % of survey respondents pointed out as the most important reason for participation in the European elections, that the European Parliament has previously adopted

decisions which have improved their quality of life. Only 4 % of them indicated that they had positive experiences with the work of European deputies. The vast majority of survey respondents have never signed European citizens' initiative. The most common reasons for that are lacks of knowledge on European citizens' initiative (53 %) and inadequate information about campaigns or opportunities for submission of support signatures (25 %).

The vast majority of survey respondents have never attended Citizens' Dialogues. The most common reason for that is ignorance or lack of information about the debates on the future of Europe (47 %).

## SURVEY ON EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND THE EU CITIZENSHIP

### I. The sense of european identity

#### 1. Do you feel European?

- Yes
- No

#### 2. In your opinion, which citizen, human and consumer rights of the EU are contributing to your European identity?

(more information about EU rights <http://europa.eu/citizens-2013/sl/about/your-eu-rights>)

- the right to be protected by the diplomatic and consular authorities of any other EU country
- getting healthcare abroad in other EU member state
- the right to vote for and stand as a candidate in European Parliament and municipal elections
- cross-border consumer rights (online shopping, rail travel or flights passenger rights, cheaper mobile phone calls etc.)
- the right to complain to the European Ombudsman
- the right to move and reside freely within the EU and not to be discriminated against on grounds of your nationality
- the right to ask the Commission to propose new legislation (European citizens' initiative)
- studying abroad, volunteering or traineeship in other EU member state
- the right to contact and receive a response from any EU institution in one of the EU's official languages
- paying social security contributions in one country at a time, even if you are working in more than one
- the right to petition to raise concerns or complaints with the European Parliament
- the right to access European Parliament, European Commission and Council documents

**3. In your opinion, among the following issues, which are those that would strengthen your sense of European identity?**

- a European ID card and passport in addition to national ID cards and passports
- enhanced sense of security and peace (common EU external borders control, European army, common measures to fight against terrorism)
- more political rights (a President of the EU directly elected by the citizens of all Member States, EU referendums about key EU issues etc.)
- European emergency response service to fight international natural disasters
- creating EU Olympics Team
- participating in national / local debates about the future of Europe
- stronger and more integrated European social welfare system (healthcare, social care, pensions, common actions to fight unemployment) and common market (banking union, energy union).
- introducing the EU week of European culture
- stronger political and diplomatic influence of the EU in the rest of the world (EU embassies in non- EU countries)
- a European civic education course for children of primary school age
- consistent translation of EU institutions web sites into all EU's official languages
- more cost efficient EU administration and institutions (e.g. European parliament sessions are now taking place both in Brussels and Strasbourg <http://singleseat.eu/>)

**II. Participation in the democratic life of the European Union/ European Citizenship**

**4. Are you interested in European politics?**

Yes

No

**5. Have you ever voted in the European elections?**

(additional information <http://www.elections2014.eu/en>)

Yes

No

**6.1 What are the main reasons why you decided to vote in the European elections (max. 3 answers)**

- I believe that voting is my duty as citizen
- European parliament adopted decisions in the past that improved my well-being
- I have trust in political parties and/or political programs



- I believe that voting directly influences decision-making in the European union
- I have positive experience with the work of members / representatives of the European parliament
- I have positive experience with the work of members / representatives of the European parliament
- I am well informed about the European parliament

**6.2 What are the main reasons why you decided not to vote in the European elections**  
(max. 3 answers)

- I believe my vote has no consequences and/or my vote does not change anything
- I do not have trust in political parties and/or political programs
- I am too busy (have no time) and/or away from home
- I feel I am not sufficiently informed about the European parliament and/or did not know that European elections took place
- I believe that the European Parliament does not have adequate power as an institution
- I am against the European Union
- There are no appropriate political candidates or parties
- I think that the European Parliament does not sufficiently deal with the problems that concern me
- I never vote in elections

**7. You feel you are a citizen of the European Union?**

Yes  
No

**8. Have you signed European Citizens Initiative?**

(additional information <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome>)

Yes  
No

**9.1 What are the main reasons why you decided to sign European citizens initiative?**  
(max. 3 answers)

- European citizens' initiative addressed a problem of my concern
- I believe that providing statement of support for European citizens initiative influences decision-making in the European Union
- providing a statement of support for European citizens initiative is easy
- I believe that participatory democracy at the EU level is important
- I was informed about European citizens initiative and/or persuaded by citizens initiative campaign
- I was a member of citizens' committee that launched an initiative

- European citizens' initiative campaign was transparent using the internet and social media

