SF 16: Creation and administration of platforms for citizen participation

Fr	B	C	NY	S	T	Total
7	8	3	4	2	2	26

Example:

Copenhagen: Participation platform in the format of an online-based contact point or platform; online communication has proven to be a very topical source of information. On the website, people have the chance to share their opinion on current projects and receive an answer within a specified period. In addition, they have access to all relevant documents relating to the meetings of the city council (in Danish): minutes, resolutions, agendas, etc.

With its „participatory budget", Freiburg has created a platform that all citizens of Freiburg can use to view the budget and help influence it.

1. Differentiated description of the key field

Participation platforms provide citizens with the chance to publish their own opinions and to participate actively in the democratic process. Such platforms have already had a long historical story (e.g. town hall meetings); but new information and communication technologies (or the Internet) make it possible to integrate many more people into the participation process, which is why they tend to be used more and more[1].

Basically, a participatory platform has the following tasks:
- Ensuring a uniform, transparent standard of knowledge of all actors, stakeholders and all those people and organisations affected by public decisions or activities,
- Involvement of the citizens in administrative and/or municipal decisions.

Formats of citizen participation platforms (as ONE instrument of citizen participation, for more information see SF 53) by a municipality:
- Events requiring attendance in person such as consensus conferences, citizens' panels and budgets or „deliberative polling," in which a representative group of citizens comes together for several days and discusses a socially divisive issue with instructions given by a facilitator .
- Interactive, online solutions (Forum, Website);
Their relevance is increasing for municipalities; online solutions (e-participation) in particular are increasingly being used.
According to a study, 52 % of all the German cities surveyed used citizen participation via electronic media, mainly covering the topics of urban planning, transport, or the par-

1 http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2012-02/partizipation-demokratie/seite-2.

ticipatory budget.

Depending on the temporal relevance, a platform can be temporary or permanent:
o   one-off (poll)
o   period-based (working group)
o   permanent

The participation of citizens in urban decision-making and projects can be initiated and driven both on the part of the city and on the part of the citizenry. Citizen involvement and participation is, therefore, always based on the activities of at least two involved parties, the city (administration) and the citizens. Both parties can act as individuals or organised groups. The integration of citizens in the form of citizen participation can take place at different levels. Depending on the intensity of the participation of each party, the following four stages at least can be identified.

-1 Information: The city provides the infrastructure for conveying to the citizens information about current projects and decisions. Such a platform can for example take the form of a website, where the citizens can find detailed information about specific topics. This demands of the city that it processes the information accordingly and regularly makes it available to the public (updated). Such an infrastructure has added value, but only if the interest of the citizens exists, or if the available information is communicated by the city in such a way that citizens actively access the information.

- 2 Discussion/consultation: The involvement of citizens in the discussion and decision-making process. Contributions are evaluated carefully (based on an existing valid assessment matrix) and included in the solution-finding process. The final decision regarding the projects to be carried out, however, is done using a top-down approach by the city (without the direct influence of citizens).

-3 Partial integration/co-decision-making by citizens (representatives): Through a partially bottom-up and some top-down decision-making, engaged citizens groups have the opportunity to discuss or at least partially influence the discussion and/or the finding of a solution.

-4 Full integration through sole decision-making authority/power with the citizens: Individual citizens or citizens' groups can set up projects and shape them freely and without the participation of the city. This bottom-up approach takes away all the city's ability to influence projects (control, facilitation, etc.) that go beyond the legal requirements.

2. Reference to sustainability:

Resilience of the city system
- If successful (citizens provide input to the platform, no abuse, etc.), the city's participatory platform may provide vital suggestions about future areas of growth and technological and cultural developments
- Enable long-term implementation, since there is commitment

Social, ecological, economic:
- Provide pointers to additional possible savings
- Serve as a collection of innovative ideas of various stakeholders

3. Relevance to industrial sectors?

Mobility:	High
Energy:	Medium
Production & logistics:	Medium
Security:	Medium
ICT:	High
Water infrastructure:	Low
Buildings:	High
Governance:	High

4. Impact:

Positive:
- Enables the use of external resources (time, ideas of citizens)
- Results in a modern image,
- Potential to modernize the administration by means of real-time dialogue with business and citizens[2]
- Increased transparency: use of open data to identify opinions and trends, etc.
- Topical information for their decision-making process obtained
- In part also used to detect implementation obstacles or resistance to certain topics or projects early on

Negative:
- Cost-benefit ratio: contents (information from city) must be maintained and citizens' contributions must be evaluated
- Representativeness is questionable (not all social classes have the same access to technology and knowledge)
- Participation quality (challenge: excluding any abuse)

5. Implementation measures:

- Maintenance and timely (if possible) and regular updating of information and contents

2 http://www.e-partizipation-studie.de/, p. 5.

- Balance of social, cultural and educational inequalities as well as the fostering of the individual skills of individual citizens so that equal participation can occur in the first place[3]
-Provision of access (online or offline)

6. Actors: Who can shape things? With whom?

City administration
Civic groups, associations
Individual citizens

7. Prerequisites:

Technical:
- Use of the technical potential to set up (electronic) access routes
- The information and communication technology must meet safety standards, so that communication with complete confidence can occur (data protection)

Structural:
- Two sides – the citizenry and the city – must be involved in the participatory processes (whereby the intensity of the participation can vary from simple information retrieval to initiatives and freely designing entire projects)
- The assessment of contributions presupposes the definition of indicators for the selection, thematic classification and importance or urgency of the posts. In order to have complete transparency (as one aspect of motivating civic participation), rating criteria that make it above all credible why certain posts are pursued at all (and which are not considered and why) and which contributions should be pursued or implemented as a priority should be made publicly available.

Cultural/historical:
- Responsive and dialogue-oriented policy making to maintain or stimulate motivation for citizen participation in at least two of the actors involved in the process throughout the entire process
- Commitment of stakeholders to enable the long-term implementation of the decisions or solutions

8. Obstacles/barriers:

- Bottlenecks in capacity (because the platform has to be „fed" with content)
- Sensitive issues or confidentiality agreements prevent the public debate
- Ensuring the quality of outcome in citizen participation:
o Use of filters?
o The formation of consensus and the quality of informati-

3 http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2012-02/partizipation-demokratie/seite-2.

on safeguarded at the same time?
o How is transparency ensured?
- Dealing with highly critical opinions or conflicts in the public debate (a single, but very drastically formulated statement [whether true or false] could adversely affect public opinion and prevent entire projects)

9. Indicators:

- Existence of an online platform for citizen participation
- Number of registered users
- Clicks or traffic to the platform pages

10. Special features/remarks: