Public Participation in the Development Process
Obtaining insight in European experiences

Introduction
Robert Chambers, one of the icons of the development era, stated:
“\textit{In the previous decades, it were the professionals who had the answers... poor and local people had the problem, and much of the problem was to be solved by education and the transfer of technology. Increasingly, that ideology has been questioned and undermined. The balance has shifted. Development imposed from the top down was often not sustained. More and more we have been recognised as much of the problem, and their participation as the key to sustainability and many of the solutions}.”

Currently, public or citizen participation is the core focus of many European democracies. Embedded in participation is the belief that elections are not the only occasion that enables people to influence their government. In general, there is a shift from government to governance, which has an impact on the legal and organisational framework of government organisations. Citizen participation is not only regarded as essential factor for success in developing and sustaining policy implementation, but more and more European governments turn towards their citizens to take over public service delivery in times of economic recession. The examples of citizen participation can therefore be found in numerous policy areas, for example: in the social domain, in maintaining public spaces (play grounds), in managing public facilities (such as swimming pools or community centres) but even in providing health or elderly care. Governments turn more and more towards their citizens for delivering certain public services.

This EUKN Policy Lab in Cyprus, focuses predominantly on the role of public participation in spatial planning and urban development. The core focal point lies on the way public participation is institutionalised and embedded in legal frameworks. This is of great importance as the legislative framework formulates conditions for local government to establish mechanisms and structures for public and community participation. The manner in which participation is institutionalised depends on the legal context of a country. For example; the UK does not have a written constitution and thus has few formal obstacles to embed participatory processes. It has been able to use national legislation to promote participation at local level. On the other hand, in Germany, the constitution does not allow the use of participatory methods on the federal level. For example, it is not allowed to hold a referendum on a contested issue. In the Länder, however, regulations have been adopted which make the use of participation much easier than before.
In addition, it is also important to note that in many countries ICT and social media play more and more an important role in structuring participatory processes. This is sometimes a challenge in relation to legal frameworks as, much of the legal framework for citizen participation predates the rise of social media and other online technologies. In fact, most of the laws governing public engagement at the local, state, and federal levels are several decades old, and do not reflect recent innovations. This has created some confusion about what legal public engagement is supposed to look like.

The aim of the Policy Lab in Cyprus is to explore how participatory planning processes can be made more efficient and especially more effective. This factsheet provides a broader overview of the way public participation is organised in different countries. Firstly, it outlines the notion of public participation in general, before going more in-depth into the way participation processes are organised in different EU countries. Different case studies, tools and relevant research studies on public participation in the development process are included.

**What is public participation?**

Participation can be viewed as a continuum of interaction between government and the public, ranging from informing and listening at one end, to implementing jointly agreed solutions at the other; and in between there is dialogue, debate and analysis. Public participation can be described as a deliberative process by which interested or affected citizens, civil society organisations, and government actors are involved in policy-making before a political decision is taken. The European Institute for Public Participation argues that a core component of genuine participation is the possibility for involved actors/stakeholders to change their mind, which enables people to come to a shared understanding of issues and solutions instead of just exchanging views.

**Different levels of participation**

Public participation knows different levels, one of the most famous models for public participation is ‘the ladder of Arnstein’, which ranges from non-participation to citizen control, whereby power and responsibility is delegated to citizens.

International documents and country specific regulation recognize the following levels of participation: (1) access to information, (2) consultation and (3) active engagement through dialogue and partnership. The following is a summary of how these levels are described in different documents.
(1) Access to information is the first, basic and important right which is underlying the whole process of participation. Whilst it means that the government informs the public about its plans and the types of documents it wants to adopt at the beginning of the process, it also highlights the right of the public to have access to all information (e.g., drafts, comments and reasoning) throughout the process. The access to information is regulated in specific laws. While at this level there is no need for intensive interaction between the government and the public, the government should not apply measures which would prevent the public from receiving the information crucial for the process.

(2) Consultation is a form of participation where the government invites the public to provide its opinion, comments, views and feedback on a specific document. Whilst the issues on which the public is consulted are defined by the government, this process should also allow for the public to express opinion on other issues contained in the draft. Consultation can be organized with a broader group of participants from the public. It is a reactive way of participation – the public becomes involved because the government requests this. However, this is not to say that the public cannot request to be consulted. Indeed, citizens can pro-actively engage and remind the governmental bodies about the need to be asked to comment on laws which will affect them.