**9.2 What are the main reasons why you decided not to sign European Citizens Initiative?**  
(max. 3 answers)

- I do not know about a European Citizens Initiative
- No European citizens' initiative addressed the problems that concern me
- personal data are required in order to provide statement of support for European citizens' initiative
- I am against the European Union
- I am not sufficiently informed about on-going European citizens initiatives and how to sign them
- I had problems with signing European citizens' initiative on-line
- Signing European citizens' initiative has no consequences and/or my support does not change anything
- European citizens' initiative is too complicated and excessively long procedure
- I never sign initiatives and/or petitions

**10. Have you attended public discussions concerning key challenges of the European Union?**  
(additional information about Citizens' Dialogues [http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-dialogues/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-dialogues/index_en.htm))

Yes

No

**11.1 What are the main reasons why you decided to attend Citizens' Dialogues?**  
(max. 3 answers)

- I was informed about and/or personally invited to participate in the Citizens' Dialogue
- European Commissioner and/or member of the European Parliament from my country attended Citizens' Dialogue
- Citizens' Dialogue took place in my town and/ or my country
- Citizens' Dialogue addressed a problem of my concern
- I am aware of concrete situation when Citizens' Dialogue influenced decision-making at the EU level
- I believe that active citizenship is important
- I was sufficiently informed about the topic in order to provide my opinion during Citizens' Dialogue
- I believe that participatory democracy at the EU level is important

## 11.2 What are the main reasons why you decided not to attend Citizens' Dialogues?

(max. 3 answers)

- I do not know about Citizens' Dialogues
- topics addressed by Citizens' Dialogues are not interesting to me and/or are too complicated
- I am too busy (have no time) and/or away from home in order to attend Citizens' Dialogue
- Citizens' Dialogues are not organized in my town and/or country
- representatives from EU institutions attending Citizens' Dialogues are boring and/or uninteresting
- I believe my opinion about the European Union has no consequences and/or does not change anything
- I am against the European Union
- I do not take part in public discussions in general
- Citizens' Dialogues should be organized in a different format (citizens as speakers and EU institutions representatives as listeners)

## 12. Have you ever used the following actions in order to influence political decision-making in the EU?

- submitted a petition to the European Parliament (1)
- took part in European Commission's public consultations (2)
- made a complaint to the European Ombudsman (3)
- communicated with EU institutions, bodies and agencies via website, e-mail or social media (4)

## 13. In your opinion, among the following actions, which are those that would encourage citizens in your country to be more active in democratic life of the European Union?

- more personal contacts with representatives of the EU institutions and/or members of the European parliament at the local level
- better media reporting on EU topics (more information about citizens views and concerns)
- introducing EU wide referendums concerning key EU issues
- accountable, cost-efficient and more transparent operation of the EU institutions
- stronger non-governmental organisations at the local and/or national level that are advocating for citizens/public interest in the EU

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Additional information:

(1) <http://www.petiport.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/main>

(2) [http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index_en.htm)

(3) <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/home.faces>

(4) [http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/index_en.htm)

- transparent and verifiable procedures of appointing holders of political and public functions within EU institutions
- consistent translation of EU institutions web sites in EU's official languages
- strengthening active citizens skills through primary and secondary school education
- reimbursing travel costs for EU citizens visiting the European Institutions
- more local level cooperation among citizens and Information office of the European Parliament and/or Representation of the European Commission in the country

### III. Demographic questions

#### 14. Gender:

- Female
- Male

#### 15. I am citizen of:

- a) Republic of Slovenia
- b) other (please fill in your text)

#### 16. My nationality is:

- a) Slovene
- b) other (please fill in your text)

#### 17. Are you a volunteer active in non-governmental organisation (charity, association etc.)?

- Yes
- No

#### 18. In which age group do you belong?

- up to 25 years of age
- 26 - 40 years of age
- 41 - 65 years of age
- 66 year age or more

# APPENDIX

## BUILDING A BETTER CITY!

### Self-organized districts and local communities

*(Initiative for citywide assembly)*

#### WHO WE ARE:

We are a group whose aim it is to promote non-partisan political self-organization at the city district level in the Municipality of Maribor. We are convinced that the civil revolt and various actions of civil disobedience in Slovenia must be followed by new, creative and far-reaching steps towards a kind of development that will empower us to effect change in our streets, districts, local communities, cities, the country and, finally, the world.

The People should play the primary role in shaping and influencing development policies in our cities and nationwide, rather than leaving them in the hands of city councillors and parliamentarians. We are the ones who should be representing our common interests. However, since politicians obviously understand their role in society quite differently, it falls to us to put them in their place and present to them our positions and demands, and in doing so take over the responsibility for the functioning of our communities, the municipality and the entire country.

We believe that the solution lies in self-organizing, debate, education and sharing information. This will enable us to critically, directly and creatively respond to the degeneration of our political and social system.

We have to regain the co-determination and co-management that was taken away from us at the local, municipal as well as national level. We can achieve this by exerting pressure on the ruling structures in various ways - but most effectively through direct democracy.

