



European Center for
Not-for-Profit Law

PARTICIPATION CHAMPIONS

Supporting civic engagement
through implementation of
the UN Participation Guidelines

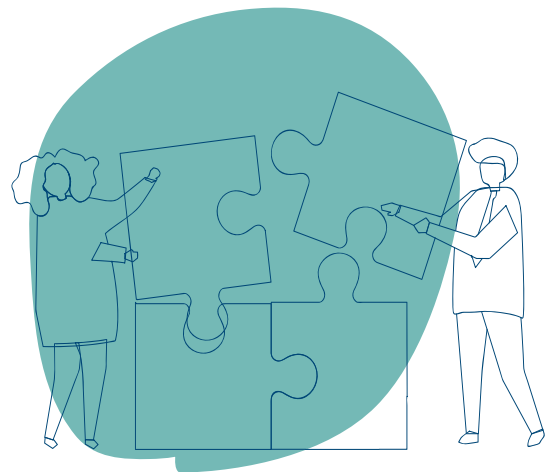
Examples for practice





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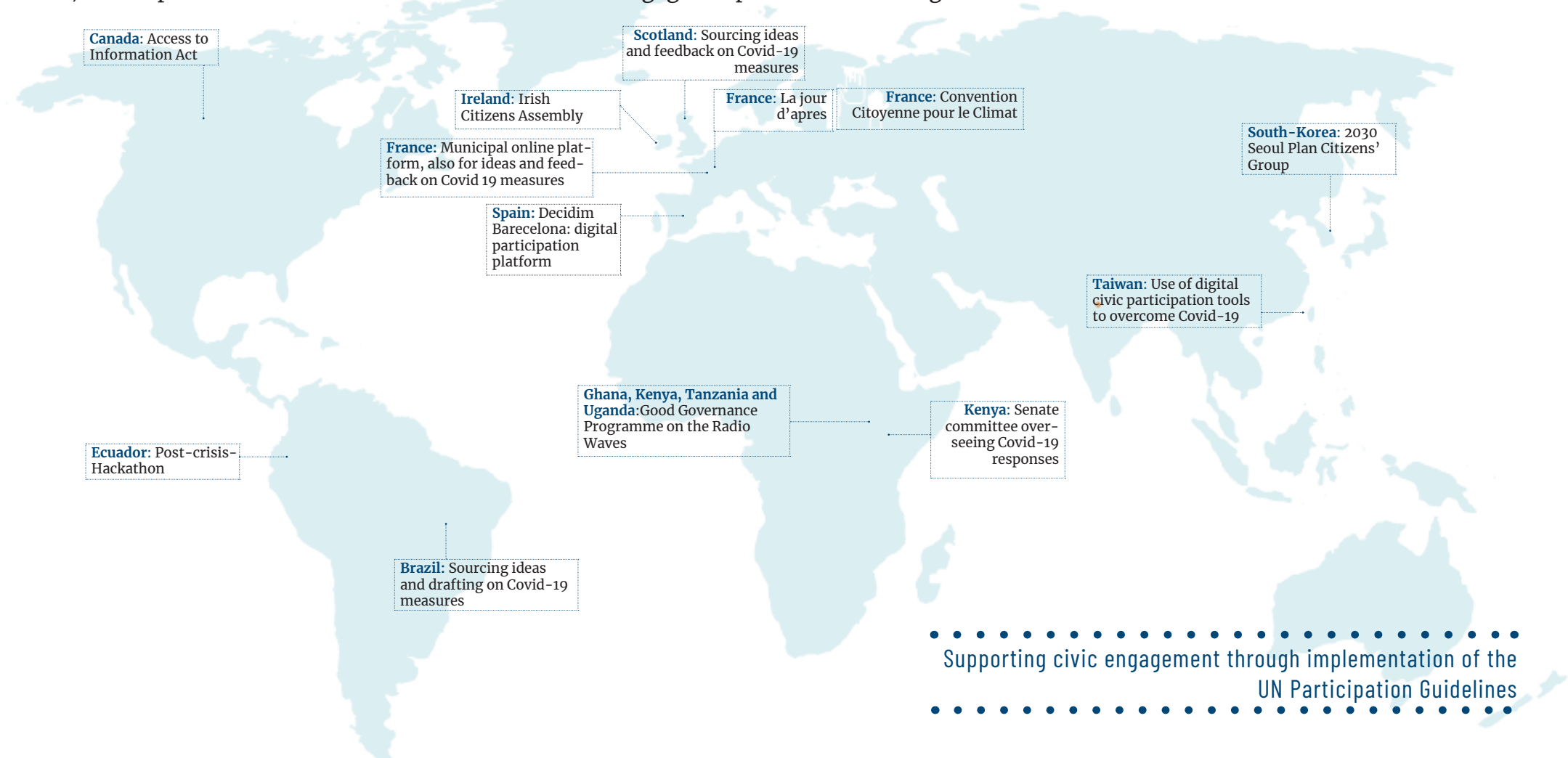
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Participation enables the advancement of all human rights. It plays a crucial role in the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion and economic development. This has become even more crucial since the start of the pandemic as people need measures that respond with their actual needs and do not affect the public disproportionality. This is in particular the case for women and marginalized individuals and groups. Public participation is necessary to overcome global challenges in the long term. It is therefore crucial for governments to enable meaningful participation in accordance with the [UN Guidelines on the right to participate in public affairs](#). However, implementing participation right is not an easy task. It requires knowledge, skills, resources and dedication. In addition to the [practical summary](#) of the UN guidelines, we prepared a **repository of good practices as a concrete elaboration of how these guidelines can and should be implemented**. The purpose of this repository is to give a variety of examples on how the UN guidelines could be implemented effectively. We will continue to explore to what extent these examples are impacting the general public participation in the given country examples. Examples are categorized to follow the UN Guidelines structure, for easier reference. We commend all states, municipalities and institutions that make effort to engage the public in a meaningful and inclusive manner.