(3) Active involvement (partnership) means collaboration and jointly undertaken responsibilities at all stages of the decision-making process (agenda setting, issue identification, drafting, decision and implementation). It is the highest form of participation; it may be described as a situation where the representatives of the public share a seat at the table with the government representatives. The initiative can come from both the sides. Whilst there should be an agreement about the common goals of the process, those involved from the public should be able to retain their independence, and to advocate and campaign for the solutions which they want to see adopted.

Added value of public participation
- Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

http://www.iap2.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=4
**Challenges of public participation**

Participatory planning in itself is not a golden recipe for success. There are a number of challenges that have to be taken into account. Some of them are listed below:

- Participatory practices can be costly in time and money and may be perceived as inefficient
- There is a knowledge gap to be bridged between citizens and government officials in complex decision-making processes (especially when using specific technical applications)
- Participatory arrangements are sometimes criticised as lacking representativeness by disproportionately involving the wealthy, well-educated citizens
- There is a culture gap between government officials and citizens and public officials have sometimes little experience in organising an effective participatory approach
- The way governments organisations function are not always aligned to participatory processes. For example, formal decision-making procedures are often lengthy in nature, which does not correspond to the expectations of citizens involved, who expect quick decisions and results.

**EU policies and projects in the field of cooperative development**

Perhaps the first and most notable document internationally is the Aarhus Convention, which requires that the parties of the Convention guarantee rights of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. The Convention sets out minimum requirements for public participation in various categories of Environmental decision-making, and also envisions the development of compliance mechanism to ensure that the parties implement its provisions. The rules and regulations became active in 2001.

The participatory approach of making policies and laws on level of EU and its member states is enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty. Specifically, article 10 prescribes that: “Every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. Decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen.” Further, article 11 provides that:

1. “The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.
2. The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with Representative associations and civil society.
3. The European Commission shall carry out broad consultations with parties concerned in order to ensure that the Union’s actions are coherent and transparent.
4. Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.”
Even before this Treaty was adopted, the European Commission (EC) launched action to improve participation in policy and law making process on EU level. In 2001, it developed the White Paper on European Governance which, among others, aimed to reinforce the culture of consultation and dialogue on EU level and thus increase the legitimacy of the decisions. In efforts to promote the dialogue with civil society as undertaken by the Lisbon Treaty and following upon the EC Principles and Minimum standards, in 2009 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the perspectives of Developing Civil Dialogue under the Treaty of Lisbon.

An active Dialogue has also been used to increase the trust of the European citizens in the European Union. [www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com)

The EC principles put it forward in the following way: “The quality of EU policy depends on ensuring wide participation throughout the policy chain – from conception to implementation”. Since there are different stages in of law-making processes the intensity and form of participation will vary depending on the stage of the process. International documents and country specific regulation recognize the following levels of participation: (1) access to information, (2) consultation and (3) active engagement through dialogue and partnership. It is important to recognize these different stages and levels of participation when aiming to regulate participation or to design models. The nature of the different levels and the relationship which arises from them desires consideration of compatible models specific to that level and relationships so to ensure effective participation.

**EU Presidencies**

*Belgium EU Presidency Multi-Level Governance*

In cooperation with the Belgian Presidency, EUKN has published a book publication based on the outcomes of the “Multilevel Urban Governance” conference in Liège, which took place on the 1st and 2nd of December 2010. The book is titled Multilevel Urban Governance - Handbook Theory & Practice. The publication focuses both on theoretical and practical aspects of multilevel governance. Experts Tuna Taşan-Kok and Jan Vranken have provided insights in the concept and mechanism of multilevel governance in the Handbook for Multilevel Urban Governance in Europe. Subsequently, practical cases have been interpreted and reviewed within the analytical framework. Based on the outcomes of the theoretical framework and the practices, recommendations have been formulated by Simon Güntner, Iván Tosics, Mart Grisel and Frans van de Waart in Multilevel Urban Governance or the Art of Working Together - Methods, Instruments and Practices. The publication aims to stimulate the ongoing debate on multilevel governance in the field of urban policy. Participatory instruments for an integrated urban development are a key component of this publication. [http://www.eukn.org/Dossiers/EU_presidencies/Belgian_Presidency/Publication_Multilevel_Urban_Governance](http://www.eukn.org/Dossiers/EU_presidencies/Belgian_Presidency/Publication_Multilevel_Urban_Governance)
**Participatory planning in different European countries**

One way of ensuring lasting and successful community participation is through establishing structured and institutionalised frameworks for participatory local governance. Structured and institutionalised models of participation generally work best when citizens see them as legitimate and credible, where there is political commitment to their implementation and they have a legal status. Below some national examples are provided.