#### MAIN PRIORITIES:

To never again allow the usurpation of the people's mandate and to prevent those in power from committing unconscionable acts: the elimination of the commons, and with it the destruction of our lives, our environment and the legacy of past generations. In order to achieve that, we need to set up self-organized districts and local communities in the Municipality of Maribor.

By taking this step, we will create a public venue for people to meet, debate, inform each other and self-organize in order to fight all sources of oppression. By creating new forms of cooperation, we wish to build trust among people, which will enable us to jointly tackle local, national and global challenges.

Because mass debates are usually not very productive, popular assemblies must be carefully moderated so that district and local communities can effectively reach CONSENSUS and make inclusive decisions.

Reaching CONSENSUS will be the greatest challenge at the assemblies. Decisions will not be reached in an easy way, e.g. voting by acclamation, show of hands or the majority overruling the minority (as is done in city councils and in Parliament). The goal of reaching consensus will require that the participants do not repeat themselves but instead build on

and contribute to what has already been said.

The moderators, in a bid to reach consensus, should take special care to structure the debates in a way that will lead to consensus decisions.

Once decisions have been made, ways must be found to implement them. This is the most effective way in which the communities can influence and co-determine the development of their city, state and, finally, the world.

### GENERAL GOALS:

- 1 By means of **active political engagement**, we aim to put a stop to systemic bribery, cronyism and nepotism, as well as end the old ways of political decision-making that led to this predicament.
- 2 **Committing to non-partisan, grassroots politics**, i.e. bottom-up politics, which means co-determining and co-managing urban development policies as well as preparing the community for future direct political participation and co-management.
- 3 **To monitor and call attention to** the problem of corruption and abuse by those in power. To find real-life solutions by putting pressure on those responsible for addressing the needs of a community, with special attention to the most vulnerable members of society.
- 4 To **change the system** of political decision-making. This requires an active and informed community which will formulate its own policies and proposals, publicly champion them, demand their implementation and itself take part in their implementation.
- 5 **To create a broad people's movement** that will enable us to achieve our common goal: creating a new social reality and changing the rules of the game so that government will serve the people and not the other way around. This probably means following the principles of self-management.
- 6 **To fuse the people's struggles** at home and abroad into one struggle against the corrupt system in Slovenia and Europe. We realize that this is our only chance to create a different system, one in which people will be able to live a dignified existence.

### SPECIFIC GOALS:

- 1 For residents (counting also the undocumented ones) of the Municipality of Maribor, the easiest option is to be active and participate at the local level through various forms of self-organization. Because of the close contacts we maintain with our local communities, we have developed a good understanding of our social fabric and political situation. Therefore, we must have more say in shaping policies on the regional and national level.
- 2 We must first recognize the pressure that is being exerted on people by either the authorities or capital in their own neighbourhoods, and then we must take steps to remedy these injustices. When necessary, we have to respond to these injustices through civil disobedience, as we must be willing to take action against those who seek to suppress us.
- 3 We must be quick to identify those who abuse their positions of power, expose them, and, if the situation warrants it, bring them to legal justice.
- 4 We must be quick to recognize any destructive or repressive action that stands in the way of our common. We must spread the word about such injustices and fight against them.

5 We must promote the message that the local community is the entity that first recognizes local specific problems, prioritizes the issues that need solving and sets the guidelines for future action. Waiting for the municipal or national authorities to come in and solve such problems has so far turned out to be ineffective, as we have waited in vain for years for the authorities to respond to the needs of the people.

6 To achieve all this, we must be vigilant and keep tabs on the actions, policies, projects, plans and programs in our own local communities as well as nationwide. We have to actively respond to these events. We need to make sure that all beneficial projects are done properly as well as stop any harmful projects or plans. If necessary, we must physically stop the implementation of the latter.

7 Guidelines for future action need to be distilled from all the political activity that takes place in a community. People need to identify with these guidelines and be ready to put them into practice, e.g. co-management as a pathway to the final goal of self-management.

## PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

*The assemblies must be held at least once a month:*

- They are held at the same location and the same time frame - at 5 PM in the winter and 7 PM in the summer.
- Free-of-charge venues intended for public use must be located in each separate city district, and free use throughout the entire year must be negotiated.
- Venue structure should allow us to set up chairs in a circular configuration (as is customary for such forms of meetings or assemblies), and should provide adequate technical equipment (such as video projector, sound system and so forth), so the assemblies could run smoothly and without interruptions.
- All the participants of the assemblies take part in informing their neighbours about the assemblies in their city district.

