



PART 1: BASIC DATA

Title of the experience: Public E-Discussions	
Name of the city/region: Kazan	
Country: Russian Federation	
Institution presenting the candidacy: Information Technology and Communications Department	
Start date of the experience: 2018	
End date of the experience: ongoing	
Type of candidacy	New experience
Type of experience	E-government/open government
Objective of the experience	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation and to incorporate diversity as a criteria for inclusion
	Community empowerment
	To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy
	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy
Territorial area	All the territory
Thematic area	Urban management

PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Objectives

<p>Main objective of the innovative experience:</p> <p><u>Community Empowerment</u></p> <p>Kazan is the third capital of the Russian Federation, following Moscow and St Petersburg. Kazan is a city with over a million inhabitants, where ancient architecture intertwines with a modern metropolis. Kazan grows as the number of population rises. The city gets bigger and changes its face every day. This raises issues of urban city development, such as but not limited to broadening of new streets and city districts and the construction of residential development, kindergartens, schools, new road lanes and highways.</p> <p>A key issue for us here when addressing important issues of urban development is taking into account city residents’ interests. The main objective of Public E-discussions was to give residents a final decisive word over the issues of Urban Space policy.</p>
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How have you achieved this objective?

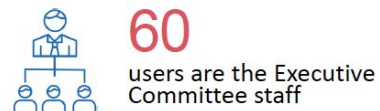
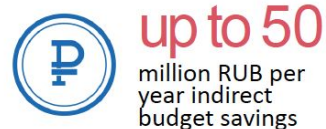
The Public E-Discussions system was developed in order to ensure the issues between city government and residents in the form of communication are addressed swiftly and conveniently. For the first time in Russia, in 2018, the Public Discussion Information System was developed and implemented. The primary objective of Public E-discussions is to engage city residents in a process of addressing socially valuable issues, to elicit public opinion and take into account proposals and comments. This includes the transition of all legally valuable public discussions on urban development to a digital form. Holding public discussions in a digital form can significantly expand the pool of participants in discussions and reduce costs of public discussions organisation. Moreover, it gives a great opportunity to all social groups to be engaged in addressing urban development issues.

To what extent has this objective been achieved?

As of 27 April 2020, 360 public discussions are registered in the Information System (IS) related to urban development in Kazan. The system has received over 2,600 questions and proposals. In total, more than 3,000 Kazan citizens have used the Public Discussion IS. During the implementation of urban agenda, all users' proposals were taken into account. In 2019, for the first time in Russia, the General Plan for the City was discussed in digital form.

Besides, a number of other advantages have been observed:

1. Residents are engaged and play an active part into the process of urban decision-making via our digital platform.
2. There is no need for personal presence in public discussions, which greatly saves time and funds.
3. Participants are not limited in time as the system is available 24/7.
4. Corruption risks are greatly reduced.
5. Public Discussions effectiveness has grown.
6. Budgetary savings (compared to regular face-to-face meetings)
7. Increase in residents' loyalty, trust and satisfaction of policy making processes.



Dimensions of the experience

Which is the most innovative aspect of the experience?

1. For the first time in the history of the city, Public Discussions on the Kazan City General Plan were held via an Information System. This document defines the main areas of City development in a course of 15 years. Thanks to E-discussions, residents and the city government could finally reach an agreement on the most crucial challenges.
2. Public hearings have been implemented online for the first time among all local government bodies in Russia. The system ensures the availability, publicness and transparency of public discussions. Today, anyone concerned can make a proposal through online public discussions from anywhere in the world.
3. The IS “Public Discussions” is the only existing one in Russia for conducting public discussions that does not use closed and proprietary technologies, but is instead based on open source software. The system has mechanisms to ensure information security.

To what extent is the procedure transferable?

We believe this project and approach are transferable. The project is scalable due to the flexibility of its elements and its transferability to other cities and regions. This allows a higher social benefit and possible financial profits at the same time. Moving from regular meetings to public discussions in a digital space can be a life-saver for any medium or large metropolitan city and region. Making the switch should not be difficult as it does not require neither significant costs of a city budget nor dedicated infrastructure.

Why do you consider that the experience is feasible?

The project can give city residents more freedom and an actual opportunity to influence decision-making of city authorities. There had been regular meetings on construction and broadening of new streets, city districts, and construction of residential development, kindergartens, schools, new road lanes and highways. Due to the objective reasons and circumstances, not all concerned residents were able to be physically present at these meetings in a certain time and place. The transition of public discussions to a digital space lets us hear and collect a maximum number of people no matter where they live, what age they are, their physical ability or social status. There is an extended period of time for each proposal when debate is open 24/7 and each authorized user can track all previous comments and express his own opinion. Besides, face-to-face public hearings and discussions in the form of regular meetings required significant human and financial costs from the city administration and for participants, forced to spend money on transportation and allow for free time.

How has the experience been coordinated with other actors and processes?

The project team includes the following responsible parties:

1. Action team of city residents
2. Information Technology and Communications Department
3. Department of Architecture and Urban Planning (project idea generator)



4. Software developer team and engineers
5. Kazan City Duma (council)

The legal requirements for holding public discussions are law established by the State. Therefore the general concept and procedure have already been predetermined.

The Kazan City Duma has formulated basic requirements for documents, residents’ rights, decision-making power, time limits for requests processing and execution. Both the action team and the project generator clarified the key elements which should be presented in the IS and defined main areas of responsibility.

After the development, a number of pilots were run, including all actors concerned. Follow-up and error correction works included all comments and recommendations. The total debugging time was more than a year.

As a result, the collective team allowed to conduct regular E-discussions over urban development issues on a regular basis.

What has been the level of co-responsibility?

All responsible parties were engaged in the process of project design and implementation.

Residents and business companies can both play two roles. As an initiator, proposing a new idea/subject or as an active participant of pre-existing discussions. The Kazan City Duma acts as organiser. It prepares and collects required documents, informs on dates when E-discussions are active, releases all required data in the platform, responds, follows and tracks comments and observations. After the deadline the Duma finalises the protocol and the conclusion of each discussion with further archive storing and access to information and documents.

Which evaluation and accountability mechanisms were used?

The system aims to ensure the full life cycle of the Public E-discussions procedure. It begins with questions, proposals and comments reception and ends when the final overview of the discussions results is released. In order to make our platform more reliable, scalable, user-friendly and secure, E-discussions provide full accounts, records, statistics and analytics required. There is also a standard feedback tool so each user can contact technical support and leave a message or recommendations for service maintenance. Therefore, public control ensures both transparency and accessibility, which raises the trust of residents in the state. Each participant in the discussion can actually track all proposals or questions made by other users and follow the results. Thanks to the shift into public E-discussions, corruption risks have been dramatically reduced.

Annex:

[Public E-Discussions](#)