

Next2Met Workshop on Citizen Participation and Digital Solutions

Initiatives and projects for local and participative development



On 24 March 2021, the webinar “**Citizen Participation and Digital Solutions**” organised by the **Next2Met** project took place online and gathered 7 speakers, presenting local and regional initiatives, and more than 40 participants from all over Europe. The event addressed the importance and means of citizens’

participation in local development and showcased innovative solutions and case studies implemented in Finland, Sweden, Ireland, and France.

During the first session, the following **case examples of citizens’ participation** were presented:

1. **Lockdown dialogues:** A tool called Erätauko (“Timeout”) to share hopes and concerns through constructive discussion presented by *Olli Toivonen, City of Lahti, Finland*. More than 1,100 people participated in 162 dialogues held in Finland between April and June 2020 and discussed the lockdown situation, sharing their worries and hopes for the future and imagining the post-COVID world. The method proved to provide deeper understanding and facilitate equal encounters among the participants, and it was met with very positive response.
2. **Resident participation for sustainable service provision** - Co-designing and testing together with the residents and businesses presented by *Mirja Kälviäinen, ASKEL project, LAB University of Applied Sciences, Finland*. In the ASKEL project, they started by analysing the residents’ needs in order to develop environmentally efficient services for residents in collaboration with local businesses. Residents’ wishes included: energy efficiency, product lending service, village helper, sharing know-how, repair workshop, organic and local food. Within the project, the MA students in design and media developed drafts for customer journeys for the selected services. These were co-designed further together with the resident participants.
3. **Veberöd – The Research Village** for a sustainable society, presented by *Jan Malmgren, Veberöd, Sweden*. In the village of Veberöd, in Southern Sweden, they developed innovative tools and devices, as sensors for watering trees, drones to ship medicines to elderly, measurements of water streams developed by a group of young inhabitants, a Fablab with 3D printers to print objects with local materials as clay, and they built a 3D model of the village to inform citizens and allow them to visualise sustainable solutions, measure energy and traffic and other indicators. They also collaborate with universities to further develop the project and keep knowledge, capital and people in the village, which becomes a model in itself for sustainable participative development.
4. **Maallemuuttajat 2030: Library of Things** – Involving local residents in planning and implementation presented by *Anna Claudelin, LUT University, Finland*. This project started in 2019 by asking inhabitants in Asikkala and Hollola rural areas, about sharing economy, via a questionnaire. Participants were especially interested in loaning cleaning and cooking equipment and tools. This initial idea developed, through workshops and more specific

questionnaires to library users, into the “Library of Things”, opened on 18 June 2020, which consists in a sharing point of items (such as sewing machines, tools, cleaning and cooking machines, etc.) available to citizens.

5. **Digital consultations** to gain insights of citizens, businesses and communities presented by *Christine Collins, Longford County Council, Ireland*. The aim of this initiative was to develop an inclusive means of consultation and engagement with stakeholders in the Longford County Council and to create a best practice for public consultation. They used digital tools (as Survey123 for ArcGIS and Mentimeter) to inform citizens, businesses and NGOs, about their local digital strategy and overcome challenges of inclusion, participation and engagement i.e due to a lack of digital infrastructure. Participants in the workshops organised by the County Council, expressed a very positive feedback and felt included in the process thanks to their involvement in the digital consultation.

After these short presentations and a quick poll about the impressions of the audience on the initiatives described above, Session 2, on **Harnessing Technology to Empower Citizens** was held. The following projects were presented:

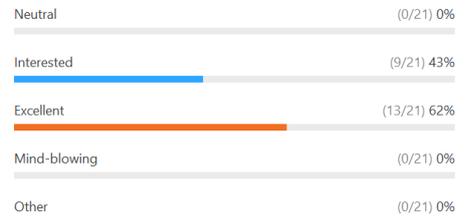
1. **Civocracy**: How to engage citizens in digital world? Case Lyon: mobilising a community to tackle climate change presented by *Esther Nass, Director Netherlands, Civocracy*. Civocracy presented the case study of Lyon, where they developed “Parlons Climat”, a citizen consultation which aimed at gathering ideas, best practices and feedback from citizens and stakeholders to co-create a 10-year Climate and Energy Plan (2020-2030), better inform Lyon’s inhabitants about the City’s current climate actions and develop a network of actors committed to tackling environmental challenges. The municipality did both online and offline actions and by using different options they were able to mobilise a great amount of people and create consensus around the Plan. The platform created by Civocracy to engage citizens had 18,076 visitors, 1,859 contributions and 40% of participants participated in previous discussions, showing the importance of a constant dialogue with citizens and of building a digital citizen network, as in the case of Lyon which is part of a broader network (including other municipalities and local stakeholders).
2. **NayaDaya**: Is your region worth your love? Empathy study and analytics as a solution to map deeper emotions, meanings, and engagement presented by *Maria Kausto-Turner, NayaDaya Inc., Finland*. NayaDaya is a project based on scientific research on empathy (conducted by the University of Geneva in Switzerland), which looks at emotions to predict behaviour and engagement levels. As an example, they applied their concept to study how people in the municipality of Asikkala in Finland, feel about their hometown or city and by using the “Emotional Value Index” (EVI) they try to predict positive, engaged and prosocial behavior in Finland. This approach can help studying many types of phenomena and can be used in different contexts, e.g., municipal and city brand, COVID-19 and climate actions, public services and programmes, and local citizenship and democracy in order to improve regional attraction and quality of life.

Afterwards, participants had the opportunity to discuss in separate break-out rooms with the speakers and at the end share their opinions and ask questions in the final Q&A session.

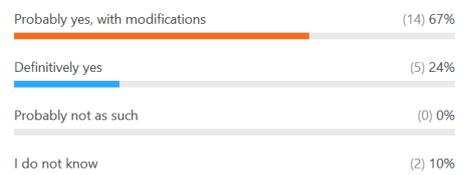
In conclusion, by using poll questions, we could see that participants in the webinar were interested in the initiatives presented, found the presentations excellent (62%), and 67% considered the cases applicable to their region, city, village, with modifications, while 24% were sure about their applicability.



1. What is your overall feeling on the presentations?
(Multiple choice)



2. Would any of these cases be applicable to your region, city, village?



The event represented an occasion to share ideas and successful projects, connect with participants and reinforce the community around the Next2Met project, specifically on the topic of Citizen Participation, with the aim of seeking further collaboration opportunities.