**Cypriot national policy**

1. Public participation in the development process in Cyprus is denoted in:
   - The EU level, though the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union and the related directions concerning development, environment or other related issues
   - The National level through the Town Planning and Country Law (1990-2013) and the related regulations, orders, mandates or directions
   - The local level deriving from the public dialog necessary for the preparation of the development plans, the granting of development permissions or the decision for action plans.

2a. To obtain useful opinion for the plan/development/action from the public the main purpose is:
   - The public to be properly informed for the plan/development/action, as to be in position to express its opinion.
   - The public opinion to be supported by planning reasons (matured public).
   - The obtained information to be analyzed and used efficiently and effectively.

2b. Concerning the preparation of the Development Plans:
   - The Development Plans (Local Plans, Area Schemes, etc – D.P.) in Cyprus are prepared or amended and approved by the Central Government (the Minister of Interior and the Council of Ministers respectively).
   - Public participation in Cyprus is present from the early beginning in the preparation or amendment of the D.P. (1990), where changes are made in 2007.
   - Firstly, the Minister publishes a document explaining the policy around which the preparation or amendment of the D.P. must be directed.
   - Each Local Authority (Municipality or Community - LA), which belongs to the area of the DP, calls for the citizens’ opinion in a public dialog.
   - The citizens’ opinion together with the experts’ opinion, employed by the LA, are put in front of the LA’s Board to compose its suggestions for the plan.
   - The suggestions of all the relative LAs are discussed together the relative NGOs in the Common Board (CB), which delivers its opinion to the Planning Board (PB) by its president.
• The CB and the PB are supported by the Town Planning and Housing Department (TPHD).
• Each citizen has the right to put his opinion in writing to the Minister (represented by the Planning Board) (since 2007).
• People who put their opinion in writing (persons, authorities, NGOs, Departments, etc.) can present it in front of representatives of the PB in public hearings (since 2007).
• LAs can also present their suggestions to the plan directly to the PB.
• If for the plan to be prepared, an environmental assessment is needed, then the PB, asks for an environmental study: having in front of it the suggestion of the CB, the peoples opinion in writing, the public hearings and the presentations of the PAs, prepares the preliminary plan, which is published for the opinion of the public at large, only for the environmental view of the plan.
• The PB, having in front of it the environmental assessment of the Environmental Authority and the comments collected from the people at large, can make changes to the plan, which is promoted to the Minister of Interior for approval and publication.
• In a second stage, people can put to the Minister its objections to the Plan.
• The Minister sets up a committee to study the objections, and promotes its position to the Council of Ministers for approval and publication.
• This is the final approval and any disagreement to the plan, can be only directed to the Supreme Court.

2c. Concerning the development control:
• For certain uses, according to the relevant regulations for submitting application for the granting of planning permission, publicity is needed as to ascertain the opinion of the public and also the opinion of the relevant departments or authorities.
• In a few cases of greater importance (applications concerning departure of the provisions of the law) or concerning safety or affecting amenities (amusement developments) a special form is delivered to the possibly affected neighbours, as to secure their opinion for the development.
• Moreover, for applications concerning departure of the provisions of the law, site notice and public hearing are needed.

2d. Concerning action plans and development projects
• Informing public for the plan/development/action, as to be in position to express its opinion.
• Obtaining public opinion which is supported by planning reasons (matured public)
• Analysing and using efficiently and effectively the obtained information
This period the Department of Town Planning and Housing, having in mind the importance of the public participation in the development process, is preparing new changes to the law (as to improve the role of the LAs and abolish the CB) and also a pilot project using a structured Democratic Dialog Design.

