2023 Work Plan Proposal
International Observatory on Participatory Democracy

Introduction

The International Observatory on Participatory Democracy is a network of local and regional governments, research centers and organizations from civil society that work to defend, boost and improve local democracy. The IOPD has collaborated with UCLG since 2006 and this work plan aims to reinforce this relationship by framing the action of IOPD more clearly in the domain of the network and aligning their strategies. UCGL is the main global network of cities and local governments, it represents these voices in the global context and its main principles are proximity, decentralization and political leadership. The IOPD should be the group that promotes reflection on democratic renewal and the defense of democratic values within the world organization.

In 2022, the pandemic situation has been under control in general terms, which has allowed the possibility to travel and organize face-to-face events again. We can highlight the UCLG World Congress held in Daejeon in October and the IOPD Conference in December in the city of Grenoble. The Pact for the Future of Humanity adopted at the UCLG Congress and the final declaration of Grenoble should be our reference guides for 2023 and the years to come.

In this work plan we want to define the strategic priorities, the thematic priorities and the lines of action as well as define the tasks and an approximate work schedule. The work plan must be implemented by the IOPD steering committee, the technical secretariat and the rest of the network members.

The IOPD working plan is divided into four parts:

PART 1. Strategic priorities

PART 2. Thematic priorities and axes of action

PART 3. Tasks to impulse networking

PART 4. Agenda

PART 1. Strategic priorities

Objectives

1. Strengthen IOPD' actions as an observatory

2. To expand the network and improving its utility

3. To frame some IOPD activities in the UCLG network

To achieve these objectives happen, we define the next strategic priorities:

❖ **PRIORITY A. Communication and awareness campaign**. Includes, on the one hand, the follow-up and internal IOPD communication, including its organs and its members. Its aim is to improve this kind of communication. On the other hand, it also includes external communication and awareness raising. Here the priority is to make IOPD activities more visible, to raise awareness among the general public about the importance of participatory democracy and to share the existing participatory experiences.

❖ **PRIORITY B. Evaluation of practices.** This kind of action has always been present in the IOPD and some activities have been developed along these lines, such as the Best Practice Awards. This kind of action would now be one of the four IOPD priorities as an observatory. The aim is for it to become not only a repository of experiences and a space for exchange, but also a tool for the promotion of the quality of participatory democracy, through the development of new actions.

❖ **PRIORITY C. Strengthening: growing the network**. This priority includes the identification of criteria to widen the network, like e.g. the kind of organisation/institution, the geographical location, etc. In addition, it includes the inclusion of new types of members, like for example social movements and informal platforms. Strengthening the network: to get new promoter members, governments or organizations that would co-leading the network

❖ **PRIORITY D. Learning: decentralised cooperation.** It is a priority not only to promote the growth of the network, but also to improve the quality of exchanges between members to incentivise decentralised learning.

PART 2. Thematic priorities and axes of action

Democracy is in crisis in many countries according to a broad consensus with a peak of populist political parties, diminution of electoral participation and according to the trust indicators towards political parties and institutions.

On the other hand, the emergence of new forms of participation and political mobilizations are channeled through communication technologies. These same experts don't agree on the causes or possible solutions to the challenges our societies are facing. Local governments have a key role in developing democratic innovations, in carrying out public policies that strengthen social and community ties and in defending human rights. The IOPD considers this

local governments' role and wants to contribute to weaving this network of cities and municipalities that work in promoting, defending and increasing local democracy.

 The agenda for local democracy is the IOPD reference guide for local governments to develop democracy.

2022 thematic priorities:

Two themes will continue to be priorities this year: "***the role of citizen participation in climate emergency and environmental challenges such as the loss of biodiversity***" and the "***gender perspective in citizen participation***".

Other priority topics of the network are:

- strengthen the narrative of the network through the recovery of the origins and history of the IOPD
- monitoring and analysis of practices compiled by the IOPD
- establish a working group of professionals facilitating participatory processes
- develop a quality index of participatory democracy

PART 3. Tasks to impulse networking

PRIORITY A. Communication and awareness campaign	
Internal communication	
Task 1	Diagnose of the existing communication mechanisms with members and proposal of new mechanisms in order to maintain permanent channels of exchange with them.
Task 2	Administration of the email account
Task 3	Update on activities and events, both to members and to the political representatives in the internal IOPD organs
External communication	

Task 4	Repository of experiences
	    a. Establishment of new criteria to systematize information about existing experiences, according to topics
	    b. Reflect upon the added value of this repository, compared to others
	    c. Active search of new experiences, activating the network
	    d. Co-production of the description of experiences, jointly with local actors

Task 5	Maintenance and update of the website and social media

Task 6	Publication of reports (related to tasks 10 and 11)
	    a. Publication of the annual report (coinciding with the annual conference)
	    b. Publication of special reports

Task 7	Annual Conference: a. Annual conference communication support
Task 8	Organization of three international events (according to priority contents, task 19)
Task 9	Participation in international events jointly with UCLG

PRIORITY B. Evaluation of practices	
Task 10	Participation in the partnership between UCLG and the Global Coalition for Democracy

Task 11	Special reports
	    a. Fundraising
	    b. Assignment (in relation to the priority contents)
	    c. Production of the report

Task 12	Best Practice Awards
	    a. Review of the criteria and process for the award
	    b. Call for candidacies

	c. Applications and selection process
	d. Publication of results
	e. To look for funds in order to offer a monetary award
Task 13	Coordination of mutual evaluation mechanisms (between members)

PRIORITY C: Strengthen: widening the network	
Task 14	Clean up of the current list of members (previous contact with inactive members)
Task 15	Identification of strategic criteria for the addition of new members

Task 16	Admission of new members:
	    a. Identification of potential members
	    b. Contact and addition of new members
	    c. Ask for information about their needs
	    d. Ask for an authorization to publish their data
	    e. Ask for contacts

Task 17	Admission of new promoter members:
	    a. Contact with local governments leaders in participatory democracy
	    b. To improve the new promoter members' role definition

PRIORITY D: Learning: decentralised cooperation and joint actions	

Task 18	Study of the collaboration forms (existing forms, incentives, technical resources and new proposals)
	    a. Assignment of the study
	    b. Production of the study

Task 19	Identification of priority content
Task 20	Development of the online platform PARTICIPATE OIDP

IOPD

PART 4: Calendar

January	
February	*UCLG Retreat* *Deployment of working groups*
March	*Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy, Mexico* *IOPD Webinar on participation and gender perspective / feminist municipalism*
April	
May	
June	*IOPD Virtual Meeting*
July	
August	
September	September 15 Democracy Day - virtual meeting OIDP Conference Rio de Janeiro ?
October	Conference Rio de Janeiro ?
November	Conference Rio de Janeiro ?
December	Conference Rio de Janeiro ?

To be scheduled according to the dates of the Rio de Janeiro Conference:
- preparation of the IOPD Award call for proposals
- launching of the IOPD Award call for proposals

- IOPD Award evaluation
- preparation of the IOPD Award publication

- Call for proposals for the Conference
- Call for General Assembly
- Coordinating committee meetings
- Mobilization of the membership for the conference

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