COUNTRY

Canada

NAME/TITLE

Access to Information Act

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Basic principles underpinning the effective implementation – access to information

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

National Authority

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Openness and transparency of the government

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Role of the Information Commissioner;

Increase accessibility of information through low fees and proactive dissemination of information;

Smart use of digital solutions, especially since Covid-19.

[Bill C-58](#), *An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act* received royal assent on June 21, 2019, making important improvements to the openness and transparency of government. These are the most significant amendments to the act since it came into force in 1983.

The new legislation improves the way government information is provided to Canadians by:

- giving the Information Commissioner the power to make binding orders in relation to access to information requests, including the release of government records;
- eliminating all fees apart from the \$5 application fee;
- requiring institutions to proactively publish specific information known to be of interest to the public, without the need for a request;
- allowing government institutions within the same ministerial portfolio to work together to process requests more efficiently.

Covid-19 related adjustments on the implementation of the Act

The Covid-19 crisis has affected the processing of requests in many ways. Most federal employees, including Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) Office staff, are working from home, and are unable to access the office to retrieve paper records or electronic records on higher-security networks that hold records classified as secret or above. Also, mailrooms, regional offices, and international offices may be closed. In many cases, ATIP Offices are also unable to consult third parties outside government concerning the release of records they have provided to government, since those third parties are also affected by the crisis.

On March 20, 2020, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat issued an [Access to Information and Privacy Implementation Notice](#) advising institutions to make best efforts to respond to requests and to meet proactive publication requirements, in accordance with their operational realities and direction from public health authorities. The notice also asked institutions to notify requesters of their reduced capacity to respond to requests and the potential for delays. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat also [advised users](#) of potential delays in processing requests.

Despite the challenges, institutions are finding ways to move forward on requests, within their individual circumstances, such as:

- offering requesters the option of searching only electronic records to respond to their request;
- establishing new digital processes to replace paper-based business processes;
- accessing government networks after-hours to work on requests;
- using e-post to transmit records to requesters, instead of mail.

In addition to these efforts, they continue to work to improve the systems that support access to information. For example, work is underway to enable the ATIP Online Request Service to send responses electronically to requesters, to reduce the use of paper and compact discs. Greater use of digital solutions will make the access to information process more resilient. **Proactive publication online** is another tool for government to provide transparency and accountability to Canadians during the Covid-19 pandemic. As announced by the Prime Minister on April 17, 2020, the [Open Government Portal](#) is hosting open data related to the applications received and processed under the Canada Emergency Response Benefit.



The **access to information review** is an opportunity to explore how new tools and approaches could improve efficiency and make information more open and accessible to Canadians.

COUNTRY

Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

NAME/TITLE

Good Governance Programme on the Radio Waves

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Basic principles underpinning the effective implementation – civic education programmes

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Municipality

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Support local government capacity building and community empowerment via radio

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Transmission via digital satellite radio technology;
Reach to remote rural areas.

The Africa [Good Governance Programme on the Radio Waves](#) is a project of the World Bank Institute (WBI), launched in 2006, to support local government capacity building and community empowerment via radio, in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The objective of the project was to **support local government capacity building and community empowerment** through transmission of key information related to anti-corruption, civic participation, and fiscal decentralisation.

The programme included 4 different components:

- 1) Governing Municipalities without Corruption,
- 2) Civic Participation,
- 3) Municipal Finance/Participatory Budgeting,
- 4) Africa Municipal News Magazines.

The goal of the learning programmes was the elaboration of action plans by the participants (mayors, local public officials, members of local communities, and representatives of civil society) that could be incorporated into ongoing reform work and had the potential to be replicated in other municipalities and countries.



COUNTRY

France

NAME/TITLE

La jour d'apres

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts – consultation and dialogue

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

National Parliament

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Collection of citizen opinions on the direction of France's policy priorities post-Covid-19

Engaging the public at an early stage, before agenda-setting on the topic.

Allowing the public to define a framework and using that as a starting point for debating and creating policy.

No restrictions on who can send in ideas, so not only acknowledged organised civil society, but also informal groups and even individuals can submit opinions.

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

This is a public consultation launched in April 2020 by a group of 60 parliamentarians that formed at the beginning of the Covid-19 health crisis. It allowed for anyone to contribute under 11 different themes, including health care, digitalization, democracy, education, and financial structure of the country. The 8,700 contributions were received in one month on the platform from more than 26,000 citizens, but also from unions, associations, collectives of all kinds; the 22 workshops, which were organized on the most varied themes, prove that there is an immense desire to think about the world. Paula Forteza's, French MP for Latin America and Caribbean who initiated this platform aim is to translate the [resulting 30 proposals](#) into concrete law, [which then will be available to parliamentarians and political leader for public debate](#).



COUNTRY

Kenya

NAME/TITLE

Senate committee overseeing Covid-19 responses invited public submissions regarding key issues relating to the pandemic

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts - consultation and dialogue

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

National

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Covid-19 response measures consultation

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Variety of stakeholders consulted;

Acknowledgment of need of cross-sectoral consultation.

The [Ad Hoc Committee on the Covid-19 Situation](#) invited stakeholders and members of the public to submit written memoranda on legislative, policy and other **interventions that may be taken in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic**, in 5 thematic areas:

- a) **Health Issues** – including community health, testing, quarantine, isolation centres, ICU facilities, human resources for health, drugs and supplies, role and engagement of county governments, and mental health;
- b) **Economic and Finance Issues** – including macro-economic effects, impact on businesses, trade facilitation, and measures to cushion borrowers and financial institutions;
- c) **Social, Public Order and Human Rights** – including protection for vulnerable persons and groups, protection of women and girls at risk of domestic abuse, measures to enable learners to continue with their studies, enforcement of the nationwide curfew, access to justice, and decongestion of prisons and remand facilities;
- d) **Access to Food, Water and other Basic Commodities** – including measures to ensure the continuous production and supply of food, water and other essential commodities; and
- e) **Support Services and Cross-Cutting Issues** – including awareness creation on measures to prevent infection and combat stigmatization, and the role of ICT in combating the Covid-19 pandemic.

In response to the call for public participation, the Committee received a total of 146 submissions from individuals and organizations. The end result was a draft framework [Pandemic Response and Management Bill](#).

COUNTRY

Scotland

NAME/TITLE

Sourcing ideas and feedback on Covid-19 measures

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts - consultation and dialogue

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

National

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Covid-19 response measures consultation

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Special platform to add ideas;

Not only post ideas but also rate, vote and comment on ideas of others.

As part of the Scottish Government's commitment to an open public discussion about potential changes to restrictions, a [Dialogue challenge](#) was launched on Tuesday 5 May 2020.

Dialogue is an online platform where the public could share and debate their opinions on steps they can take to move to a new normal. Ideas are the main tool on the platform to submit suggestions/proposals. Users can then rate or comment on the ideas to agree, disagree or refine them.



