D 4.3- Final Report on the EUARENAS Piloting

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EUARENAS investigates the ways in which social movements coupled with local government reform initiatives, manifesting themselves in local-level experiments, create momentum for political change that include more inclusive and participatory forms of governance.

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Deliverable 4.3.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

This final report presents the comprehensive outcomes and insights from Work Package 4 (WP4) of the EUARENAS project. The primary objective of WP4 is to bridge research and action by testing and adapting existing tools and methods of deliberative and participatory democracy within specific urban areas across Europe. This deliverable summarizes the experiences and results from three pilot cities - Gdansk, Reggio Emilia and Voru[1] - emphasizing the innovative approaches to citizen engagement and deliberation.

The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed and structured account of the methodologies employed, the organization of piloting activities, and the lessons learned from the implementation phase. The scope includes theoretical frameworks, practical applications, and iterative processes that were central to the project's success. The report aims to offer valuable insights and tools for future participatory projects in urban areas, highlighting the support provided to cities and the impact of these efforts.

The interim report D4.2 provided a descriptive account of the initial stages of the pilot activities, detailing the preliminary methodologies, tools, and frameworks employed. It highlighted the early experiences of the pilot cities, initial findings, and the setup of collaborative platforms for continuous improvement. This final report builds on that foundation, transitioning from a descriptive narrative to a more structured, system-oriented approach. It emphasizes process-coaching, the support provided to cities in analysing their activities through Action Research, and the mutual learning processes developed throughout the project. WP4's main objectives are:

- **Bridge research and action:** Test and experience how deliberative and participatory democracy tools identified in different European cities can be innovatively transferred into specific urban contexts.
- **Collaborate across sectors:** Foster collaboration between cities, urban development experts, and academic researchers to implement participatory processes.
- **Support continuous monitoring and analysis:** Encourage and support cities in monitoring and analyzing their activities, providing feedback on the use of selected tools and methods.

WP4 is structured around three interconnected pillars:

- **Piloting**: Implementing participatory processes in urban areas.
- **Action research**: Conducting practice-based analysis to understand and improve the use of participatory tools and methods.

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[1] The originally planned fourth pilot city, Budapest Józsefváros has fallen out from the project due to budgetary reasons. The municipality couldn't join the project as full partner only as associated partner but finally didn't have the capacities to follow up the activities linked to the piloting and the action research.

● **Toolbox development**: Creating an experimental toolbox informed by the experiences and analyses from the pilot cities. The Toolbox has been presented in D.4.1. and D.4.4.

Figure 1: The three pillars of the EUARENAS pilots
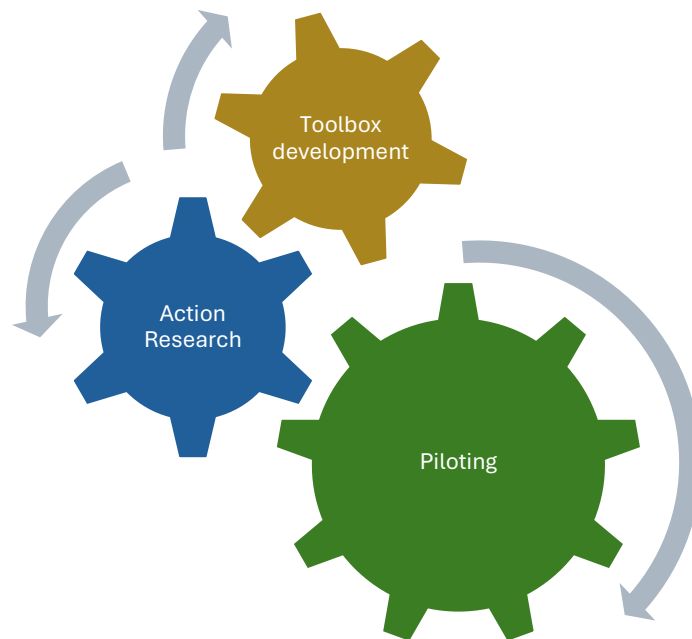
In the piloting phase, these pillars interact constantly, influencing each other and contributing to the overall project activities and results. The collaborative nature of WP4 ensures that cities not only implement participatory processes, but also actively learn from their experiences and contribute to a wider comprehension of effective participatory democracy practices.

Over the project's final year, there has been significant progress in refining and applying the methodologies and tools initially outlined in the interim report. The pilot cities - Gdansk, Reggio Emilia, and Võru - have completed their pilot activities, providing substantial data and insights into the effectiveness and adaptability of various participatory approaches.

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The following report summarizes the process, the main results and learning outcomes of the piloting. It is divided into the following parts:

Part I: Presentation of the Methodology utilised during the project

Part II. Description of the main elements of the piloting coordination

Part III. A summary of the results of the analysis of the pilots

Lats but not least, as a conclusion, a short list of recommendations have been gathered dedicated to cities and stakeholders intending to launch deliberative processes.

PART I: METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1. The Theory of Change: The overall approach for piloting

The Theory of Change (ToC) model serves as the analytical foundation for WP4. It provides a comprehensive description of how and why desired changes are expected to occur within specific contexts. The ToC framework outlines the causal pathways through which a set of interventions can lead to desired outcomes, using a strategic approach that begins with identifying the expected impact and then mapping out the necessary steps to achieve that impact. This analytical tool helps address the most pressing social and environmental challenges looming ahead by analysing dynamic situations in the institutional environment and enables organisations to think about their work more deeply (Ostrom et al., 2010; Serrat, 2017).

Figure 2: The Theory of Change framework
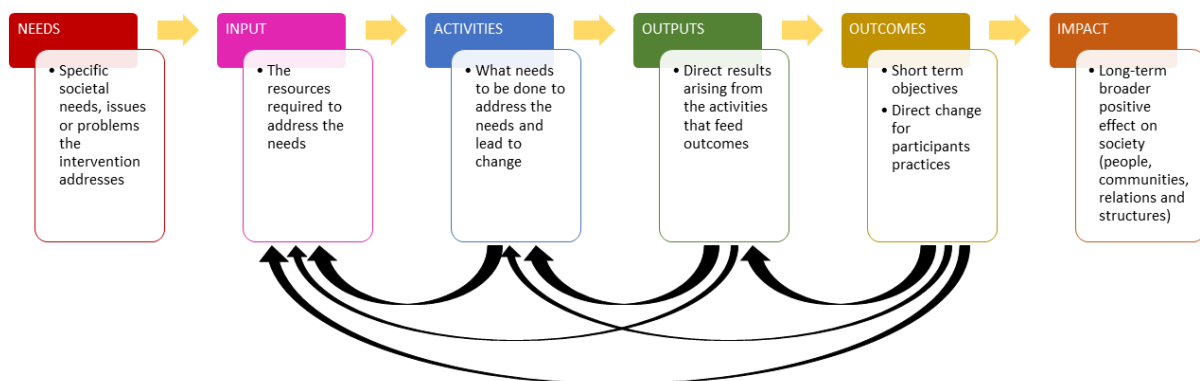
Even if the simplified hypothetical picture of expected change before activities is visualised linearly, when the Theory of Change (ToC) is employed as a framework for practice, it involves several feedback loops and requires regular evaluation. This indicates that ToC is a flexible and dynamic framework that allows for continuous learning from practice and enhances the understanding of how expected change is occurring in real life, making it a suitable approach for application in the EUARENAS piloting work package. The challenge lies in the fact that the world is not static, and we are actively co-creating the scene for ongoing actions.

The ToC model can be applied at different levels of activity, ranging from individual behavioural experiments to system-level change. In the EUARENAS project, it is utilised from the overall WP4 planning and assessment down to each pilot-project planning and assessment. The focus has been on how to design and implement activities to achieve identified impacts, determining the milestones for long-term achievement, and understanding how each action contributes to the necessary outcomes that bring about the expected change within the specified timeframe.

Application in Piloting

Preparation Cycle

- Conducting baseline evaluations to identify initial problems in citizen participation.
- Performing needs assessments through desk research, community reporting, and empathy interviews.
- Planning interventions for citizen engagement, resulting in the first action plans.

Implementation cycle:

- Dividing the implementation into iterative cycles of action, evaluation, and refinement.
- Conducting participatory workshops, elections, and hackathons to prototype and test deliberative tools.
- Using design thinking and action research methodologies to adapt and improve interventions based on feedback.

Evaluation Cycle:

- Continuously monitoring and assessing the impact of the interventions.
- Gathering feedback through surveys, empathy interviews, and focus groups to refine the tools and methods.
- Conducting cross-case analyses to compare and contrast the results from different pilot cities.

The cyclical nature of the ToC approach—planning, acting, observing, and reflecting—ensured that the piloting process was both responsive and proactive. This iterative method allowed cities to adapt their strategies based on real-time feedback and evolving circumstances, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the interventions.

Expected outcomes and impact

Applying the ToC model in WP4 was designed to achieve both immediate and long-term impacts.

Short-Term Outcomes

- Enhanced participatory processes: Improved engagement methods, such as participatory workshops in Gdansk, Citizen Councils (Consulte) in Reggio Emilia, and political Hackathons in Võru.
- Capacity building: Strengthened local teams and municipal staff with new skills and knowledge in deliberative democracy.
- Increased citizen involvement: Broader participation from diverse community groups, fostering inclusive decision-making.

Long-Term Impact

- Institutional changes: Establishment of sustainable participatory frameworks within municipal governance structures, such as the Consulte system in Reggio Emilia.
- Policy influence: Adoption of deliberative tools and methods in local policy-making processes, leading to more responsive and transparent governance.
- Social innovation: Creation of a replicable and adaptable participatory process and toolbox of participatory methods that can be applied in other cities and contexts

2. The Methodological framework of the Piloting

The methodological framework for Work Package 4 (WP4) of the EUARENAS project is formulated to promote innovation in participatory democracy through a methodical and dynamic approach. This framework encompasses a variety of methodologies and tools aimed at aiding cities in the implementation and enhancement of participatory processes. The fundamental elements of this framework comprise Action Research, Living Labs, Design Thinking, and an iterative mode of operation.

2.1. Action Research

Action Research (AR) is a participatory and practical approach that combines inquiry, reflection, and action to facilitate social change. This approach integrates theory and practice to generate knowledge about an action while simultaneously executing that action. AR emphasises the importance of practical experience in scientific research and encourages actions that achieve meaningful change. It is conducted partly or entirely by the actors (organisations, people, etc.) engaged in the realisation of the process, innovation, or service being studied. This ongoing activity runs parallel to the implementation and development of its subject, carried out by the practitioners involved.

AR supports social action practitioners in obtaining feedback for their communities, using self-reflective inquiry to improve the rationality, justice, understanding, and situations surrounding their practices. AR also provides information and feedback about the social change their actions create (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). From this perspective, AR serves as a self-monitoring tool implemented by the actors themselves, helping them continuously check the status of their projects/actions and recalibrate them if necessary. The ability to assess and adjust interventions continuously makes AR a suitable strategy for adapting to evolving environments.