**United Kingdom**
The United Kingdom has devolved an assorted range of responsibilities to assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Among these is the ability to determine means of decision-making within these countries. This paragraph draws largely on the experience of public participation in England, which does not have devolved government; the national UK government retains responsibility. Government policy is to give citizens a much stronger voice in decision-making and even, where appropriate, transfer control of assets to citizen groups. For example, the ‘*White Paper Communities in control: Real people, real power*’ and the ‘*Local Government, Economic Development and Construction Bill*’ requires local authorities to promote democracy and facilitate petitions and places a duty on public authorities to involve the public in its functions; from a present 20 local authorities practising participatory budgeting, all 400 will be expected to do so within the next three years.

http://www.involve.org.uk/blog/2007/09/15/engage-for-change/

**Germany**
In Germany official publications identify a high level of civic engagement in the country. The significance of participation, however, depends on the issue. In urban planning, participatory structures have been in place for the last thirty years. In some areas, citizen participation has been legally enshrined as in the German building law of 1976 that states the public must be consulted on development projects. There have been citizen consultations on energy policy, on questions of environmental policy and recently on health issues. Most official activity to engage citizens is restricted to the local and municipal level. At the federal level, referenda, for example, are constitutionally prohibited. At the federal level the possibility of using eParticipation has only recently been examined, but there is now support for the development of tools to foster participatory practices on the internet. Within the constitutional constraints, participation at federal level is focussed on consultation and information. Most innovative methods are to be found at local level. They work closely with private companies to organise citizen participation processes. The focus of these processes lies on urban planning, infrastructure development and, partly, investment decisions. Two institutions have published reports whose understanding of citizen engagement is likely to determine German policy and the constitutional framework for public participation:

- A committee in the German Bundestag, which exclusively deals with citizen participation more information can be found here (www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse/a13/buerger_eng/index.html)
• A special commission (Enquete-Kommission) on citizen engagement more information can be found here
  www.dip.bundestag.de/btd/14/089/1408900.pdf

While the federal level is rather inhibited in its use of public participation processes, in the last two decades new opportunities for this political component of citizen engagement have been written into local laws. This has allowed citizens to participate more widely in local policymaking by initiating referenda and citizens’ consultations. Based on this, the citizens of Berlin initiated several referenda on urban development and economic policy.

Belgium
Belgium has come a long way when it comes to participation in governance and especially in urban planning. The post-war modernistic planning was basically determined by the experts and authorities, and strongly influenced by economic imperatives. However, currently great emphasis is put on making information available and accessible, although a gap between experts and the broad audience remains. For example, the terminology and techniques used in spatial and urban planning (as GIS systems) are still often difficult to be communicated. Specific low threshold planning gatherings, information sessions for planners and non-planners, informative evenings from municipalities, brochures and information on the Internet, and so on are all initiatives to make the plans and regulations more ‘readable’. A second aspect of participation is then ‘getting people involved’ from an authorities perspective. Also here, a legal frame is developed and minimum requirements for participation are defined by law. Public Hearings for regional plans in Brussels Capital Region for instance last 3 periods of respectively 60 days to give the general audience, specific associations and the Regional Development Commission the chance to react. A third aspect is the initiative developed from within civil society. Various contributions to the urban debate, petitions or street actions have been organised since the 1970s to address authorities with alternative statements.

Some aspects of participation to planning processes are defined by law (the different legal settings for the three regions, with slight variations). Most important tools are public hearing and various forms of consultative commissions. Public Hearings exist already since the 1970s. The procedure is almost unchanged. Public hearings are held on both supra-local and local level, for instance for the presentations of Regional Development and Land Use Plans, of provincial and of municipal plans. It is recently also used for the acceptance of local interventions such as the neighbourhood contracts in Brussels Capital Region. The different regional laws on urban planning describe all cases to the details for which public hearings are necessary. The duration of a public hearing is strongly dependent from the level of planning and can vary from in total 3 times 60 days for Regional Plans to 30 days for individual projects of renovation.
In addition, government officials have various tools available to structure participatory planning processes, such as public hearings, commissions of consult on different levels as well as various forms of urban debate. Some attempts have been made to focus on local integrated projects. A good example here is the model of neighbourhood contracts in Brussels Capital Region, where a variety of local actors and players from authorities gather in the so-called ‘Local Commission for Integrated Development’. Integration is promoted between actors of different levels as well as between different programs and programs from different sectors.