In total, online platform was open between 5 May and 11 May and in that time it received more than 4,000 ideas and almost 18,000 comments. The outcome of the consultation was analysed and published in this [report](#). In the report, the First Minister of Scotland pledges: *“Clearly it is incumbent upon us a Government to take those views into account. I can assure those that contributed that their ideas and comments are being used to inform the decisions we will be taking on moving out of the current lockdown.”*

COUNTRY

Taiwan

NAME/TITLE

Use of Digital civic participation tools to overcome Covid-19

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts - consultation and dialogue

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

National

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Increase public participation and tackle Covid-19

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

People are asked to write down statements and share their feelings about them;

Got rid of notion of strict differentiation between government, administration, civil society and citizens. All work together to co-create policies;

Participation officers in ministries;

Internet access as a human right and of course technology that supports it.

Taiwan's Digital Minister, Audrey Tang designed platforms that enable the engagement of citizens, civil society and government officials. [VTaiwan is one of those](#). It is an "online-offline consultation process which brings together government ministries, elected representatives, scholars, experts, business leaders, civil society organizations and citizens. The process helps lawmakers implement decisions with a greater degree of legitimacy".

Central to VTaiwan, is a platform called [Pol.Is](#). Pol.Is "is a real-time system for gathering, analyzing and understanding what large groups of people think in their own words, enabled by advanced statistics and machine learning." People can write down statements about how they feel about certain policies, which then will be upvoted or downvoted. The idea is that people are forced to reflect about their feelings regarding a certain policy, rather than taking sides. This way polarization is avoided and a rough consensus is often achieved. Policy makers can use this created common ground to develop targeted policy solutions.

Another tool designed directly by government's National Development Council is [Join](#): a comprehensive platform on which citizens can interact with various levels of government in an open way. On Join, citizens can at the same time:

- a) discuss existing policies,
- b) get information on and “supervise” government policies,
- c) propose new policies through petitions that have to be discussed by the government if supported by 5000 or more people,
- d) give feedback directly to heads of government agencies.

These tools have helped finding collective solutions and tools to fight the pandemic, such as an app that helps citizens find pharmacies selling medical masks in real time, updated every 30 seconds.



COUNTRY

Ireland

NAME/TITLE

Irish Citizens Assembly

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts – consultation and dialogue

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

National

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

To collect public opinion, debate, and provide recommendations on the topics outlined in its founding documents.

- The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution;
- State response to an ageing population;
- State action on climate change;
- The manner of [referenda](#);
- The issue of [fixed-term](#) parliaments.

The second citizens assembly, established in 2019, was tasked to advance gender equality.

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Direct citizen participation for the purpose of co-creation, lead by citizens and not politicians;

Involvement of citizens early on in the process to allow for meaningful input;

Proper facilitation by the government (i.e. assigning an expert group for support, co-chairing the steering group, follow-up commitments).

The two Citizen's Assemblies, first one in 2016 and the second in 2019, were established through Parliamentary resolutions as an independent body with a Government-appointed Chairperson. Moreover, an "expert group" was established to assist the work of the Assembly in terms of preparing information and advice and a "steering group" comprised by the Chairperson and a representative group of Assembly members elected by the Assembly. Attendance as an observer is restricted to CSOs, but all the meetings were livestreamed.

The first Citizens' Assembly had [two major effects](#). First, it allowed politicians to understand public opinion on the issue of abortion before committing to a referendum and a binding legislative decision. Second, the Citizens' Assembly appears to have been welcomed by the majority of the population as a fair and reliable process of public consultation.

The second Citizen's Assembly is still active, though a lot of its meetings had to be postponed in 2020 due to Covid-19. The issues dealt with during the meetings will be voted upon and the recommendations will be presented to the government.



After that, the government will respond to each recommendation of the Assembly and if the recommendations are accepted, the government will provide a timeframe in which it aims to hold any related referendums.

COUNTRY

South - Korea

NAME/TITLE

2030 Seoul Plan Citizens' Group

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts - partnership and co-drafting

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Municipality

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

100 citizens who were tasked with identifying the vision and key tasks for the city

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Direct citizen participation throughout the process, including the development of vision and issues;

More inclusive and accessible format that allowed citizens to easily understand and respond accordingly.