In the EUARENAS project, AR was realised through an intersectoral collaboration between partners representing practical approaches (i.e., the piloting partners/cities) and those representing methodological and theoretical research. This ongoing collaboration allowed the partner cities to improve their actions continuously by learning new methods and tools for implementation and evaluation, while also sharing mutual experiences. The methodological and theoretical research partners benefited from conclusions derived from practical experiences, enhancing the overall research outcomes.

A critical component of the AR strategy in WP4 was the **process-coaching approac**h. Process coaching is a form of coaching that focuses on helping people learn and apply processes, by asking them open-ended questions, providing feedback, facilitating reflection, and encouraging action.[2] In EUARENAS, this approach involved supporting cities in analysing their activities and providing guidance and feedback to ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement. Process coaching included regular meetings, workshops, and hands-on support, enabling cities to reflect on their actions, identify challenges, and develop solutions collaboratively.

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[2]https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/what-best-tools-methods-process-coaching#:~:text=Process%20coaching%20is%20a%20form,facilitating%20reflection%2C%20and%20encouraging%20action.

Key elements of AR in WP4 include:

- **Ongoing monitoring**: Cities continuously monitored their activities and provided feedback to adjust and improve interventions.
- **Participatory evaluation**: Stakeholders were actively involved in evaluating the impact of participatory processes.
- **Real-time adjustments**: Interventions were adapted based on feedback and evolving conditions.
- **Process-coaching**: Cities received continuous support in analysing and refining their activities.

The elementary conditions of AR in WP4 are as follows:

1. **Objective**: Follow up and understand the change generated and how it is generated.

2. **Parallel implementation**: Intervention and research are implemented parallel to one another by the practitioners and actors themselves.

3. **Regular feedback**: AR provides regular feedback on activities, results, and goals, serving as a monitoring tool.

4. **Critical analysis**: AR produces critical analysis based on the reflections of involved individuals, creating a double outcome of continuous process monitoring and co-creation of main conclusions with target groups.

AR is increasingly recognized as a meta-methodology, extending beyond its traditional bounds to encompass various heterogeneous research practices across different fields (Erro-Garcés & Alfaro-Tanco, 2020). Within this general framework, AR can follow a variety of methods depending on the topics and aims of the process. Design Thinking, for instance, is one of the leading principles in AR. Additionally, being realised by the actors of a project and not by researchers alone, AR corresponds to the principles of **citizen science**. In the context of the EUARENAS project, AR also plays a crucial role in dialogue and community building, allowing ongoing internal discussions about problems faced and solutions found during the process.

In WP4 of EUARENAS, AR permanently followed and enriched the pilot activities, operating on different levels:

- **Educational and experimental level**: Helps cities use new approaches and methods to implement their actions.

- **Monitoring level**: Supports cities in continuously monitoring and updating their actions to achieve the expected impact.

- **Analytical level**: The use of common methods and tools helps WP partners analyse actions and results on a comparative basis.

Objectives of AR and synergies with other EUARENAS research fields include:

- Monitoring the pilots in a comparative way based on a common guideline for piloting cities.
- Providing a tool for local pilot cities to monitor their activities and evaluate the changes implemented.

- Analysing and understanding the piloting process, including the difficulties encountered, solutions found, and methods used.
- Contributing to impact assessment within EUARENAS.
- Contributing to policy recommendations concerning the use of deliberative tools in cities/areas with varying conditions and levels of deliberative democracy.

Strengths and challenges encountered based on one-to-one interviews and collective reflections with pilots project leaders[3]

Strengths:

1. **High engagement and attention:** Cities have reported significant engagement from stakeholders and the local community. Regular meetings have been essential in maintaining focus and contact with partners and local communities, thereby reinforcing ongoing engagement. This active involvement has been crucial in driving the participatory processes and maintaining momentum throughout the project. Participants have felt engaged in meaningful activities for local development and have been proud of their contributions, noting impacts on local, regional, and national levels.

2. **AR influence**: Despite initial challenges, AR helped structure activities and focus on key areas. The collaborative aspect of AR, with input from various cities, enriched the process, although some teams initially found it challenging to balance day-to-day actions with the broader AR framework. Reggio Emilia found it particularly beneficial for expanding analytical possibilities and incorporating an external perspective, which helped in systematic self-analysis.

3. **Cooperation and shared learning**: The cooperation model within WP4 facilitated systematic workflow reflection and the identification of shared impact areas. Regular meetings and interactions allowed cities to learn from each other's experiences, even though the diversity in pilot objectives and contexts sometimes limited direct applicability. It also made EUARENAS project partners able to continuously learn from the pilots and utilise these experiences as resources for their own work packages.

4. **Capacity building:** Continuous support and training provided through the process-coaching approach equipped local teams with the necessary skills and knowledge, enhancing the effectiveness of the interventions and ensuring their sustainability.

5. **Innovative tools and methods:** Tools like the MIRO platform and impact assessment toolbox, despite their initial complexity, were ultimately viewed as inspiring and helpful in organising activities and evaluations.

Challenges:

1. **Challenges in impact assessment:** Cities have reported challenges in planning and evaluating impacts. Gdansk has found the typical form of impact assessment to be too theoretical and not practical, and has had difficulty translating periodic evaluations into actionable steps. Reggio Emilia has pointed out the unpredictable nature of community issues and the complexity of differentiating between impact and results.

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[3] Interviews prepared with the leaders or representatives of the piloting teams 2 times: in June 2023 and in June 2024

2. **Resource intensive**: The ongoing monitoring, feedback, and adaptation processes required significant time and resources from cities and research partners. Regular meetings, while useful, were time-consuming.

3. **Coordination challenges**: Ensuring consistent communication and coordination among diverse stakeholders and partners was challenging. The differences in pilot objectives, contexts, and target groups made it difficult to share experiences and collaborate closely.

4. **Complexity of implementation**: The complexity of implementing AR in diverse urban contexts requires tailored approaches, sometimes leading to confusion and difficulties in the application of methodologies. The differences in local contexts (e.g., population size, and stakeholder engagement) further complicated collaboration.

5. **Short-term perspective**: The 1-1.5 year timeframe was too short to observe significant changes, making it challenging to identify and highlight small incremental changes. This short perspective also hindered the ability to see the long-term impact of the interventions.

6. **Challenges of dialogue between the cities:** Despite receiving support and continuous communication via AR, as well as exchanging with other project partners, the cities emphasised the need for more time to discuss their main ideas, challenges, and problems encountered during the pilots among themselves.

AR is a versatile process encompassing multiple subprocesses and can be considered an umbrella for different methods. In the EUARENAS project, the Living Labs methodology was used alongside tools of Design Thinking, enhancing the overall effectiveness and adaptability of the participatory processes.

2.2. Urban Living Labs

The Living Lab (LL) concept supports user-driven innovation processes by situating activities in real-world contexts rather than constructed laboratory settings. LLs address contemporary trends such as the transformation of users from passive consumers to active co-creators, the shortening of time from discovery to implementation, and increased adaptability. A Living Lab can be established in various environments — on a street, in a house, within an organisation, or encompassing an entire city or industry — depending on the project's scope.

In the EUARENAS project, Living Labs were practice-driven project organisations that facilitated and fostered open, collaborative innovation in citizen participation. They are based on the real-life environments of the pilot cities: Gdansk, Reggio Emilia, and Võru. These LLs served as arenas where democracy innovation processes were developed and studied, operating as intermediaries among citizens, research organisations, companies, cities, and regions for joint value co-creation, rapid prototyping, or validation to scale up innovation and businesses.

Key features of Living Labs in the EUARENAS project included:

1. **Real-life environment**: LLs situated their activities in the natural settings of the pilot cities, allowing for genuine user engagement and practical application of participatory tools and methods.

2. **User-driven innovation**: Citizens played an active role in co-creating solutions, reflecting the shift from passive to active participation in the innovation process.

3. **Collaborative platform**: LLs provided a space for diverse stakeholders to collaborate and innovate, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

4. **Intermediary role**: LLs acted as intermediaries among various stakeholders, facilitating joint value co-creation, rapid prototyping, and validation of innovative solutions.

The cities served as living labs and were actively involved in various work packages. In WP3, they shared information about their previous participatory and deliberative actions through case studies. In WP5, they contributed to future storytelling activities and worked on the concept of local democracy. They also indirectly contributed to the theoretical background (WP1), establishing policy recommendations and knowledge exchange (WP6), generating impact (WP8), and analysing methods (WP2). Under the EUARENAS project, collaborative work with the three living labs involved regular weekly online meetings held from June 2022 to June 2024(see also Part III).

Specific contributions of each Living Lab

● **Gdansk:** The Gdansk Living Lab was dedicated to creating a master plan for a specific area in the city through collaborative workshops. These workshops involved residents, social activists, and municipal officials in joint planning efforts. The iterative process of the Living Lab activities enabled ongoing feedback and adjustments, improving the incorporation of citizen input into urban planning.

● **Reggio Emilia:** In Reggio Emilia, the local leadership facilitated the establishment of Citizen Councils (Consulte) to institutionalise participatory decision-making. The process included public assemblies, online nominations, and elections, ultimately involving 124 elected councillors. These activities fostered dialogue between citizens and the administration, contributing to more inclusive governance.

● **Võru**: Võru's ULL focused on social and political hackathons to engage youth and other community members in policy-making processes. The hackathons provided a platform for innovative problem-solving and active citizen participation, highlighting the potential for co-creation in governance.

The integration of ULL activities across multiple work packages ensured that the insights and innovations developed within the labs have a broad impact on the overall project. By contributing to WP3, WP5, and other WPs, the Living Labs helped build a comprehensive understanding of participatory democracy, informed by both theoretical and practical perspectives.

The Living Labs methodology in the EUARENAS project provided a robust framework for fostering user-driven innovation and participatory democracy. By situating activities in real-life environments and actively engaging citizens as co-creators, the Living Labs bridged the gap between research and practice. Their integration across multiple work packages ensured that the innovations and insights developed had a wide-reaching impact, contributing to the project's overall success in advancing democratic participation and governance.

2.3. Design Thinking

Design Thinking (DT) offers a solution-based approach to tackle complex human and social problems. It involves close cooperation with target groups throughout the design process, from identifying needs to finalising solutions. DT's cyclical feedback loops aligned well with the iterative nature of AR and LL methodologies used in WP4.

Figure 3: The Model of Design Thinking
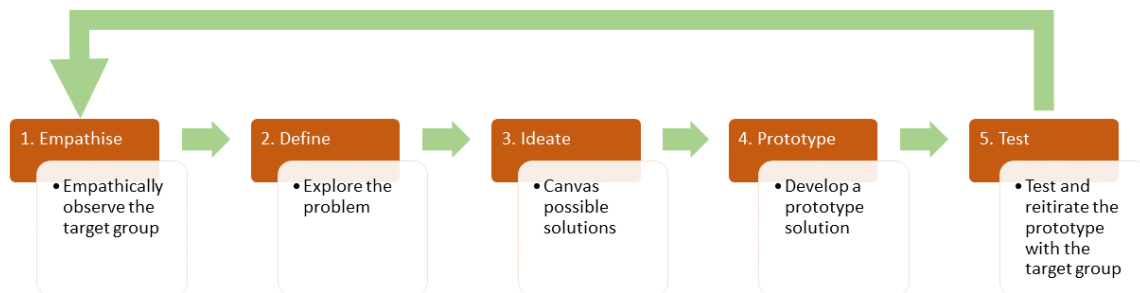
Key aspects of DT in WP4:

- **User-centred:** Focused on understanding and addressing the needs of the participants.
- **Iterative process:** Solutions were refined through repeated cycles of feedback and improvement.
- **Collaborative approach:** Engaged stakeholders in the co-creation of solutions.

