

10TH "BEST PRACTICE IN CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION" Award

AWARD APPLICATION FORM



A. BASIC INFORMATION:

Title of the experience : 1st Teenagers' Municipal Council "Living together in multicultural societies"		
Name of city/region : Ilion (Athens)		
Country: Greece		
Starting date: 21/10/2015		Finishing date : 21/10/2015
Population size: 84.793		
Surface area: 9.453 square kilometres		
Population Density: 8.970 persons/ square kilometre		
GDP per capita: 13.000 € (estimated)		
Sector of the economy: service sector		
Type of experience:	Participatory budget	
	Urban planning	
	Councils	V
	Diagnosis, prospection, prioritization, monitoring etc. workshops or spaces	
	Forums and audiences	
	Referendum/Public consultation	
	Citizenship judging committee	
	Open-government/ e-government	
	Public participation in the Law	
	Others	
Regional scope	Entire Region	V
	District	
	Neighbourhood	
Thematic area	Governance	V
	Education	V
	Transportation	
	Urban management	
	Health	
	Safety	
	Environment and/or urban agriculture	
	New social movements and associations	
	Culture	V
	Housing	
	Employment	
	Decentralization	
	Local Development	
	Learning/training	V
	Economy and/or finances	
Legal regulations		
Social inclusion	V	

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	All	
	Others	



B. PROCESS

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE EXPERIENCE OCCURRED

The experience took place within the framework of the European Local Democracy Week celebrated in late October 2015 under the 2015 annual priority of the Council of Europe "Living together in multicultural societies. Respect, dialogue, interaction". This priority was set by the Council of Europe after the terrorist attacks of January 2015 in the premises of the French satirical journal Charlie Hebdo and its importance was highlighted even further after the 13th of November 2015 coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris. The experience has gained more relevance, given that Greece has become a host country of migrants since the early nineties and a transit route for an unprecedented surge of refugee and migration flows in 2015 towards other European destinations. These people abandon their countries of origin either because of war or economic deprivation in search for a better future in Europe posing serious challenges for national and regional/ local authorities both in transit and destination countries. The vast number of the newcomers coupled with the lack of adequate reception conditions both in the spots of arrival and the rest of the country has forced regional and municipal authorities and the local population to offer relief and shelter, often on voluntary basis.

Securing decent reception conditions and adequate registration for the incoming population and mobilize local population to volunteer, to counter anti-foreign sentiment and racism and to ease the security concerns the massive movement of refugees and migrants pose after the recent terrorist attacks in France and elsewhere has become a huge task for local authorities in Greece during a very strained economic conjuncture for the country because of the ongoing recession and the high unemployment rate.

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OBJECTIVES

The aim of the initiative

The experience had the following objectives:

- to familiarise the participants with the functioning (regulations, organization) of the municipal council, thus promoting a stronger sense of citizenship within young people who are often prone to extremist ideologies and cultivating a greater sense of legitimacy and confidence in democratically elected public authorities.
- to promote democratic values and traditions entrenched in the European culture and applied in their most authentic way on the local tier of governance.
- to train the participants to conduct research on primary and secondary sources on a given issue, to articulate arguments and counterarguments and debate in a typical municipal council and to present their arguments before public.
- to sensitize the participants with the state of refugees, their rights arising from the international and European legal instruments (1951 Convention, European directives etc.) and empower them to evaluate the information they receive from various sources (press, television, internet) which are often partial, lack accuracy and sparkles anti-foreign sentiment and racism.

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DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE

The Teenagers' Municipal Council was convened in Ilion (Athens-Greece) on the 21st of October 2015 in the municipal premises under the form of a simulation exercise in the presence of the Mayor of Ilion, municipal councillors, the director of the First Reception Service of the Ministry of Interior and many people.