The 2030 Seoul Plan

With revision of the Act on Planning and Use of National Territory in February 2009, the authority to establish an urban master plan was moved from the central government to local governments. This gave the mayor of Seoul the authority and responsibility to develop an urban master plan that reflected the characteristics and conditions of the city.

The 2030 Seoul Plan aimed to incorporate the values of the time and changes in the environment. To do this, Seoul considered the following: i) more stringent democratic procedures that do not exclude the citizens, as opposed to the old habit of relying on administrators and experts; ii) more focus on future values, such as sharing innovation, co-existence, and convergence; and iii) urban restoration and urban planning that reflects the actual lifestyle of the city and considers demographic changes and regional characteristics.

One of the things that came out of this is the **2030 Seoul Plan Citizens' Group**, which is a group of 100 citizens who were tasked with identifying the vision and key tasks for the city right from the beginning as to come up with the appropriate vision and tasks to perform. The public worked with administrators and experts in developing the plans for key issues.

Direct citizen participation

The major change that can be observed in 2030 Seoul Plan compared to existing Basic urban plan – which was created by the national government and is now replaced by this plan – is the role of citizens. The existing plan only allowed indirect citizen participation, whereas 2030 Seoul Plan directly involved citizens. The vision and the issues were developed based on the deliberation of citizens.

Different format

Although there was a certain format for the Basic urban plan, decided by the national government, 2030 Seoul Plan did not follow the format as the existing format was too comprehensive for citizens to understand fully. 2020 Seoul Plan is more comprehensive as it consists of specific plans for 12 domains. Instead, 2030 Seoul Plan adopted a more succinct and different form that contains five key issues and 17 goals so that the citizens can easily understand, and the plan can be more strategic and holistic.



COUNTRY

France

NAME/TITLE

Municipal online platform, also for ideas and feedback on Covid-19 measures

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts - partnership and co-drafting

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Municipality

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Municipal online platform for consultation, decision-making and community outreach

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Regular communication and updates about the projects helped build trust with community members;

During Covid-19 Pandemic, transformation from decision making tool to community connection and information sharing.

The French commune of Rueil-Malmaison, launched [its participation platform](#) in 2018 to give citizens a voice in the decision-making process. **The platform has become more than a decision-making tool and is now being used by residents to connect with their community despite social distancing.**

Rueil kicked off its digital engagement platform with a wide-scale participatory budget. In 2019, citizens had one and a half months to submit innovative projects for the city. In addition to collecting ideas through the platform, the municipality also installed physical ballot boxes at the town Hall, therefore ensuring true inclusivity for participants with limited access to digital tools. All citizens older than 16 could participate, as long as they could prove their residence in Rueil-Malmaison.

After the spring of 2019, regular new projects helped maintain regular activity on the platform and supported the steady increase of new users. Then, in March 2020, as the country ground to a halt and most of the city's projects were put on pause, registrations spiked.

As France went into strict lockdown, **Rueil-Malmaison made it a priority to maintain a dialogue with citizens. The city used the platform to share information with inhabitants, to coordinate local volunteering efforts but also to organize online community events.**



Local businesses shared information about online deliveries and opening hours; citizens shared ideas about child activities during lockdown; and volunteers organized online events like e-sport tournaments and an egg hunt for inhabitants, where chocolate was delivered to participants. The platform went beyond its usual role as a consultation tool to serve as an online civic space, keeping community members connected and creating a true sense of mutual support.

Between March 17 and June 11, the platform recorded more than 43,000 sessions, an increase of more than 30% compared to the previous period. These visits to the platform also had a very tangible effect: the city received close to 30 000 masks, made by the 285 volunteer seamstresses who registered through the platform. Over 6 000 food baskets were delivered to families in need, and 353 isolated and at risk inhabitants got their groceries delivered by volunteers. Close to 2 700 inhabitants took part on the online events organised on the platform.

The Rueil example shows how a digital tool can go beyond its initial consultation purpose and connect communities in times of need. The momentum that started on the platform hasn't stopped: since lockdown has eased, new projects have been launched to clean up the surrounding woods, and hundreds of citizens have already signed up. The city is now looking to grow the team responsible for the platform.