In each pilot, the process began with an initial phase, followed by reflection and evaluation, and concluded with readaptation or reiteration. In Gdansk and Võru, this involved repeating the process, while in Reggio Emilia, it involved continuous follow-up.

Gdansk: In a series of participatory workshops, DT was employed to facilitate the development of a master plan for the Piecki-Migowo district. The primary focus was on gaining an in-depth understanding of the needs of both the residents and stakeholders involved. The iterative approach of DT proved to be instrumental, as it allowed for continuous refinement of the master plan based on the feedback received from the participants. This iterative process ensured that the plan was not only practical but also aligned with the aspirations of the community.

Reggio Emilia: The implementation of Citizen Councils (Consulte) was facilitated by DT, which organised public assemblies, online nominations, and elections to ensure a user-centred and collaborative design. Regular feedback loops were established to allow for adjustments to the councils' structures and processes, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness and inclusivity.

Võru: The social and political hackathons were structured by DT and focused on understanding problems from the users' perspective. These events brought community members together to co-create solutions for local challenges. The iterative feedback during the hackathons refined the solutions, making them more viable and impactful.

2.4. Mode of operation: Iterative (Cyclical)

AR is a cyclical process. Kurt Lewin's Spiral Theory argues that AR is a spiral of actions '*each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action*' (Lewin 1946, reproduced in Lewin 1948: 202-3). Lewin described the steps of the spiral as following self-reflective cycles, including planning a change, implementing the change, observing the process of implementation and consequences, reflecting on the process of change and re-planning; it is then repeated. EUARENAS's WP4 is following a similar logic (*Figure 4*), adopting a cyclical approach to its piloting activities. The process is structured into three main cycles, each designed to address specific phases of the project, with self-evaluation checkpoints marking the transition from one cycle to the next. These self-evaluations included impact assessments and reflections on how planned activities and expected outcomes were achieved, ensuring continuous learning and improvement.

The piloting work package is divided into 3 main cycles:

- **Preparation Cycle**, between Month 12 and Month 21 of the project (December 2021 - September 2022);

- **Implementation Cycle**, between Month 22 and Month 37 (October 2022 - January 2024) This cycle itself was divided into 3 main phases as follows:
    - Phase 1: Set up of the participatory tool within the pilot city
    - Phase 2: Evaluation, reflection and reiteration
    - Phase 3: Finalisation of the participatory tool

- **Evaluation cycle,** between Month 38 and Month 44 (including a 2 months of extension for the reporting) (February 2024 - August 2024)

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Figure 4: The Process of the EUARENAS Piloting from Preparation till Evaluation

3. A self-critical reflection on the methodology

The participatory approach has significantly contributed to bolstering stakeholder engagement across the pilots, fostering active participation and community involvement. By offering a framework for continuous improvement through real-time feedback and iterative refinement, the methodology has effectively structured activities and focused on key areas, enabling continuous adaptation based on community feedback. Situating activities in real-life environments has allowed for direct engagement with community challenges. Additionally, employing a user-centred, iterative, and collaborative approach has ensured that solutions were aligned with the needs and preferences of target groups. Dividing the project into preparation, implementation, and evaluation cycles has allowed for systematic planning, execution, and assessment, ensuring that each phase builds on the previous one, incorporating lessons learned and enabling continuous improvement.

Figure 4: The Process of the EUARENAS Piloting from Preparation till Evaluation

1. Baseline evaluation: identifying initial problem of citizens participation

2. Needs assessment: data via desk research, community reporting and

4. Taking first action round: Phase 1 of implementation (prototyping)

5. First evaluation: results of

3. Planning the intervention for citizen engagement

6. Feedback process on phase

8. Taking second action round: phase 2 of implementation

9. Second evaluation: results of

7. Planning the improved intervention and timeline (action plan 2)

10. Feedback process on phase 2 (focus groups, empathy interviews)

12. Taking third action round: Phase 3 of implementation (improved prototype)

13. Evaluation, cross case study analysis

11. Planning the improved intervention for post-project period (action plan 3)

Evaluation

Although measuring the impact of interventions has posed significant challenges due to the limited project timeframe, efforts are being made to distinguish between immediate results and long-term impact. Pilots have faced difficulties in translating periodic evaluations into practical actions, and the unpredictable nature of community topics has further complicated this assessment. Coordination and communication across multiple cities and stakeholders has also proven to be complex, with differences in pilot objectives, contexts, and target groups sometimes hindering effective experience sharing. Despite the resource-intensive nature of the iterative process, robust communication channels, such as regular meetings, workshops, and online platforms, have been established to facilitate better alignment and sharing of experiences. Furthermore, tailored training sessions and workshops have been provided to address specific needs, while continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms have been enhanced to ensure real-time adjustments to interventions, allowing for better responsiveness to stakeholder input and changing conditions.

Part II: Coordination of Piloting

EUARENAS introduced an environment along with a process enhancing permanent interactivity between the cities and the other project partners. In the following chapter the main elements of this process and the results achieved thus far will be presented.

1. WP4 as a collaborative platform

WP4 played a critical role within the project, encompassing a variety of diverse activities such as piloting, action research, and toolbox development. In order to effectively address the complexity of its tasks, WP4 necessitated an environment and organisations for ongoing collaboration among partners with varying roles, experiences, and capacities. WP4 is at the heart of the multi-actor approach utilised by EUARENAS, and was centred on the interaction and co-creation among stakeholders. It was structured to operate as a collaborative platform among project partners, where various roles (pilot cities, academic partners, non-academic partners, CoP members) were emphasised, and where, under the guidance of the WP lead, information was shared and mutual learning occurred.

Roles/positions of partners within WP4 are as follows:

1. **The piloting partners,** consisting of the municipalities of Reggio Emilia and Gdansk, and the Võru Development Centre, were actively engaged in implementing pilots. These partners were selected for the project based on their preliminary pilot ideas, which also served as a criterion for their inclusion. The pilot partners received support from other consortium members to ensure that their activities contribute to their development and address their specific needs. Additionally, these activities facilitate a comparative analysis of different aspects, such as activities, results, and tools employed.

2. **WP4 coordinators** and partners involved in the action research process directly supported the piloting process. They carried the responsibility of providing methodological, analytical, and organisational support to the pilots. They monitored and assisted the pilot activities to ensure that the results were comparable and contributed to the overall project outcomes. The Comparative Research Network (CRN), as the coordinator of the work package, with the permanent support of the University of Eastern Finland (UEF) offered methodological, analytical, and reporting support. The University Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali (LUISS) contributed to this process by leveraging its methodological and impact assessment expertise. Eutropian collaborated with the cities and other partners to design and develop the toolbox that aligns with the project's objectives.

3. **The other research partners, including work package leaders,** formed the third group within the work package. Their role involved analysing the results, providing feedback, and identifying synergies between the piloting efforts and the overall project. The SWPS University (SWPS) bridged the gap between theoretical research and the pilots, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and insights. The University of Gdansk (UG) focused on finding connections between the analysis of case studies and the pilots, ensuring that valuable insights were integrated. People Voice Media (PVM) contributed to the methodological support for the needs assessment through WP5, thereby enhancing the overall research efforts. Community of Practice (CoP) members provided overall feedback for assessing the piloting results and providing recommendations for planning.

2. Guiding principles for coordination: Co-creation and open dialogue

The action research process within the piloting work package relied significantly on a co-creation approach involving all partners. The primary principle guiding this process was to offer mutual support and guidance in implementing pilots while considering cities' specific needs, strategies, and opportunities. This approach ensured that the piloting process facilitated the development of innovative deliberative actions that contributed to enhancing participatory policies within each municipality. Furthermore, this co-creation framework ensured that the project generated comparable and innovative pilots that contributed to the overall project outcomes. To achieve these objectives, the coordination of the pilots involved

- continuous co-monitoring of local activities,
- the adaptation of the tools and methods used in the action research,
- support for the cities to address challenges encountered throughout the process and
- a space for exchange and learning from each other and the other project partners.

Flexibility, dialogue, and guidance based on co-creation were the pivotal characteristics of pilot coordination.

Dialogue and interaction between the cities and the partners commenced during the first year of the project, predating the official initiation of WP4. Pilot cities underwent interviews regarding their requirements and expectations from the project. These discussions aimed to facilitate the integration of pilot partners into the research project's framework and, conversely, to enlighten the research partners about the particular needs and realities present in the pilot cities. At the commencement of WP4, a two-day online launching workshop was conducted, during which partners deliberated the timeline of the preparation cycle for piloting. Additionally, pilot partners received training in utilising needs assessment tools such as empathy mapping, community reporting, stakeholder mapping, and inclusion.

During the Preparation Phase, the partners and pilot cities collaborated to co-design the main elements of the Zero evaluation template and the Action Plans, which served as the foundation for the pilots' implementations. Additionally, weekly piloting meetings were established and sustained from July 2022 to July 2024, providing a crucial platform for collaboration and co-creation between the pilots and project partners (*see 2.1*).

At the Project meeting in Gdansk (November-December 2022), partners and cities worked together to co-design the key aspects and elements of the pilots' impact assessment activities. These aspects were integrated into the impact assessment templates, which were shared with the cities on the WP4 Miro board (*see 2.2*), and into the evaluation templates completed by the cities at the conclusion of each phase of implementation.

In Phase 2 of Implementation, a two-day personal meeting held in Voru in March 2023 was dedicated to a collaborative reflection on the main learnings of the pilots thus far. This meeting also contributed to the co-design of the main questions for a future cross-case evaluation and the primary elements of the first report (D.4.2)[4].

During the project meeting in Wroclaw in September 2023, partners and pilot cities worked in groups to refine the main topics of evaluation identified in Voru. The outcomes of this workshop

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[4] EUARENAS Deliverable 4.2, June 2023

were integrated into the evaluation framework of the EUARENAS pilots, which was further developed and co-created by the partners during the initial months of the Evaluation cycle.

Throughout the evaluation cycle, the assessment of the pilots and their impacts comprised collaborative events. The final impact assessment was carried out by each city together with the piloting team and the closest participants (stakeholders) through the use of the Ripple Effect mapping method (February 2024). The evaluation of the pilots was also grounded in a community-based activity, whereby an evaluation event was organised in each pilot city (March 2024) with the involvement of local stakeholders, representatives of the local authorities, and inhabitants to co-evaluate the pilots using Community Reporting and Focus Group interviews.

2.1. Tool for coordinating co-creation: Regular meetings

Based on the discussion and feedback from pilot partners, the need for regular information sharing was identified to help organise piloting. Since Month 20, regular (weekly) online meetings have been introduced, scheduled every Thursday from 11 am to 12 pm on the Teams platform. These meetings became the main arenas for discussions and dialogue between the cities and the other research partners, but they have also been helpful for the permanent monitoring of, support for, and learning from the pilot activities and training. Regular weekly meetings have been a relevant choice in making project operations smooth and effective.

The agenda of the meetings varies depending on the circumstances. The main clusters of topics for information sharing and discussion have been:

- Important milestones in the pilots or the action research (for instance end or start of a phase within the piloting cycles);
- Internal tasks related to action research (for instance, impact assessment or evaluation);
- Sharing of ongoing activities and experiences by the cities with each other and with the other partners;
- Training and capacity building for the cities and partners. Before the use of some new tools, coordinators provided a short training to the cities (for instance on empathy mapping, action plan canvas, impact assessment, ripple-effect mapping etc);
- Pilot cities highlighting and asking their specific questions or presenting their specific needs.
- Dialogue and information sharing with the other WPs

These weekly meetings have also been dedicated to facilitating the smooth interaction between the pilots and other project activities, ensuring that the pilots fulfil their primary role as bridges between theory and practice. As the meetings took place consistently in the same online space, all partners were invited to join spontaneously or regularly to the meetings based on their availability and interests and/or to raise topics to discuss according to the activities within their work packages. As an example, a dialogue started between WP 1 and 4 in May 2023, in order to support a series of theoretical topics with practice-based answers. Also, a permanent interaction took place between WP 4 and 3, helping the pilot processes to also learn from the case study analysis; between WP 4 and 2 for the definition of methodology, and WP 4 and 8 for impact assessment. The topics for the meetings were announced a few days in advance of the meeting, and minutes were diligently recorded by the coordinator (CRN), and shared among the partners.

Piloting partners found these regular meetings valuable because they:

- Helped to hold the 'pace and rhythm of actions';
- Created space for direct communication and discussions around relevant issues for piloting including the cities needs and expectations regarding the Toolbox;
- Helped expand the understanding of the topic, and find inspiration and novel solutions to raised issues by sharing experiences and having an external view on the local actions;
- Mitigated the risk of not fulfilling the project expectations;
- Activated a regular self-evaluation of the pilot actions which have thus maintained a constant ongoing monitoring of the activities.

Furthermore, the partners involved or interested in WP4 were connected by a common mailing list, where the main information as well as the summaries of the meetings are shared.

2.2. Tool for coordinating co-creation: MIRO board

The work of the weekly meetings was supported by the co-creation of content on the WP4 shared MIRO board. The board served as a common working space but also as a storage space for all the information relevant to the cities. It stored the results of the different action research activities including needs assessment, action planning, Impact Assessment, etc., and the main results of the dialogue and exchange activities. The MIRO board was constantly available, the pilot cities and other partners used it as a resource of information and as a co-creation space in the frame of the online and offline meetings.

3. Narrative and storytelling-based tools for engaging stakeholders

In the process of AR, the narrative and storytelling-based tools obtained an important role in assessing the local needs and obtaining feedback about the piloting process from the team members and local participants. These tools were also used for the evaluation of the final results of the pilots.

3.1. Storytelling for needs assessment and evaluation

In the initial phase of piloting, the **citizen storytelling method** (D5.2[5]) based on the Community Reporting approach was utilised to identify the crucial needs of local residents and stakeholders. At the commencement of the project, each pilot city harboured an idea for a deliberative method promising to be piloted in the local context. However, in order to clarify the design and implementation plan of these conceptual models, a more precise understanding of the local context, experiences, needs, and assets was imperative. To establish a comparable understanding and to minimise overlaps between the activities of different cities, WP4 collaborated with WP3 and WP5, employing citizen storytelling methods and focus group interviews to identify local needs. These tools enabled the cities to develop a deeper understanding of the current citizen experiences pertaining to various issues and to explore signals regarding future possibilities and scenarios.

As the piloting progressed, storytelling emerged as a critical component of the self-assessment. In the advanced stages, the use of storytelling was less rigidly coordinated, allowing cities to **tailor the method according to their specific needs and contexts**. Not all pilots utilised storytelling equally or comparably, reflecting the diverse priorities and circumstances of each city. For example, Gdansk fully integrated storytelling into their self-assessment following the

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[5] EUARENAS Deliverable 5.2.

implementation phase, whereas other cities employed it more selectively, focusing on aspects most relevant to their local contexts. This flexibility ensured that the method remained useful and pertinent, even as its application varied across pilots.

Citizen storytelling and narratives were also utilised as a primary approach for the final evaluation of the pilot programs. In the evaluation cycle, each pilot city conducted **two narrative-based activities** to assess the impact and evaluate the overall pilot activities within the local communities. The activities involved the pilot teams, their main local partners, stakeholders, and citizen representatives. The first activity focused on assessing the final impact of the pilots using **Ripple Effect Mapping** (see 10.2). As a second step in the community-based evaluation, each pilot city organised a day-long evaluation event. The event included the participation of main stakeholders, local citizen representatives, and different municipal departments. The evaluation events were collaboratively prepared by the cities and the pilot coordination team, the cities themselves being responsible for the overall organisation. Each event commenced with the presentation of the previously prepared Ripple Effect Map by the pilot teams. It also incorporated a **focus group** discussion with stakeholders and a **community reporting** event, preferably involving citizens. Additionally, the evaluation events served as important local dissemination moments for the pilots. The results of the evaluation events were summarised by the pilot leaders and presented and discussed during the weekly meetings. The results of these summaries have been largely used for the creation of the WP 4 Evaluation Framework and the summary of the main findings of the pilots, described in Chapter III of this report.

3.2. Empathy interviews for getting feedback on the pilot process

The empathy interview is a technique employed in the Design Thinking method to comprehensively explore an individual's experience as a "user" of a product, space, process, goal, or environment. Its purpose is to gain insight into the decisions people make and the rationales behind these decisions. By delving into and understanding another person's thoughts, emotions, and motivations, one can ascertain their behavioural characteristics and needs. This understanding is invaluable for fostering innovation and developing products or services tailored to that person.

Empathy mapping is a narrative-based needs assessment method that relies on open dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. It enables the interviewer to analyse interview results by classifying the interviewee's messages based on verbal and non-verbal expressions, emotions, profound thoughts, and the interviewee's observations regarding how the external world reacts to a given topic. This approach provides a comprehensive overview of the true needs of the interviewee, encompassing needs and ideas that the individual may not have been able to express verbally or directly as concrete needs, but rather as feelings or thoughts.

The method of empathy mapping was utilised at various levels and stages during the piloting process. Cities engaged in empathy interviews with their team members at regular intervals, aiming to comprehend the challenges and triumphs encountered during the project's realisation. Additionally, they conducted empathy interviews with their target groups to assess their needs during events. The implementation of empathy mapping significantly contributed to the action research by offering a robust approach to the human and organisational factors involved in deliberative processes, thereby aiding in the analysis of the intuitive aspects of participatory processes. A common practice observed was the conduct of empathy interviews

by the pilot cities within their teams at the conclusion of each phase of the preparation cycle and the three phases of the implementation cycle.

4. Questionnaires for checking the state of art of the pilot cities

4.1. Zero evaluation

At the outset of the piloting process, it was crucial to establish a comprehensive understanding of the initial conditions in each pilot city. To achieve this, a "Zero Evaluation" was conducted in June 2022, six months after the start of the WP4. This evaluation was based on a questionnaire co-designed by the project coordinators, pilot cities, and other partners, ensuring that it addressed the specific needs and contexts of each city.

The Zero Evaluation served multiple purposes. First and foremost, it provided a baseline understanding of the socio-economic and political context of each city, which was essential for the continuous evaluation of the success and impact of the deliberative actions undertaken throughout the project. This initial assessment allowed for a non-standardized analysis of the overall deliberation process, taking into account the unique local conditions and possibilities.

The questionnaire required cities to present a broad picture of their initial situation, including socio-economic background, governance structures, and key challenges in areas such as social inclusion, environmental protection, and economic development. Additionally, cities were asked to provide insights into the existing deliberative tools they had been using and to identify potential additional resources for the pilots. This detailed information was crucial for tailoring the action research to the specific contexts of each city.

The Zero Evaluation template was divided into several sub-sections:

- **Socio-economic context**. A description of the city's overall socio-economic landscape, highlighting key challenges related to social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and economic development.

- **Governance and administration**. An overview of the city's political decision-making and administrative structures, providing context for how deliberative processes would be integrated.

- **Traditions of deliberation.** A summary of the city's experience with deliberative tools and practices prior to the pilot, offering a foundation for further development.

- **Local needs.** Identification of the main needs within the community, as determined through the initial needs assessment process.

- **Pilot objectives and tools**. A detailed outline of the main objectives for the pilot, including the tools to be used and the experiences upon which the pilot was based.

The results of the Zero Evaluation were incorporated into the ongoing action research in each city, allowing for continuous refinement and adaptation of the pilot activities.

4.2. Evaluation templates for monitoring the pilots

To ensure that the piloting process remained on track and responsive to emerging challenges, cities were required to fill out feedback evaluation templates at the end of each sub-phase of implementation: February 2022; September 2023 and January 2024.

These evaluation templates were designed to capture a wide range of data, including the activities carried out during the previous phase, the impact generated by these activities, and any challenges that cities encountered. By collecting this information, the evaluation templates played a key role in monitoring the progress of the pilots and identifying areas for improvement.

The main sub-sections of the evaluation templates included:

- **Implemented activities**. A record of the specific activities carried out during the previous phase of implementation.

- **Outreach**. Data on the number and composition of inhabitants and stakeholders engaged during the activities.

- **Partnership dynamics**. Information on the partners involved in the process, including any changes in partnership dynamics, such as partners dropping out or new partners joining.

- **Impact assessment**. An evaluation of the impact of the activities on various levels, aligned with the project's impact assessment tools.

- **Tools and innovation**. A description of the tools and innovative approaches used during the phase.

- **Summary of challenges**. A reflective summary of the difficulties and threats encountered, along with any other concluding remarks.

These evaluation templates enabled cities to assess whether they were aligning with their initial action plans, identify any missing elements, and address the main difficulties encountered during implementation. Additionally, the data collected through these templates provided a basis for conducting the analysis of the pilots, contributing to the overall understanding of the project's effectiveness and areas for future improvement.

5. Action planning tools

At the conclusion of the Preparation Cycle, pilot cities were instructed to develop their Action Plans using a process founded on the Theory of Change approach. This process was designed to prompt cities to approach piloting in an innovative manner by commencing with the desired impact to be achieved by the end of the pilot phase and beyond, rather than commencing with specific goals and activities. Cities were urged to contemplate the long-term change they aimed to bring about. Subsequently, they identified the anticipated impacts, outcomes, outputs, activities, and necessary inputs.

Following the completion of this initial reflective phase, cities were tasked with assessing the logical structure of their plan by working in reverse, ensuring that the planned activities and inputs would lead to the desired outputs and outcomes, ultimately resulting in the expected impact. To aid this process, pilot partners utilised an Action Planning Canvas, an interactive tool

on the MIRO board. Cities were encouraged to conduct co-creation workshops with their teams and stakeholders to collectively complete the canvas. Once the canvas was finalised and the interconnections between impact, outcomes, outputs, activities, and inputs were verified, cities elaborated their plans using the Action Planning Templates, which included a timeline for at least the initial implementation phase.

The action planning process spanned nearly two months, with coordinators offering close support through weekly meetings. Mini-trainings on the utilisation of the canvas and templates were provided, and cities provided feedback on their progress and challenges. The Action Planning Canvas and template contained standardised sub-elements, with explanations provided in a glossary distributed during the mini-trainings, ensuring that all city teams adhered to a consistent logical framework, thereby enabling comparability and fostering further dialogue.

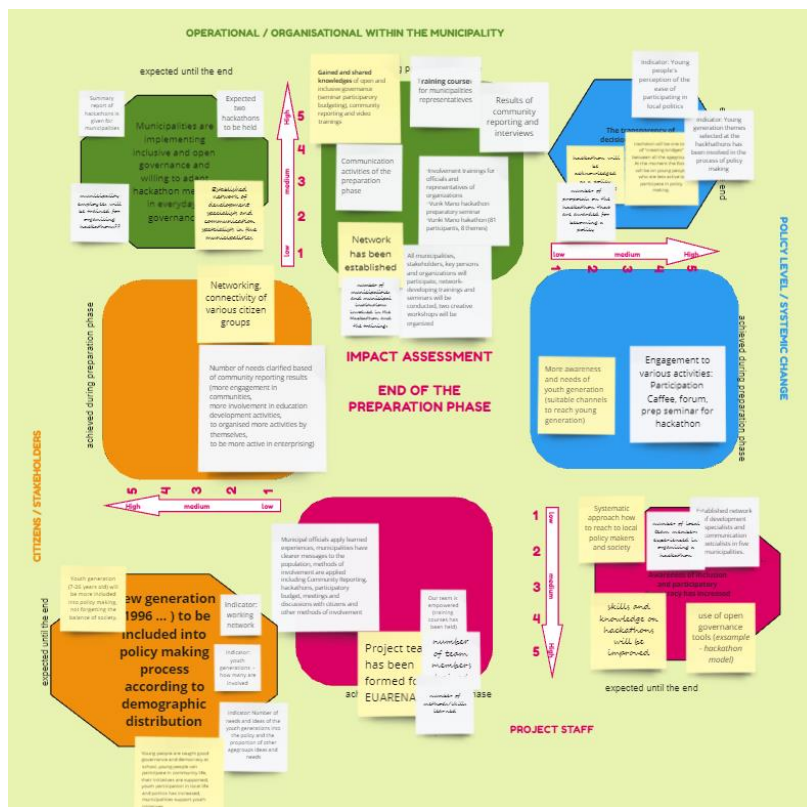# 6. Impact assessment tools

6.1. Impact Plus

During the implementation phase, the coordinators of the work package initiated an Impact Assessment process to support cities in regularly updating the impact of their activities and readapting their action plans based on these assessments. This process aligns with the Theory of Change principle, emphasising the importance of continuous reflection and adjustment. Cities were introduced to the "Impact Plus" tool, which allows the impact of activities to be assessed on four levels: 1) the team level, 2) the organisational/municipal level, 3) the level of citizens and stakeholders participating, and 4) the systemic or policy level. A gradual metric for assessing changes was also included. Mini-training sessions on using this tool were provided during the weekly meetings.[6]

The impact assessment was conducted in multiple steps throughout each phase. Initially, pilot partners identified the expected impacts of their projects by the end of the piloting. Then, in each phase of implementation, they conducted the impact assessment in two stages: at the beginning of the phase, they identified the expected impacts, and at the end of the phase, they described the impacts actually achieved. Comparing these two assessments provided cities with the information needed to recalibrate or improve their activities and timelines for the following phase.

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[6] More about this tool: https://erasmusplus.org.uk/impact-and-evaluation.html

Figure 5: Example of the impact planning tool on MIRO

Resource: EUARENAS WP4 MIRO board

According to the original expectations, the impact table of the last phase of implementation was planned to be compared with the expected impacts identified at the start of the impact assessment process (and also included into the Action Plans). However, as it turned out during the interviews conducted with the pilot cities during May/June 2023 as a resource for D.4.2[7]., the pilot teams found this process too theoretical and abstract to be used for reflecting on the impact achieved in such a short notice (*see also 3.1*.). Therefore, in the evaluation cycle of the project a different method has been used for the summary of the impact of the pilots: the Ripple Effect Mapping.

6.2. Ripple Effect Mapping

Ripple Effect Mapping is a technique for impact evaluation, specifically for community-based programmes/projects. It is designed to capture the 'ripples' of impact that are hard to measure by more traditional methods or that don't happen immediately. It involves people who are a part of a process/project reflecting upon and visually mapping intended and unintended changes. [8]

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[7] EUARENAS Deliverable 4.2.

[8] https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/190639

The method is:

- •Participatory and interactive

- •Iterative and conclusive

- •Adaptable to unique contexts

This method was initiated to the pilot cities by a mini-training and relevant documentation provided by the People's Voice Media in February 2024. Following this, each city organised their own Ripple Effect mapping workshops, resulting in the co-creation of their ripple effect maps with their team members and the closest collaborators and participants of the piloting. The Maps were used as an important resource for the community discussions during the evaluation events held in the cities during March 2024.

Figure 6: Ripple Effect Map of Reggio Emilia
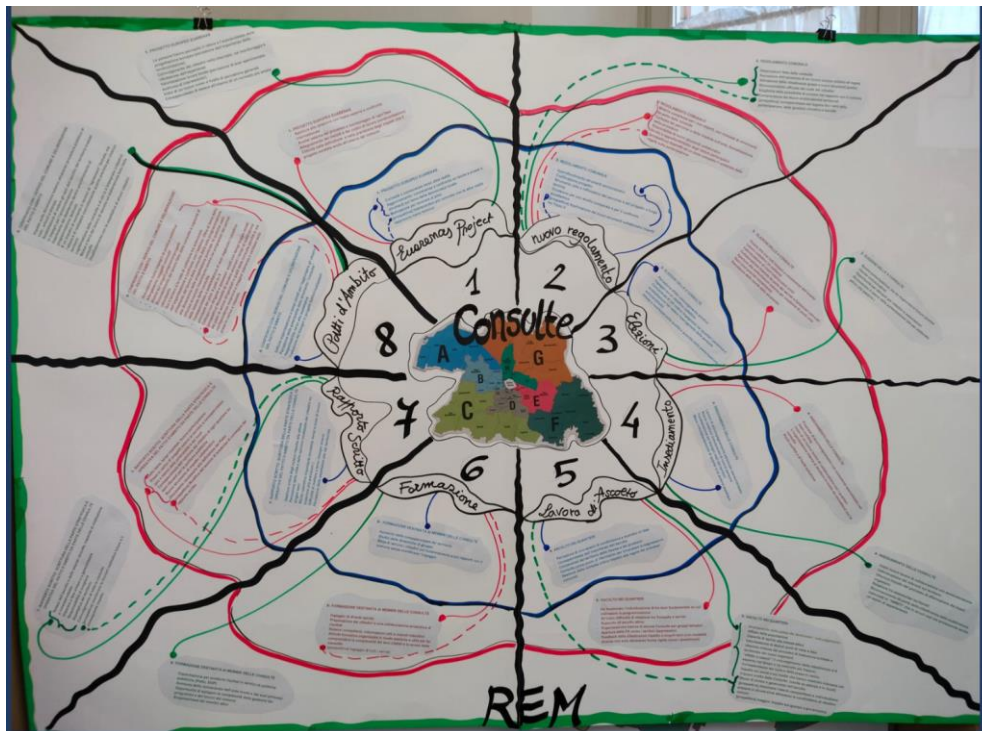
7. In summary

The methodology and pilot coordination utilised in WP4 of the EUARENAS project were designed to link research and action by testing and implementing participatory and deliberative democracy tools in diverse urban contexts. This was accomplished through the establishment of Living Labs across the pilot cities, where innovative approaches such as Action Research (AR), Living Labs (LL), and Design Thinking (DT) were utilised to tailor these tools to specific socio-economic and urban environments.

The methodology focused on continuous learning and adaptation, facilitated by iterative cycles of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Through these cycles, pilot cities were able to refine their approaches based on real-time feedback and impact assessments, ensuring that the tools used were not only effective but also tailored to local needs and conditions. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the flexibility and adaptability of participatory tools, revealing both the strengths and challenges of their application in varying contexts.

The methodology also fostered a collaborative environment, encouraging the exchange of knowledge and experiences between cities with different levels of experience in deliberative democracy. This collaborative effort ensured that the lessons learned contributed to a broader understanding of how to enhance democratic processes in urban areas across Europe.

Part III. THE PILOTS AND THEIR ANALYSIS

The piloting phase of the EUARENAS project aimed to achieve two principal objectives. Firstly, it sought to experiment with participatory tools in practical urban settings and to establish a linkage between theoretical concepts and real-world application through the use of Action Research. During this phase, cities involved in the project conducted thorough analyses and monitored their activities, making necessary adjustments based on identified needs, as extensively detailed in Part I and II of the project report. These participatory tools were drawn from the Toolbox, which contained an extensive inventory of methods and approaches catalogued from various European cities.

Secondly, the project sought to assess the potential transferability of deliberative tools across different urban contexts. This objective was pursued through collaborative endeavours, including both physical and virtual meetings, leading to the formulation of an evaluation framework that mirrored the categories of analysis delineated in the WP4 Toolbox (D.4.4[9]). Through these efforts, the project aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the effectiveness and adaptability of deliberative tools in diverse urban environments, laying the groundwork for valuable insights into the feasibility of implementing such tools across various city contexts.

1.The objectives and challenges of the analysis

Evaluating the success of deliberative processes poses a significant challenge due to their inherent complexity and reliance on local contexts. These processes are influenced by a myriad of factors, including political, economic, and social conditions, as well as stakeholder dynamics and cultural norms. The examples from WP4 illustrate how local conditions and stakeholder engagement levels can notably impact the trajectory and outcomes of a deliberative process. Consequently, employing solely predefined indicators to measure success proves to be quite challenging.

Furthermore, deliberative processes are protracted endeavours susceptible to diverse internal and external influences, such as elections, shifts in stakeholder roles, and unforeseen events like the COVID-19 pandemic or geopolitical changes. The unpredictability of these influences further complicates the assessment of such processes.

Practical illustrations from WP4 underscore the necessity for adaptable evaluation frameworks capable of accommodating the specific intricacies of various local contexts. By incorporating these practical experiences into the theoretical discourse, a more nuanced comprehension of the functioning of deliberative processes in practice is achieved, as well as more effective approaches to evaluating their success.

The strong influence of "unpredictable" factors makes deliberative processes flexible in their execution, and their success is difficult to assess based solely on preliminary identified quantitative and/or qualitative indicators. While it is important to consider the number and composition of participants, the character of stakeholders involved, and the outcomes of the process, many factors influencing the success of deliberative processes cannot be described by normative indicators due to the need for adaptation to local contexts.