The 26 participants all aged between 15-16 years old and students of 3 schools of secondary education of Ilion, had one theme in the agenda: "Living together in multicultural societies. Respect, dialogue, interaction. Benefits and challenges ahead". They were divided in three groups of ten, representing the municipal authorities, the opposition and the civil society (local entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, local committees). The simulation exercise was coordinated by the president of the municipal council (the real one) who was responsible to give the floor to each participant so as the positions of all groups be presented in balanced way and on equal terms.



The participants representing the municipal authorities developed their arguments in favor of multiculturalism. More specifically they recalled the experience of Greek Diaspora and the experience of former Greeks as refugees abroad. They mentioned the obligation of national and local authorities to respect the rights of refugees enshrined in international treaties, European and national legislation such as the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees, the European directives on minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers and for granting and recalling the refugee status and Greek laws that incorporate the above mentioned obligations in the internal legal order. They highlighted the role migrants and refugees can play

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in filling labor market needs in sectors where Greek employees are scarce and functioning complementary with their Greek counterparts bringing valuable skills and experiences with them. They stressed their contribution in enriching local culture and promoting tolerance and mutual understanding between different ethnic groups, religious beliefs and cultures. Their success in overcoming suffering and discomfort in their quest to find a better place to live away from their country of origin and their efforts to adapt in a new society make them successful models inspiring other people with their courage and persistence, as it was also mentioned by the supporters of multiculturalism.

For its part, the opposition side referred extensively to the difficult economic situation of the country, the high unemployment rate and the lack of financial resources that do not allow the absorption of all incoming migrants and refugees in Greece. They also warned about the danger of spreading racism and tension among Greeks and foreigners especially in places of great concentration of migrants. The security challenges that pose the flux of migrants given the lack of infrastructure for proper registration in entry spots was also raised. The opposition stressed the need for more European help through financial assistance and a more equal redistribution of migrants and refugees according to each European country's GDP.

Participants of the civil society representing the local market expressed their concern about a possible degradation of the local society because of the large number of migrants in their region. Representatives of school associations emphasized the need to set up special classes for the reception of school aged migrants in order to secure their proper adjustment in school life and participants acting as members of a local NGO supported the idea of setting a network of volunteers to provide incomers with relief, food and shelter in an attempt to function complementary with state and local authorities.

LEADERSHIP AND SHARED RESPONSABILITES.

The initiative was organised by the Department of Development, Co-financed and European projects of the Municipality of Ilion marking our participation in the European Local Democracy Week 2015. The participants worked together and under the guidance of their teachers to prepare their arguments either in favour or against multiculturalism. They conducted research on primary (conventions and legal texts) and secondary sources (documents, press articles) and held contacts with experts on the field to enrich their argumentation in an attempt to present all possible aspects of multiculturalism, migration and asylum, the benefits and the challenges they pose.

The Department of the Municipal Council provided them with directions and guidance concerning the rules and norms that define the workings of a municipal council's meeting.

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COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES OR WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS OF THE SAME MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

The participants of the three schools involved worked under the supervision of the Department of Development, Co-financed and European projects of the Municipality of Ilion and received assistance by the Municipal Councils' Department regarding the technicalities of the functioning of the municipal council's meeting. They held two meetings with experts of the First Reception Service for guidance concerning the legal status of refugees and migrants, the legal rights and obligations of both groups, the distinction between the refugee and the migrant, the minimum standards that must apply to reception conditions etc.

They also visited a Reception Centre of female refugees victims of trafficking located in Ilion and run by state and municipal authorities and held in-depth discussions with the personnel and some of the women hosted in the facility, who shared with them their stories, in an attempt to enrich their argumentation.

C. METHODOLOGY

DESCRIBE THE METHODOLOGY AND THE PARTICIPATION MECANISMS IMPLEMENTED IN THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE PROCESS.

The simulation exercise was selected as a more vivid and interactive form of approaching the subject.

The selection criteria of the participants secured gender equality and participation of more than one ethnic groups.

The participants were divided in three groups: those representing the municipal authorities who were in favour of multiculturalism. The opposition which expressed concern towards the phenomenon. And the representatives of the civil society expressing either contrast (in the case of local shopkeepers) or support (in the case of the NGO) or proposing measures to help local authorities to handle the issue (in the case of the school association).

The participants conducted extensive research on primary and secondary sources to acquaint themselves with the notion of migrants and refugees.

They held interviews with experts from the First Reception Service to get a more day-to-day view of the issue.

They followed the press coverage of migration and refugee issues in local portals and websites (of the islands in Mytilini and Kos) where the incoming flows where arriving.

They attended a municipal council meeting to understand its functioning, the roles

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of the participants and the timeframe within which they would have to express their views.



D. FUNDING STRATEGY AND BUDGET

BUDGET

Total amount and percentage amount over the total costs of the project/institution/department.

The total cost of the project amounted to 1070 euros. The cost per expense category is analyzed as follows:

- printed material, posters, certificates of attendance 50 € (4,67% of the total cost)
- photographic and video coverage 690 € (64,48% of the total cost)
- coach hire for visit to the reception centre 80 € (7,47% of the total cost)
- buffet after the event 250 € (23,36% of the total cost)

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FUNDING STRATEGY

Origin of funds (own, subsidies, donations, etc.). List of partners to the initiative noting if they are public or private actors.

The total cost of the event was covered from own resources of the municipal budget.

In the organization of the event contributed as partners three local schools of secondary education, the third, the fifth and the tenth Gymnasium of Ilion, with 12 students each.

All of the partners involved in the event were public actors.

E. INFORMATION SPREADING AND FEED-BACK TO THE PARTICIPANTS

DESCRIPTION OF THE INFORMATION DISSEMINATED DURING THE PROCESS.

First, the participants and the public of the simulation exercise got a better understanding of how a municipal council functions (agenda setting, succession of the speakers, timeframe, the role of the majority and the opposition, the voting process).

Secondly, several aspects of multiculturalism, migration and asylum issues were presented such as the actors involved, their legal position according to international, European and national law, the challenges the incoming population poses to the receiving societies, the interaction between sending and receiving countries, the externalities of a national policy response towards this phenomenon to other neighboring countries etc.

Thirdly, the minutes of the Teenagers' Municipal Council were kept, made public and uploaded to the official website of the Municipality of Ilion.

FEED-BACK TO THE PARTICIPANTS

To whom has the information been returned? (General, individual, sectorial return). In which stage/s of the process the information has been returned? Is the return mandatory? Used means/ channels for returning the information.

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The information disseminated by the simulation exercise reached the participating students and their teachers in all stages of the project (preparation and presentation phase) regarding both the knowledge they acquired about the functioning of the municipal council and the ability to influence its decisions as members of the civil society and the understanding of migration and asylum issues they got through their research.

The present viewers and the general public received the information during the simulation exercise by its live broadcast through the portal of the municipality and the web tv (http://www.hellasnews.tv/site/index.php?option=com_seyret&Itemid=90&task=videodirectlink&id=1312) and its transmission in the sign language so as to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Finally, both the participants, the public and the municipal councillors received in the aftermath of the event a copy of the minutes of the Teenagers' Municipal Council.



F. RESULTS

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS. PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS OVER THE TARGET POPULATION GROUP. PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

The number of the participating students were 26, all drawn from three schools of



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secondary education: the third, the fifth and the tenth Gymnasium of Ilion. All three schools mentioned above represent approximately 15% of the total student population of the age of 15-16 in our town.

Attempts were made to secure gender equality and ethnic diversity in the simulation exercise through the equal representation of both sexes and the participation of students of more than one ethnic groups.

ΔΗΜΟΣ ΙΛΙΟΥ

ΠΡΟΣΚΛΗΣΗ

Ο Δήμαρχος Ιλίου Νίκος Ζενέτος σας προσκαλεί στην εκδήλωση της 1ης ευρωπαϊκής εβδομάδας τοπικής δημοκρατίας που έχει ως σκοπό την καθιέρωση του Δημοτικού Συμβουλίου Εφήβων ως επίσιου θεσμού.

ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΟ ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΙΟ ΕΦΗΒΩΝ

1n ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΗ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΑ ΤΟΠΙΚΗΣ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑΣ

Τρίτη 20 Οκτωβρίου 2015

ΔΗΜΑΡΧΕΙΟ ΙΛΙΟΥ Ωρα: 19.00

HAVE THE RESULTS BEEN DOCUMENTED? WHAT KIND OF DOCUMENTATION IS IT? HAVE OUTCOMES BEEN RETURNED TO THE CITIZENS?

The minutes of the 1st Teenagers' Municipal Council have been kept and disseminated to all participants (students and teachers) and uploaded to the official website of the Municipality of Ilion.

Other material of the simulation exercise (press releases, photos, videos) has been uploaded to the official website of the Municipality of Ilion (www.ilion.gr) and is available to the broad public.

The event was also presented through the web tv (http://www.hellasnews.tv/site/index.php?option=com_seyret&Itemid=90&task=videodirectlink&id=1312) and was also transmitted in the sign language so as to be accessible to people with disabilities.

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IMPACTS ON PUBLIC POLICY. PLEASE DESCRIBE IF, ONCE THE EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED, HAVE THERE BEEN CHANGES IN THE LEGISLATION, ACTIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATION (NEW PLANS, NEW PROJECTS), BUDGET AND/OR MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT.

Given the success of the 1st Teenagers' Municipal Council, the municipal authorities have committed to repeat the simulation exercise next year within the framework of the 2016 European Local Democracy Week and in accordance with the thematic priority of the Council of Europe for 2016. While remaining consistent to the general thematic priority of the Council of Europe for 2016, the simulation exercise will examine a real problem of local interest and will result in a resolution. The municipal authorities have committed to take action and try to resolve the issue on the agenda in accordance with the resolution of the Teenagers' Municipal Council. This intention expressed by the municipal authorities upgrades substantially the Teenagers' Municipal Council and gives greater effectiveness to its functioning and resolutions.

Another possibility that is under examination is for the Teenagers' Municipal Council to take an institutional character and function on a permanent basis with advisory role on issues of youth and education.

IMPACTS ON THE ACTORS. CULTURAL EFFECTS AMONG PARTICIPANTS AND CULTURAL EFFECTS AT THE ADMINISTRATION (TECHNICAL STAFF, POLITICAL STAFF) CAN BE DESCRIBED?

For the participants the project marked their first contact with research process. They learned how to seek information, articulate arguments and present them before public in a persuasive manner. Furthermore, they acquaint themselves with the policy process and with the functioning of a municipal council.

For the administration, the thorough analysis by the students, their respect on the rules and time schedules of the procedure has been very instructive.

In light of all these the administration is examining the possibility to engage the youngsters in the local policy process on a permanent basis setting up a body with advisory character.

EXTERNAL IMPACTS. IS THE EXPERIENCE TRANSFERABLE? CAN IT BE REPLICATED IN ANOTHER CITY OR BY ANOTHER ORGANISATION?

The simulation exercise can be easily transferred to other municipal or public entities thanks to its low budget, the proximity to all potential stakeholders and the relative ease to mobilise them to participate in a similar project. The project was given broad publicity through different channels (leaflets, posters, press releases, website announcement) and was also uploaded to the website of the European Local Democracy Week so as to be accessible to anyone interested.

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G. EVALUATION AND MONITORING.

DESCRIBE SHORTLY WHAT KIND OF EVALUATION (INTERNAL/EXTERNAL) HAS BEEN FORESEEN FOR THE PROCESS, WHO WILL CONDUCT IT AND WHICH PARAMETERS WILL BE MEASURED.

An internal evaluation conducted by the Department of Development, Co-financed and European projects of the Municipality of Ilion is in progress and is focusing among others on the following criteria: a) completeness in the presentation of all arguments, b) vividness/ persuasiveness of the process (degree in which the whole process resembled with a real municipal council), c) gender equality in the group of participants, d) representation of more than one ethnic groups, e) respect of the process norms (time schedule, absence of interruptions etc.), f) publicity of the project, g) attendance, h) relevance of the issue under examination with the current situation in the local society/ country.