*Each assembly is coordinated by three moderators:*

- To be able to moderate effectively, the moderators are trained. They coordinate the assemblies in accordance with the agreed upon rules, which are based on the principles of mutual respect of all participants.
- Moderators coordinate the assemblies along the lines of chosen agenda points and try to merge discussion into decisions reached by consensus. The moderators do not interfere with the arguments of participants. They merely facilitate a fruitful flow of debate. If moderators are perceived to have failed at this task, the participants can replace them at any point.
- Moderators continuously rotate in facilitating varied tasks (coordinating assemblies, taking notes, coordinating with other district assemblies, publishing material on the internet). Moderators MAY exchange from one assembly to another, but they ARE REQUIRED to exchange at least once a year.
- Moderators encourage participants to join in and guide structured debates, based on their fundamental principles. They also serve as conveyors of information to the wider public, especially when an assembly decides on public intervention, mobilisation or action.

- If necessary, moderators take extra effort to inform citizens about time and location of an assembly. They coordinate the distribution of tasks when assembly's decisions are to carry out specific actions.
- Moderators organize additional forms of education, should the assembly participants indicate desire for it. They invite experts and other people active in the fields, which assemblies are discussing.
- If assemblies detect any wrongdoings or non-transparencies in activities of public institutions, assemblies should try to call the responsible public servants to answer. They also then take active part in problem solving.

#### *Fundamental principles for assembly participants:*

- If the agreed upon principles are not respected, assemblies cannot be considered a legitimate form of decision making.
- Any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, age, gender, religion etc. cannot be allowed, whatever the circumstance! The moderators, as well as other participants, are expected to keep the debate respectful and inclusive. If a person repeatedly violates this rule, they have to be excluded from the assembly. Everyone must strive for a tolerant, democratic and constructive environment, otherwise intellectual fatigue will set in among the participants.
- Assemblies should strive to encompass as wide range of population as possible, regarding gender, age, occupation and similar. It is of great importance to repeat as often as possible that assemblies are based on inclusion and reject all discrimination.
- There is no room for personal or particular interests at the assemblies. It is the way the current governing structures operate and we must end this logic. The main goal of the assemblies is the opposite: finding common interests in society - at the district, city or national level.
- Moderators ensure that each participant is given a fair amount of discussion time. They also make sure debate is heading towards reaching conclusions, based on mutual agreement of participants or consensus. Assemblies must not evolve into a debate among just few participants.
- Assemblies do not operate along the usual political party principles (voting and decision making principles by raising hands). Instead they strive to reach all decisions by consensus, by responding to the concerns raised by every active participant. That way the participants are able to reach decisions that encompass common interest. To achieve this they must be willing to take as much time as necessary for the majority to agree and the minority not to have any insurmountable disagreement upon the matter.
- Initiatives and activities in the community should be encouraged: civic initiatives, proposals, public letters, roundtable discussions etc., including active response to national and EU directives.

#### *Proposals of the assembly participants:*

Every proposal is noted, furthermore, it is expected that the person proposing certain action will take up at least part of the responsibility to see it come to action, should it achieve consensual support. If required, every participant supporting this proposal joins in the effort to carry it out.



*Meetings and exchange of information among the moderators at the city level:*

- Once a month all moderators meet and inform each other about activities going on in different district assemblies.
- Moderators and participants of all assemblies get together once a year.
- There is mutual support in activities between participants of various district assemblies, the same is expected for the city assembly.

## HOW TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS:

- by creating political pressure (public letters, petitions, demonstrations, manifestos, public discussions);
- by creating concrete proposals for change (legal initiatives, referendum initiatives, criminal indictments);
- through various actions of solidarity;
- through continuous cooperation and support between district assemblies in attempt to reach common goals;
- by creating new ways of distributing information, communicating political and other issues;
- by creating new ways of expressing and conveying positions and policies, agreed upon at the assemblies;
- by various forms of civil disobedience, such as road blocks, occupying squares and public buildings, visiting public servants at home, erecting signs, distributing flyers and other similar actions.

## HAND SIGNALS:

In attempt to keep debates with many participants running smoothly, and without disrupting the participant currently speaking, we use hand signals.

### **Raised hand:**

*Raised hand is a universal gesture, signifying a desire to speak. Moderator will notice the raised hand and give the word.*



### Technical issue:

Forming one's hands in the shape of the letter T means that the person has a technical suggestion. Examples of such would be: »The issue in discussion is not on the agenda today.« or »Could we turn up the lights?« or similar.



### Waving up and down:

Waving one's hands up signifies that the speaker should speak louder. Waving one's hands downwards means that the speaker should slow down or speak more quietly.



### Spinning hands:

Spinning hands forward signifies that the speaker is taking too long to get the point across or is speaking too long. They should hurry up.



### Lifting and shaking:

Lifting and shaking hands signifies a silent applause. It has the same meaning as clapping, except this way the speaker is not interrupted.



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