Additionally, the difficulty in providing a normative analytical approach for deliberative processes stems from the fact that the effects of partial **outcomes are sometimes**

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unpredictable and dependent on local factors. This unpredictability can influence the overall follow-up of the process. For instance, in the EUARENAS piloting, the case of Gdansk exemplified this unpredictability, as the approach of the municipality towards local participatory workshops was entirely twisted due to the success of the first series of workshops, leading to an immediate adaptation of the process into another area of the city, which had not been explicitly planned by the team. Deliberative processes aimed at achieving certain outcomes might lead to antagonistic results or features. For example, Voru, while working to adapt the social hackathon as a policy-making tool, ultimately turned the fundamentally bottom-up event into a tool used for a top-down process. This raises questions about success, failure, and the conditions under which such processes could be transferred to other cities. It also prompts exploration of distinctions between the tool itself and the context in which it is used.

The subjective nature of these processes requires the use of narrative-based methods to effectively capture the nuanced outcomes of the pilots. Each pilot's assessment took into account the specific context of the process, considering both external and internal influences that may affect or alter events. Storytelling and narrative approaches, previously utilised in other aspects of EUARENAS WP 3, 5, and 8, played a crucial role in contextualising the deliberative processes within the unique local environments of each pilot city, providing valuable insights into the complexities and impacts of these initiatives. However, while these methods yielded valuable qualitative data, they also presented limitations.

The narrations provided by the pilot cities, based on the various narrative activities used for needs assessment, impact assessment, and evaluation, offered a nuanced picture of the specific activities, achieved results, and challenges within the cities. Nonetheless, narrative approaches may sometimes lack the objectivity and consistency offered by more quantitative methods, presenting challenges in generalising findings across different contexts. Furthermore, the subjective nature of storytelling can introduce biases, emphasising certain perspectives over others. Moreover, there remained the question of how to utilise these narratives concerning the unique local situations for a more global analysis of the transferability of the participatory tools and processes developed within the EUARENAS project. To mitigate these limitations, the analysis employed **a structured framework for storytelling**, ensuring that the narratives aligned with the study's broader objectives. Additionally, the narrative-based information was **combined with the more "traditional" quantitative and qualitative data** provided by the cities through various evaluation templates used to monitor the pilot activities.

The evaluation of deliberation quality and, consequently, its transferability, has been a central concern for several authors. Blacksher et al (2012) posits that due to the unpredictable and often perverse outcomes of deliberation, one should assess where and how deliberation brings about changes, and if the processes themselves adhere to basic requirements. The authors suggest the analysis of three main domains: 1) the structure, 2) the processes, and 3) the outcomes. The structure may encompass, for instance, the composition and representativeness of the participants, the quality and quantity of information provided to the participants, among others. Under processes, they propose analysing the quality of communication, dialogue, transparency, tolerance, and inclusivity. With regards to outcomes, the primary factor mentioned is the examination of the impact on the participants – essentially, the change generated by the process across various levels, from different social groups to the policy and decision-making level. Building on these fundamental considerations, recent studies suggest the development of more intricate evaluation frameworks for assessing the quality of deliberative processes (Claudia Chwalisz and Ieva Česnulaitytė, 2020), based on four main

fields: a) design integrity (pertaining to the fairness of the process itself), b) sound deliberation (inclusive of all elements linked to participant involvement), c) influential recommendations and actions (referring to the impact of the outcome on decision making), and d) impact on the wider public (considering the long-term effects of the process). While a myriad of attempts to analyse deliberative processes can be observed, one common underlying element necessitates emphasis: in all instances, the assessment is conducted on the basis of a narrative approach, allowing for the consideration of specific local circumstances.

In EUARENAS, the method developed for this analysis followed a similar line of thought. The co-design of the evaluation framework was preceded by some common assertions, as follows:

Individual analysis and identification of common elements instead of comparison: The evaluation of the three pilots does not seek to draw comparisons. Each of the three pilots is unique and not directly comparable, as also described in D.8.4.: "The difficulty in comparing pilot cities is partially attributed to their diversity. However, when comparing, we tend to seek similarities, which leads to the loss of diversity. Thus, there exists a tension between preserving the diversity of cases and the necessity to compare them" (D.8.4., page 54[10]). Similar to the assessment of the pilots' impact within WP8, the overall analysis of the pilots also focuses on their individual evaluation. Nevertheless, the co-designed evaluation framework allows for a cross-case analysis, highlighting common elements and approaches that link the three cases together.

The common approaches and challenges observed in the various aspects of the pilots may be regarded as generally characteristic of all participatory processes. These include, for instance, the inevitable gap between the ideal objectives of the process and the actual levels of participation achieved; the reliance on learning-by-doing perspectives; or the impossibility of attaining complete representation/participation of local societies.

Signals of Change instead of normative indicators: The aim of WP4 is not to assess the success of the pilot processes; rather, it is to provide a methodology, a set of questions, and approaches that the cities might utilise in the future for evaluating their processes. This is partly due to the short-term nature of the piloting, which renders such evaluation meaningless. Additionally, in the case of participatory processes, a normative evaluation cannot be provided: the effective success of the process relies significantly on external and internal factors. In Reggio Emilia, the pilot had been implemented based on a strong institutional background prepared prior to the project itself, whereas in Gdansk, the pilots merely captured the attention of policymakers, leaving a long road to effective policy making based on the results of the deliberative process. However, in both cases, a policy impact has been achieved, albeit at different levels and in different forms, which can be regarded as "signals of change" – reflecting the sentiments of Blacksher et al (2012).

2. The EUARENAS Piloting Evaluation Frame and Analysis

2.1. The co-creation of the Evaluation Frame

The evaluation framework used to analyse the outcomes of the EUARENAS pilots was collaboratively developed by project partners during the implementation cycle. A dedicated on-

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[10] EUARENAS Deliverable 8.4.

site meeting in Võru, held on March 29-30, 2023, included open discussions through world café groups to explore potential dimensions for a comparative analysis of the pilots. Moderators and participants at each table identified three primary fields of analysis:

1.) The Policy Impact Dimension: This group deliberated on the evaluation of the impact on policy formulation in order to accurately represent the tangible changes realised in the realm of policy development, in the form of indicators of change. The identified types of changes encompassed discussions on office competencies, shifts in the overall attitude towards municipal participation, increased engagement of important stakeholders, implementation of new methods in cities, assessment of strategic documents and political programs, restructuring of institutions, appointment of specialists in deliberative processes, and enhancement of inter-departmental collaboration.

2.) The Organisational Dimension of the Piloting Processes: This field of analysis mirrors the organisational aspects pertinent to the overall management and execution of the pilots, encompassing considerations related to participant motivation, recruitment and communication, pilot planning and implementation, and adaptations required compared to the initial plans.

3.) The Human and Local Democracy Dimensions of the Processes: This area of analysis explores the influence of the deliberative process on local societies, participants, and democratic structures, including aspects such as upholding democratic principles, enhancing participatory culture, preserving core values, and assessing impact on participants' daily lives and their interactions with local decision-makers and authorities.

Further deliberations during the online WP4 weekly meetings led to the addition of a fourth field:

4.) The Impacts of the Pilots on Local Knowledge: Learning, Exchange, and Transferability Dimensions: Learning and transferability were identified as crucial aspects of the deliberative processes and the EUARENAS pilots. Key questions in this domain included aspects related to learning and improvement within the pilots, as well as the replicability and transferability of the processes.

During the transnational meeting in Wroclaw in September 2024, the questions were revisited through group discussions, leading to the creation of the WP4 evaluation framework by the WP4 coordinators, which was subsequently reviewed once more with the partners. The final result of this co-creation process is as follows:

The EUARENAS PILOTING EVALUATION FRAME[11]

I.ORGANISATIONAL DIMENSION
Initial motivations and plans of piloting   *What were the city's initial motivations for starting the piloting?*   *What were the main needs and starting conditions for the piloting? How were these included into the pilot plan?*

The original plans and the main turning points during the piloting

How the original plan/design of the pilot was built and by whom? How did it change during the piloting and why?

What were the key turning points in the changes of the piloting process? What were the main reasons for the changes, what were the main internal and external effects?

How were the main values (sustainability, innovation, inclusivity, urban justice, replicability) taken into consideration during the pilot?

Did pilots manage to maintain the core values during the piloting? What were the main challenges linked to them?

The piloting team and internal collaborators and the impact of the pilot on them

What was the main composition of the pilot teams and internal collaborators? How did it change and what were the structural impacts of these changes on the piloting process?

What helps and what hinders the implementation of deliberative actions in „real life"?

What were the main internal motivations to push the piloting, and what were the main internal obstacles?

What are external factors that strengthened the pilot, and what were the main factors that weakened?

Sustainability of these actions after the project

How will the results of the pilot be used in the future?

What are the conditions and proofs of sustainability of the pilots' results?

Innovation in the deliberative process

What are the main innovative elements of the pilots?

Do they need further improvement?

Recruitment

How did the recruitment of citizens take place, what were the main activities, principles, actors? Who was difficult to engage and why?

How the main principles of inclusivity and urban justice were taken into consideration during recruitment? How did the pilot help to increase the diversity of voices?

Communication

What were the main communication channels used during the pilot with the different target groups?

What were the main difficulties, challenges encountered?

II. POLICY DIMENSION

Impact of the pilots on the policy making - engagement of policy makers

What were the main processes for engaging policy makers into the process and for channelling the results of the pilots into the policy making?

What are the main signals of change on the different levels of policy making linked to the pilot?

The role of the pilots in the legally binding regulations and its embeddedness to official processes in the pilot cities

What is the role of the piloting in the change of legal/policy making structures?

Changes in the legal/regulation system

Were there any changes made to city regulations linked to the piloting?

The stakeholder ecosystem

How did the stakeholder ecosystem around the pilot and their role in policy making have changed during the overall piloting process?

What are the key stakeholders involved in the piloting and what are their roles in the city and their connection to the local policies? From which point did they get involved and how their roles changed?

Relations between the stakeholders

Did the relationship between stakeholders and the city change during the piloting?

What factors did influence these relationships? How do different actors see each-other, and did it change during the pilot? Level of trust?

The attitude of the municipality towards deliberation

What were the main signals of the changing attitude of the municipality towards deliberation?

III. SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY DIMENSION

Motivation of citizens to participate

What was the main motivation for the people to participate in the deliberative process of the piloting?

How did it change during the piloting process, and what are the reasons for the change?

What about the motivation to repeat this experience?

What are the main contextual conditions influencing citizens' willingness and motivation to participate?

What are the local specialities, and how were they considered in piloting?

The gain of participation

Did the participation change the life and approach of the citizens, did it change their behaviour, their relationship, their active role in the city ?

How did the participation affect attendees' well-being? How did the project affect people's everyday lives? What was the value for citizens to participate?

Impact on the local community

What was the direct impact of the event on the local community and environment?

In which way did the space /room, the facilitation and other organisational factors of the deliberative processes influence the local community and environment?

IV. LEARNING, ADAPTABILITY AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE DIMENSIONS

Self learning and self improvement by the pilot teams during the piloting

How was the pilot organization able to learn and transform itself during the AR process? Was it a self-learning process, and the plan was evolving based on the results of action research?

How did the Action research support this process?