At the same time an external evaluation is ongoing by the public who has been called to contribute with remarks and proposals either by responding to a questionnaire distributed or by sending relevant messages to the social media account of the municipality.



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WILL CITIZENS BE INVOLVED IN THE EVALUATION? WILL THEY BE PROVIDED WITH THE EVALUATION'S RESULTS?

A questionnaire was disseminated to the public that was present in the simulation exercise and was encouraged to fill it evaluating the project. The criteria upon which the evaluation of the public was conducted were the same with those taken into account during the internal evaluation (completeness of the presentations, vividness, gender equality, representation of more than one ethnic groups, respect of the norms, publicity given to the project, attendance, relevance of simulation's subject with the current political situation).

The participants (students, teachers) were also encouraged to contribute in the evaluation of the simulation exercise with their remarks through different channels (written reports, messages on twitter).

All comments and remarks will be received, processed and presented to the municipal authorities and will be made public as soon as the evaluation process is finalised.

ONCE THE EVALUATION PROCESS IS FINALIZED, IS THERE A CITIZENS' MONITORIZATION/ FOLLOW UP PROCESS FORESEEN?

Municipal authorities have committed to consider all remarks made by the public and the participants during the evaluation process and incorporate them in the project design of the simulation exercise ahead of the next European Local Democracy Week due to take place in October 2016.

Thus, public participation and interaction will be secured from the project design till the preparation and implementation of the 2016 project through an open consultation that will run from the moment that would become known the thematic priority of the Council of Europe for the 2016 European Local Democracy Week.

H. ABSTRACT AND CONCLUSIONS.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EXPERIENCE.

1) The presentation of a young girl of Albanian origin representing the municipal authorities in the simulation exercise exposing the difficulties her family and herself had encountered during their first years in Greece as migrants in their efforts to gain respect and acceptance and their struggle to overcome prejudice and stereotypes linked to her country of origin.

2) The introductory remark of the director of the First Reception Service exposing some very painful moments with desperate people seeking asylum that the personnel of the service had to deal with during the 4 years of its operation.

3) The awarding of certificates of attendance to the participants in the end of the

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exercise.

4) An educational visit in the reception centre of abused women and victims of trafficking in Ilion, which is run by state and municipal authorities, during which the students had the chance to speak with some of the women hosted there, who shared their stories with them.

FUTURE CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVE.

First, it will be sought to repeat the simulation exercise in 2016 ahead of the next European Local Democracy Week and taking into account the thematic priority of the Council of Europe for next year.

Secondly, and in case it succeeds in its mission to mobilise local society and to encourage participation in local governance, the simulation exercise could take a permanent character and be converted into an advisory body with alternating composition, having the mission to propose topics for discussion to the municipal administration and monitor the application of the respective decisions.

WHY CAN THE EXPERIENCE BE CONSIDERATED INNOVATIVE?

It was the 1st Teenagers' Municipal Council both in our municipality and in Greece according to available data.

The simulation exercise gave the chance to prospective citizens to conduct a thorough research on a very sensitive issue and to express themselves before public in a persuasive manner articulating arguments in favour or against the issue on the agenda.

The participants got an insight in practice on how democracy works getting a lesson of the value of dialogue, tolerance to different views and democratic principles, at a time when Euroscepticism, extremism and radicalisation soar in Europe.

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**ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΟ
ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΙΟ ΕΦΗΒΩΝ**

1^η ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΗ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΑ
ΤΟΠΙΚΗΣ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑΣ



**ΘΕΜΑ: "Ζώντας μαζί σε πολυπολιτισμικές κοινωνίες:
Σεβασμός, Διάλογος, Αλληλεπίδραση"**

Τρίτη 20 Οκτωβρίου 2015
ΔΗΜΑΡΧΕΙΟ ΙΛΙΟΥ Ωρα: 19.00