Case studies

**Duisburg 2027 – long term planning**
The German city of Duisburg, a shrinking city with an outdated land use plan, facing decreasing public finance and increasing ecological demands has developed an original way of dealing with these challenges. The Duisburg 2027 project combines the formal procedure of creating a new land use plan, with the informal process of developing an urban development strategy. While creating a land use plan is mandatory by law, the city-wide process of developing an urban strategy by creating local forums, and having local businesses and stakeholders pondering on questions as “How do we want to work and live in Duisburg in the future?”, is a rather alternative way of informing the land use planning process.

To approach all the future issues Duisburg chose the method: “Future Management”, in which five questions are highlighted:
- How do we create our future? (Strategy)
- What is the probable future? (Assumptions)
- How could the future surprise us? (Discontinuity)
- How do we want our future to look like? (Vision)
- What is the possible and creatable future? (Opportunities)

There were seven kick-off events in all districts of the city to start local forums, which are now self-organized and managed. These forums were set up to have the inhabitants deciding the future aims and priorities for the neighbourhoods. Technical support is provided by the city. The result produced by the forums are the Duisburg Ideas and will be discussed in the city departments and feed into the ongoing process of developing the urban strategy. However, the city finds it difficult to motivate young people and migrants to participate in these meetings, and developed ways to target them in different settings.


**Do not Plan, Play the City**
There a recent trend of using engagement games as a way of facilitating public participation in urban planning. An example in the Netherlands is the [Play the City](#) organization, whose
motto is “Do not plan, play the city”. Play the City integrates city gaming, digital public polls, interactive learning and social networks with traditional architecture and urban design. Working with cities, housing corporations, and cultural organizations, Play the City helps to generate interactive and collaborative plans with multiple stakeholders. The process usually includes creating a small model of the city area in question, inviting the stakeholders involved and defining the different roles and rules of the game. The game is played analogically and online, and the different steps are reported in the website.

Using engagement games in urban planning can be useful in many aspects: role playing can make someone aware of the particularities of the reality of a person whom they would have difficulties relating to (an elderly woman, a child, an immigrant...); it can free people from the constrains of their mindset at work and ease the process of envisioning their desirable future for the city/neighbourhood; it can bring together in each participant their dual roles, as professionals (planners, city official, shop owner, etc.) and citizens, which can contribute to a different discussion and deliberation process, than it would be in the usual procedure of urban development.

**Participatory budgeting**

Participatory budgeting can be broadly defined as a way of including the citizens in the decision making process of the city budget. It can imply, in some cities, a whole administrative structure feeding on grassroots democracy, which defines budget priorities for the local neighbourhood or district. In other cases the city allocates part of the budget to projects which are decided by the citizens: the citizens can suggest projects, and then they can vote in their favourite ones. Lisbon Participatory Budget

It was created in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in the late 80’s, in a conjunction of both top-down and bottom-up processes: the Labour Party won the local elections and wanted to show a different style of government, and at the same time, local civil society groups were demanding more co-decision capacity. There are three principles supporting the set-up and functioning of Porto Alegre’s Participatory Budget: grassroots democracy is carried through citizens’ assemblies in every district of the city, where local priorities are defined; the principle of social justice ensures, through and allocation formula, that districts with less infrastructure receive more funds; and the principle of citizen control, realized by boards, which oversee and ensure that the local priorities defined are taken up in the drafting of the budget.

In the UK, the Secretary for Communities and Local Government made in 2008 an enthusiastic appraisal of participatory budgeting, and although projects have started in communities throughout the country, some critics say that the budgets allocated are too small to produce meaningful change. There are also risks to Participatory Budgeting: The Guardian reports a UK case where rival community groups thwarted the process, by voting against each other.