Replication of the Pilot

Will the pilot or its elements be replicated on the local level? Which parts will be used and which parts will be changed?

What are the conditions of replicability of the pilots?

Changed approach and perspectives

How did the approach of the local governments towards deliberative policies change as a result of the pilots?

What were the main learning elements of the pilots that can be useful for other municipalities?

Participatory culture

Did piloting improve the understanding of participation between the decision makers, stakeholders and citizens? How did this perception change in the different groups?

Did the overall approach to participation and deliberation change in the city?

2.2. The Resources of the Analysis

The Evaluation Frame was filled based on the different documents prepared by each pilot city in the frame of the different activities of the Action Research, described in Part I. These documents- presented in Part II of this report are as follows:

a) Documents prepared during the Preparation Cycle:
    - Community reporting interviews
    - Zero Evaluation Templates
    - Action plans

a) Implementation Cycle
    - Evaluation templates of Phases I, II, and III of Implementation
    - Impact assessment tables and templates (MIRO board)
    - The evaluation reports of the processes prepared during phase II of implementation

- Any other presentations provided by the cities during the online and offline meetings

b) Evaluation Cycle
   - Ripple effect maps for the evaluation of overall impact of the pilots
   - The results of the evaluation events held in each city
   - Personal interviews with the pilot team leaders

c) Main reports and deliverables provided by other work packages and the main results of the WP4 Tool box

The following chapters will outline the primary discoveries from the analysis of the pilots using the evaluation framework. This report may not address all the questions in the framework due to limitations of space and time, but it will provide a concise summary of these unexplored areas. The aim of this report is not to describe in detail the pilot processes - rather to point out their main elements, communities, and specificities.

Figure 7: The main activities of the Pilots during their Implementation cycle

Gdansk:

| **Phase 1: First series of participatory workshops in Pieczki Migowo disctrict**

September 2022 - January 2023 | **Workshop 1, opening the workshop series, open for the public: 17 November 2022:**
● General introduction, describing the project and its scopes.

Workshop 2, 28 November 2022 selected participants:
● Discussion in 4 groups: mobility, social sphere, spatial infrastructure, and green areas – a first list of issues.

Workshop 3, 19 December 2022, selected participants:
● Project cards based on the previous list;
● selection of the most important topics (group work, voting) and start of the project's preparation (solutions).

Workshop 4, 30 January 2023, selected participants:
● Continuing working on the projects and placing them on the area map (visualisation) and presentations.

Workshop 5, 20 February 2023, open for the public:
● Summary of the workshop results, awarding participants. |
| **Phase 2: Evaluation meetings in focus group** | **Evaluation Meeting 1, 27 April 2023:**
Discuss all topics connected to: the organisation, the venue, the participants, the schedule and the conducting of the workshops

Evaluation Meeting 2, 27 April 2023: |

February 2023 - July 2023	Showing the ongoing work and new initiatives of the municipality to the participants **Evaluation Meeting 3, 14 July 2023:** Discussing the combined results of the evaluations
Phase 3: Second series of participatory workshops in Żuławy Gdańskie *August 2023 - January 2024*	**Organisational Meetings, 8 September 2023 to 26 October 2023:** ● Proposing the schedule for the upcoming meetings, discussing partner lists, discussing the evaluation of the Piecki-Migowo District ● Describing the borders of the functional area (made of several smaller administrative areas) ● Discussing the specific issues to overcome ● Planning the details of upcoming workshops ● Setting the promotion methods ● Clarifying the improvements needed **Workshop 1, Presentation with open discussion 1, 15 November 2023, open for the public:** ● Presenting the overview of the area and the process, starting initial discussion, discovering the local stakeholders' main points ● Sharing the facilitators' vision on the process versus the stakeholders' expectations **Workshop 2, Presentation with open discussion 2, open for public, 22 November 2023:** ● Presenting the overview of the area and the process, starting initial discussion, discovering the local stakeholders' main points ● Sharing the facilitators' vision on the process versus the stakeholders' expectations **Workshop 3, 11 December 2023, selected participants:** ● Initiating the discussion on the most crucial issues, deciding which should be considered most urgent ● Formation of first stakeholders according to the proposed topics **Workshop 4, 8 January 2024, selected participants:** ● Progressing the key projects for each groups ● Putting them on a map, sharing ideas with everyone **Workshop 5, Organisational Meeting 4, 17 January 2024, open for public:** ● Summing up the current workshops progress

Reggio Emilia:

Phase 1: Establishment of the Consulte	**12 September 2022:** The regulatory text on democracy, urban and climate justice is implemented by the municipality, it paves the way for the creation of the Consulte.

September 2022 - January 2023	**Information meeting, 4 to 27 October 2022:** ● Starting event for institutional and associative bodies ● 10 meetings in the different neighbourhoods of the city ● Public assemblies to present the project **17 October to 14 November:** Online nominations for citizens and associations. **25 November to 5 December: Online and offline voting.** **January 2023**: Establishment of the elected part of the Consulte.
Phase 2: Workshops and trainings *February 2023 - July 2023*	**10 February 2023:** Identification of the non-elected part of the Consulte (delegated by local NGOs and organisations) **Team building meetings,** 16, 21, 23, 28 February 2023 and 2, 7, 9, 14, 16 March 2023: ● Consulte participate in collective activities led by experts ● Sharing values, attributes, personal attitudes and skills useful for the groups **21 February to 21 March 2023**: Official establishment of the Consulte. **20 April 2023:** All 9 Consulte have been installed, and the election of the 18 coordinators by acclamation or by vote was held. **Workshop 1, 22 February 2023:** ● Workshop/Focus groups Neighborhood, common good: democracy and urban and climate justice in Reggio Emilia. **Workshop 2, 27 April 2023 and 6 May 2023:** ● Presentation and training meeting on the digital platform "Hamlet" created to support the work of the councils. Illustration of the possibilities of the platform, registration of participants, creation of working rooms. **Focus interviews, 24 May 2023:** ● Investigation of the trainings needs for the coordinators ● Group reflection where participants elaborated on their needs **February 2023 to July 2023:** ● The Consulte held about 43 informal meetings internally to develop and prepare for the official and publicly relevant sessions.
Phase 3: Preparation of the area pacts	**Organisation meeting 1, 14 September 2023** ● Provide information on the organisation and functioning of the area reporting to Department Director Gandolfi (mobility, green, public works) and to provide information on the main projects launched

August 2023 - January 2024	and planned in the areas of reference ● Acquisition of content and methodological information useful for the work of the Consulte **Public Assembly 1, 26 September 2023:** ● Inform Consulta A about the safety works on the Via Emilia (the main national artery crossing the city from east to west) **Organisational meetings, 16 October 2023 to 20 November 2023** ● Meetings held by the counselling project coordinator with all relevant managers and councillors for the actions requested by the Consulte in order to validate or not their feasibility and inclusion in the framework pact. **Meetings for a revised Regulation, September 2023 to January 2024** ● Online update and discussion meetings, individual work of City Science Office researchers and municipal employees to write the new Title V and revise the already approved text of the Regulation. ● Introduction of a Title V dedicated to collaborative democracy tools. This title would provide for a phase of co-design, at the outcome of which public policies co-programmed through the Area- pact would be implemented through multi-actor partnerships that would be named Partnerships for Sustainable Development and Innovation, a formula that would summarize innovative forms of partnership introduced into the legal system through various regulatory provisions at European Union, national, regional and local levels.

Voru

Phase 1: First hackathon *September 2022 - January 2023*	**23 – 24 September 2022 First Vunki Mano! Hackathon, Värska,** in Setomaa Municipality, **22 December 2022:** Study trip by the winner team in Setomaa to 4 schools, **24 January 2023:** Round table discussions in Setomaa
Phase 2: Follow-up of the winner project and preparation of the second hackathon *February 2023 - July 2023*	**May 2023 to July 2023: Preparatory meetings** ● Link of the hackathon and Voru county development strategy: pre-evaluation of hackathons' ideas ● Decision concerning upcoming hackathon: Vunki Mano Hackathon 2 cover more areas in Voru county ● Activation of local specialists, key persons, stakeholders, designation of two new mentors ● PR plan to engage better with different target groups ● Preparation of two seminars: one strategy working group, one for the specialists of the Development Centre of the county
Phase 3: Second Hackathon	**29 August 2023: Preparatory meeting** ● Introduction of the Vunki Mano Hackathon methodology ● Reviews of the action direction by leaders and members of the

August 2023 - January 2024	working groups **August 2023: SETO-VÕRU youth festival** **11 and 20 September 2023:** ● Seminars for all employees of the Development Centre **13 to 14 October 2023: Second hackathon** ● 9 teams discussing strategies for the county's development and its goal.

3. The organisational dimension of the pilots

In this chapter, the organisation of the pilots is analysed from different perspectives, with a focus on the basements of the pilots and the initial motivations for their realisation. The initial plans and the main changes/turning points occurring in the piloting are also examined, providing insights into the evolution of the pilot programs. Additionally, the chapter delves into the core teams, their partners, and participants within the stakeholder ecosystem, shedding light on the collaborative dynamics at play. The recruitment system is scrutinised to understand its role in the overall organisation of the pilots, while also exploring how some core values are represented by the pilots. This comprehensive analysis offers a multifaceted view of the organisation and execution of the pilot programs, providing valuable insights for understanding their impact and effectiveness.

3.1.Motivations and antecedents

The motivations and plans of the three pilots had been built on antecedents and previous experiences related to deliberation, albeit in various forms and at different levels of preparation. **Reggio Emilia**, located in a region with a strong tradition of democratic participation and robust engagement in the management of urban commons, was the most prepared among the three pilots in terms of political motivation and organisational basis. The direct antecedent of the pilot project was the "Quartiere Bene Comune" project, a participatory process at the neighbourhood level involving stakeholders, citizens, individuals, associations, schools, and parishes in the discussion and creation of collaborative projects that are signed as agreements with the municipality. The "mediator" role in this process was fulfilled by the team of "neighbourhood architects". In the initial phase of this system (2015-19), 27 agreements were signed between 730 local actors and the municipality (EUARENAS Toolbox, https://euarenas-toolbox.eu/the-tool/quartiere-bene-comune-reggio-emilia-italy/).

The success of this system led to the idea of extending it to the entire city through the establishment of Neighbourhood Councils (Consulte) in each district, representing and conveying the ideas and needs of citizens and local stakeholders to the municipality in the form of district agreements (so called Area Pacts). The implementation of the Consulte system had already commenced prior to the piloting, with the creation of the regulatory framework for the Consulte system. The decree regularising the work, tasks, and competences of the neighbourhood counsellors was adopted in September 2021 at the start of the piloting implementation cycle.

In Voru, the pilot idea was based on a successful practice already employed several times in the county: the Voru Vunki Mano social hackathon. These yearly events, initiated in 2018, aimed to gather citizens and social and economic stakeholders from the remote rural area of Voru county to co-design and select the best ideas for social innovation. The Social hackathon had also been utilised as a pilot practice in the COSIE H2020 project. The aim of the EUARENAS pilot was to transform the Social hackathon into a stable and sustainable policy tool by involving the local municipalities of the Voru county's settlements in the process. Although this involvement did not provide a ready-made legal background as in the case of Reggio Emilia, it expressed the engagement of the decision makers in the process.