COUNTRY

Brazil

NAME/TITLE

Sourcing ideas and drafting on Covid-19 measures

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts - partnership and co-drafting

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

National

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Covid-19 response measures consultation

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Senate is deliberating legislative responses to the Covid-19 crisis proposed by citizens through the e-Citizenship Portal.

The new coronavirus pandemic and Brazil's fiscal situation have stimulated popular engagement with the Senate. Through the [e-Citizenship Portal](#), citizens have presented legislative ideas such as the one that suggests using the resources of the Special Campaign Financing Fund (known as *Fundão Eleitoral*) to combat Covid-19.

The engagement of the population through e-Citizenship can also be done [through public consultation](#). In it, the citizen can inform whether or not to accept the content of a proposal already in progress in the Senate. The public consultation serves as a parameter to measure the interest or not of the population on the topic and thus also guide the performance of parliamentarians. This is the case of the Complementary Law Project (PLP) 183/2019, authored by Plínio Valério, which suggests taxing large fortunes to fund actions to combat the coronavirus. The parliamentarian's initiative quickly had more than 222 000 supports.

The e-Citizenship Portal was created in 2012 with the objective of encouraging greater participation of citizens in legislative, budgetary, inspection and representation activities in the Senate. So far, 78 ideas have been debated at the HRC and 25 have been transformed into bills or proposed amendments to the Constitution. To participate, the interested party must register directly on the portal, with a valid email, inform the full name and register a password. Domains that provide temporary emails cannot be used. Another participation option is to link your registration to Facebook or Google social networks.

COUNTRY

Spain

NAME/TITLE

Decidim Barcelona: digital participation platform

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts – partnership and co-drafting

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Municipality

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Build a more democratic city

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Platform with many different features;

Open source: Any citizen can see how it is built, reuse it or improve it. Code can be viewed on [GitHub](#).

The [decidim.barcelona](#) is the digital participation platform of Barcelona City Council to build a more democratic city. A reference space to build an open, transparent, collaborative city with the prominence of its inhabitants. decidim.barcelona is also a community with the aim of guaranteeing the democratic principles of the social contract and improving and monitoring the quality of the processes and the platform itself.

At decidim.barcelona anyone can participate and decide on different topics, through the spaces: [Processes](#) [Organs](#), [Initiatives](#) Ext).

Anyone can find different options to participate: make proposals – individually or with other people, take part in debates, prioritize projects to be executed, attend face-to-face meetings and other actions.

Decidim is a Free Open-Source participatory democracy platform for cities and organizations. Also, it's a common's free and open project and infrastructure involving code, documentation, design, training courses, a legal framework, collaborative interfaces, user and facilitation communities, and a common vision. It is currently used by cities and organizations. In fact, any group of people can use it, whether it is an NGO, university, trade union, cooperative, neighbourhood association, etc. Check the [complete list of currently active instances](#).

COUNTRY

France

NAME/TITLE

Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts - partnership and co-drafting

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

National

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

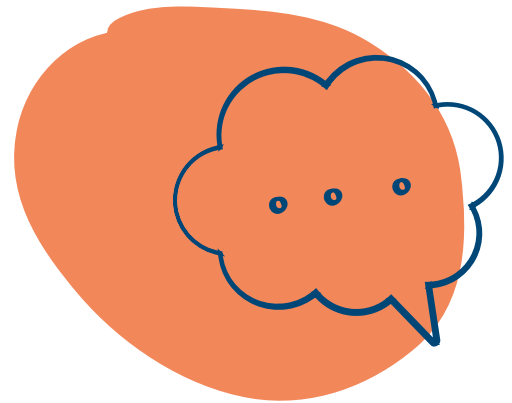
Find specific ways to reduce greenhouse emissions to 40% of their 1990 level by 2030 while guaranteeing social justice

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

150 randomly selected citizens;

Many of the proposals have become law.

In reaction to the yellow vests movement and to address citizen's complaints, president Macron initiated in 2019 the "Great Debate". Citizens had the chance to voice their concerns about several social and economic issues. In this framework, the Citizens Assembly for Climate was set up. 150 randomly selected citizens, representing various age and societal groups, held 7 face to face and one online meeting in a 9-month period. They came up with 149 proposals and measures. Half of them is translated to a bill which is currently under discussion.