In Germany, as in many countries, participatory budgets are on the increase. Examples are:

- Cologne (www.buergerhaushalt.stadt-koeln.de/)
- Freiburg (www.beteiligungshaushalt.freiburg.de/)
- Berlin (www.buergerhaushalt-berlin.de/)

A recent research project at the Humboldt University Berlin provides an overview of these participatory processes in which citizens decide about local public investments. The importance of these processes is that they allow the administration to have a positive experience of participation.

www.buergerhaushalt.org

Use of ICT and Social Media

There are more and more cities experimenting with instruments of e-governance for their local democracy. Sites of e-petitioning allow citizens to create petitions on issues that they wish to change in the city. In some cities, like Reykjavik, the monthly most voted petitions are then included for discussion in the agenda of the local council. In other cities, if a petition reaches a certain number of votes the city commits to officially consider the petition and to issue a reply. In other systems it is also possible to vote against a petition, and in that way triggering deliberation. The success factor seems to lie in creating a platform in which citizens can post their questions, concerns, suggestions, to which the municipal authorities are attentive and reply. The key seems to be to engage not only the citizens but also the municipal actors in joint online spaces of dialogue.

Another type of initiative is the creation of online forums for citizens. The city of Gothenburg in 2004 launched an online forum in relation to a large redevelopment project as part of an innovative effort to break with traditional structures for policy-making and planning. The contributions on the forum focused on city life, housing, transport, the environment and the participation process. In addition, the forum had features such as “question and opinion of the week” and “advice to the editors”. Many contributions were direct proposals and opinions about how the new city space ought to be used. The discussion in the forum was vibrant and included heated debates on a multitude of issues. The experiment was, however, characterized by an absence of formal decision-makers. The informal citizen participation process became disconnected from the formal decision-making arenas, and potentially worthwhile interactions between these arenas were lost. The decision-makers were unable to communicate important considerations for enabling the formulation of “realistic proposals” and the citizens could not relate to the decision-makers’ preferences and priorities.
Two other projects, Pep-Net (www.pep-net.eu) and Demo-net (www.demo-net.org) focus on e-Participation. They address the question of participation methods less directly, but focus more on the research best practice exchange with e-Participation initiatives and practitioners. Pep-Net is an EU-supported network with the goal of encouraging best practice exchange among actors who organise e-Participation. Demo-net is an EU-funded research project that focuses on better interconnection and on knowledge exchange in e-Participation research across Europe. In its ‘practitioners corner’ (www.demonet.org/practitioners-corner), it offers a set of methods and tools for e-Participation. Both websites provide extensive information about projects and approaches on a descriptive level.

**Relevant other publications**
The growing use of participation in Europe has spurred the development of tools for organisers of participatory processes. They are designed to make the organisation of public participation processes faster, ensure that the methods used are suitable and that the organisers are aware of the limitations of a particular method. This is necessary as there is a vast array of participatory methods that allow citizens to deliberate about collective problems. Below a number of interesting handbooks and toolkits are listed

*Building Bridges*
UN Habitat developed a toolkit for local governments, who aim to participatory develop an integrated long-range development plan, or an action plan to address more immediate problems within the local community. The toolkit contains planning tools to increase collaboration and participation within local governments, NGOs, CBOs, leaders, staff, and citizen constituents. Part I includes the participatory planning process as it has evolved over time and provides strategies for implementing the process. Part II is more manual, addressing practical tools and methods.

1) Building Bridges through Participatory Planning - Part 1 (more strategic/conceptual)
2) Building Bridges through Participatory Planning - Part 2 (practical tools and methods)

*Citizens as Partners*
This OECD handbook ‘seeks to clarify the key issues and decisions faced by government officials’ when they set out to use public participation in any form in their work.
**European Handbook on Participation**

This URBACT handbook compiles experiences with participation from all over Europe, but with a focus on public participation in urban development. The focus lies on when in a political process participation can most help to solve issues of various kinds. The authors point out the democratic potential of public participation, through its inclusion of underrepresented points of view and to empower disadvantaged groups. It is emphasised that to realise this democratic potential, public participation must take place within a contractual framework, which clarifies the scope and impact of participation. The book is illustrated with examples from all over Europe.

**A City’s Guide to Social Media**

A City’s Guide to Social Media instructions and advise on how to introduce a city to social media.

http://thesocialcity.org/

**The Toolkit Citizen Participation**

Is a handbook that does not attempt to categorise methods. Instead it presents experiences from different countries with a structured description of each process. In particular, it presents successful practice and examples where participation did not work.

www.toolkitparticipation.nl

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Please visit www.eukn.org/Policy_Labs for all relevant research documents, handbooks and other background information related to the Policy Lab