COUNTRY

Ecuador

NAME/TITLE

Post-crisis-Hackathon

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

ICT to strengthen equal and meaningful participation

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Non-governmental – national

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Civic organizations coordinated a Post-Crisis Hackathon -opportunity to discuss citizen vision after the crisis

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Widespread event with no limitation on who can attend, so accessible for all with ideas;

Tools to give a follow-up to the best ideas gathered at the event, enabled by the multi-stakeholder approach.

The [Post-Crisis Hackathon](#), which took place from April 29-30, 2020, was attended by 549 people who brainstormed solutions to the issues that would affect the economy and society in a post-Covid-19 Ecuador. It was organized by civil society, including NGOs and business networks. The Hackathon focused on challenges related to ten areas: environment, work and employment, daily life and social practices, cultural industries, education, health and well-being, economy and production, and government and citizenship.

The participants shared 116 projects and organizations participating in the Hackathon helped choose 19 finalists. There were two votes: one from the public and one of from the jury. Nearly all the finalists received prizes in order to help give follow-up to the idea. For example, exposure, campaign launch, and social media advertising for a value of \$1,000, or technical advice for a value of \$1,000.

Ivan Terceros, member of [MediaLab](#), one of the organizations coordinating the Hackathon, said that Media Lab [will continue to support the projects](#), so that they can become start-ups.

COUNTRY

Netherlands

NAME/TITLE

Mini-citizen deliberation

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts - consultation and dialogue

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Municipality

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Co-creation of additional measures to reach the climate goals of the municipality of Amsterdam

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Experts were invited to inform citizens about the topic to increase access to the topic and enable participants to formulate suggestions;

Democratic voting process on suggested measures and the final overall recommendations;

Actual follow-up of deliberation output by local authorities.

The Municipality of Amsterdam invited residents to take part in a mini-citizen deliberation with the aim of sourcing advice on how the Municipality can achieve its climate goals. The participants of the deliberation were given the following question: "Amsterdam wants to reduce CO₂ emissions by 55% in 2030 compared to 1990. With the current measures, that goal is not yet within reach. The forecast is that a reduction of 37% will be achieved. That is why we ask you: help us by devising measures to achieve the objectives."

The deliberation took place 6 times. During the meetings, the citizens were informed by experts about the issue and in the end they formed 26 concrete suggestions. These suggestions were shared the last day of the deliberation with the alderman for Spatial Development and Sustainability who will discuss them with the rest of the Municipal Executives and see how they can be integrated into the current climate policy. The proposal will be discussed with the city council in 2022.

<https://www.amsterdam.nl/wonen-leefomgeving/duurzaam-amsterdam/mini-burgerberaad/>

COUNTRY

Finland

NAME/TITLE

Citizen's Panel on Freedom of Expression

PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Participation in non-electoral contexts – consultation and dialogue

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

National

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Formulate recommendations for measures to be taken in Finland to protect people in public professions from hate speech and to safeguard free expression of opinion

KEY / INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Diversity of the panel in terms of area of residence, gender, age and mother tongue;

Co-creation of recommendations after educational expert sessions on the topic;

Promise of meaningful follow-up of deliberation output by national authorities;

As part of the Civic Space Scan Finland, an OECD initiative, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice, and Åbo Akademi University's Samforsk organised the Citizen's Panel on Freedom of Expression. The purpose of the Citizens' Panel was to examine the views of citizens and solutions for safeguarding the freedom of expression in Finland, as well as to produce a collective statement based on the views of the participants.

The Citizens' Panel met to discuss the measures that should be taken in Finland to protect people who are in the public eye due to their professions from hate speech and to safeguard free expression of opinion. The invitation was sent to 3000 people residing in Finland of whom 29 were selected to participate at the panel. The persons invited to take part in the panel were selected randomly from among the volunteers who answered positively to the invitation.

The Citizens' Panel met virtually for one evening and two entire days, familiarised itself carefully with background information on the subject area, and heard experts on freedom of expression, hate speech and online harassment. The members of the Citizens' Panel held discussions in small groups and formed their recommendations with the help of trained moderators.

They formed 25 recommendations for the prevention of hate speech and online shaming. These recommendations were firstly used in the OECD report Civic Space Scan Finland. Moreover, the ministry of Finance together with the ministry of Interior and the ministry of Justice, set up a working group which was tasked to draw up timetables and allocate responsibilities for implementing the recommendations of the Citizens' Panel.



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