Gdansk was invited to the project due to its longstanding experience in using participatory tools, specifically the Participatory budgeting, second in Poland after the City of Sopot, giving the city a particularly innovative position between the Eastern and East Central European post-socialist cities. Despite this innovative position, there are some criticisms due to the slow and often changed realisation of the projects co-designed in the form of participatory budgeting. Furthermore, the city aimed to bring the participatory approach closer to the local communities and neighbourhoods, supporting the planning of local urban development based on the needs of local citizens and stakeholders. The EUARENAS pilot idea in Gdansk was based on a strong tradition of participatory approach but without any direct antecedent of the tool itself.

3.2. Original Plans, Challenges and Turning points of the deliberative processes

The pilot cities provided regular feedback on the eventual changes to their original plans and the reasons for these adjustments. The Pilot Action Plans, formulated at the conclusion of the preparation cycle, outlined the primary objectives and expected results of the pilots, along with the planned actions for the initial phase of implementation. Subsequent actions were specified at the commencement of each implementation phase during the weekly discussions. The evaluation templates, completed at the end of each phase, inquired about potential alterations to the initial plans. It was observed that the stronger the political engagement behind the Pilot Action plan, or the more concrete the city's initial idea regarding the objectives and expected outcomes of their piloting, the fewer substantial turning points intervened during implementation. Notably, this evidence encompasses various concrete situations. In the Pilot Action Plans, the objectives of the three cities were described in a relatively general manner, allowing for considerable flexibility in terms of actions and expected outcomes. However, the general formulation of objectives encompassed different concrete plans.

In **Reggio Emilia**, the objective was defined as follows: "Develop the public-private partnership through structured methods of listening to needs, co-planning, and collaboration that will materialise after the election of the Councillors." The aims and main steps of the pilot were clearly elucidated in the Pilot Action Plan, and the formulation of the expected outcomes and the concrete timeline for the initial period indicated that the city had a well-prepared idea of the entire piloting process, which was planned to be divided into: a) the establishment and implementation of the election of Councillors of the Neighborhood Councils (Consulte); b) their continuous training; and c) the creation of tools for cooperation between citizens, the Councils, and the city decision-making system. The main aspects of this plan were maintained, with activities being realised: a) during the first cycle, b) during the second cycle in the form of trainings, meetings, and needs assessment; and c) during the third cycle of implementation. Any

changes were primarily related to fine-tuning the actions and tools used, a process also supported by the Action research within WP4.[12]

In the case of **Voru**, strong political engagement was observed, which is linked to the county covering a relatively small community, with 5 local authorities responsible for their small territories in close interaction with the County and each other. However, while the main objective of the County initially aimed to use the Social hackathons as policy-making tools and transform them into "Political hackathons", the general objective identified in the Action Plan remained too vague: "[...] to increase community involvement and to empower the voice of the community on important issues to change policies of local municipalities and their bodies and to affect local government policies." Conversely, the main actions outlined in the Action Plan and the Evaluation Templates primarily focused on organising the 2 Hackathons in Voru, giving less attention to the assessment of their impact on the involvement of local communities in the process. Consequently, the main change that occurred in the state of play was associated with the characteristic and approach of the Hackathons themselves: during the final evaluation of the pilot, the Political Hackathon developed as a tool for participatory processes represented, at least in its second edition, a clearly top-down approach, with the ideation groups being invited based on previous evaluations decided by the organising committee. In Voru, a fundamental change thus occurred in the leading approach of the process.

In **Gdansk**, the political climate during the initial stages of the pilot project was marked by instability, primarily due to local political events and the emergency situation triggered by the influx of Ukrainian refugees into the city. The pilot project commenced with a clearly defined goal: "Enhanced decision-making processes across various levels of city institutions, with a focus on promoting cross-sectoral cooperation through the use of deliberative democracy tools, and the establishment of a participatory Master Plan." Additionally, the project clearly delineated the targeted intervention area for the first phase of implementation. The initial phase involved the execution of a series of local participatory workshops based on a comprehensive action plan and specific expected outcomes. However, the lack of explicit policy support during this phase led to uncertainty concerning how the results of these workshops could be integrated into the policy-making framework. A significant shift occurred in Gdansk during the second phase of implementation following discussions within the WP4 weekly meetings, leading the city to organise two focus group discussions involving participants from the workshops, including citizens, stakeholders, and city representatives. Encouraged by the positive feedback from these participants, the City Architect became actively engaged in supporting the project and proposed replicating the process in another area of the city. This decision marked a pivotal moment for the project, enabling a more comprehensive evaluation of the participatory tool developed by Gdansk.

3.3. Teams, participants and stakeholder ecosystem

The core team that worked on the pilot project exhibited relative restraint in all three cities. In **Gdansk**, the pilot was managed by the representatives of the Department of Social Development of the city and was led by the head of the department. This core team collaborated closely with the councils of the local districts where the participatory processes were engaged, the City Architect, local NGOs, and community leaders active in the areas involved in the

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[12] Evaluation interview with Giulia Bassi, E35 team leader, Reggio Emilia

process. The team also worked with a facilitator who was strongly engaged as an expert in participatory processes.

In **Reggio Emilia**, the local authority's representatives worked together with the Public Foundation E35, which provided professional support and actively participated in the piloting meetings. This core team collaborated with a large circle of local organisations and the different departments of the municipality.

In **Voru**, the core team was composed of representatives of the Voru Development Centre. This team was linked to the representatives of the five local authorities and local NGOs. The project's connectivity extended to the highest levels within the country, as the winning project of the first Hackathon - "Building a New Curriculum for Schools in Setomaa" - was supported by the Minister of Education of Estonia.

3.4. Recruitment system

The pilots achieved some considerable numbers in terms of their outreach.

In **Gdansk**, the local participatory workshops gathered around 200 participants in each case, meaning all together around 500 people engaged in the piloting processes.

In **Reggio Emilia** 245 people applied for the post of the Councillors, 61 people participated at the workshops, 30 people participated at the evaluation event. The training activities using the Hamlet digital platform to serve the Councils reached out to 18 persons in April 2023 and 43 in May 2023.

In **Voru** 131 people participated at the two hackathons (81 at the first, and 50 at the second event). 16 participants attended the evaluation event. In Setomaa, the winning project of the first Hackathon involved 4 schools and around 70 people.

One of the most critical dimensions of deliberative processes is the mobilisation and recruitment of participants. The three EUARENAS pilot cities employed different strategies. In the city of **Reggio Emilia**, the circle of participants was the most widespread. The recruitment covered the entire city, aiming to select citizen representatives in 9 Citizen Councils covering 55 subdistricts. The process was open to any person over 18 years old, regardless of nationality, gender, social, educational status, or other factors. The only condition, beyond the age restriction, was that candidates had to be registered inhabitants of the city of Reggio Emilia at the time of candidacy. The recruitment process utilised public announcements, public hearings, assemblies presenting the project, and the mobilisation of a large number of volunteers.

The recruitment in **Gdansk** was a more scientifically grounded process. For the first series in Piecki Migowo, the process began with preparational interviews involving 30 people representing various social spheres such as leaders from NGOs, representatives/leaders from business, community organisations, cooperatives, and senior citizen clubs. The purpose of these interviews was to identify the needs and challenges in specific areas of the district and gather different perspectives. The district was then divided into 5 areas, each representing a unique neighbourhood with its own specific challenges and development potentials. An extensive outreach campaign was conducted in each area using various means of communication. An online recruitment platform was also opened, which resulted in over 100 applications. The selection of the final participants was based on statistical data and three main criteria: residence or place of work/business in the area, community leadership, and matching gender, age, and education level to the composition of the local society.

Figure 8: Composition of the population in Piecki Migowo reporting to the questionnaires and participating at the workshops
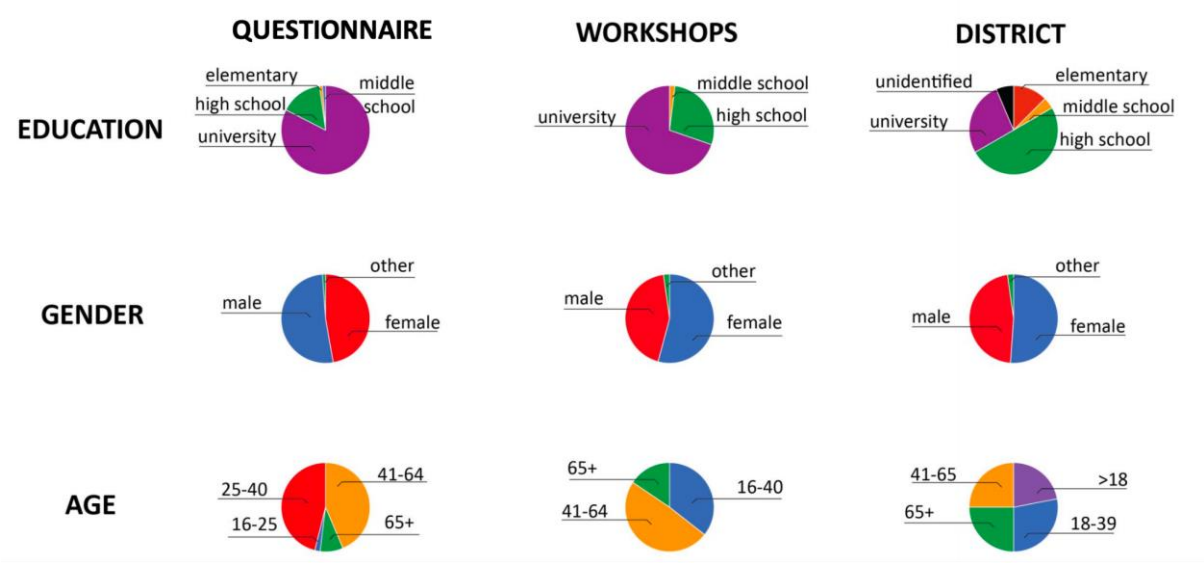
Source: Gdansk Department of Social Development

The second area for the workshops was in "Żuławy Gdańskie," a more complex area with territories of different social composition. This area was also divided into 5 sub areas and the participants were selected based on a similar system of criteria as in the first case. Further, here the previous selection system was also combined with sortition: it was used to randomise the choice in a situation when there are for example persons of similar characteristics (sharing similar age group, gender, education level etc.). The inclusive and just representation of the local society was a clearly defined goal in both cases, even if a perfect match of the social composition couldn't be realised, as the composition of the people registered at the events differed from that of the entire local society. In the second area the fact that some participants were directly invited by the local public servants made this attempt less successful.[13]

In **Voru**, the conscious recruitment process was focusing on the local municipalities: meetings and a preparatory seminar were held for them, during which local governments were encouraged to take the initiative and present ideas at the Hackathons. Preparatory meetings were held in the municipalities of Antsla and Võru, as well as a preparatory seminar to introduce the concept and to encourage participation in Loometalgutel. There was no specific recruitment activity involving citizens though; instead, they were informed about the Hackathon through traditional information channels (posters, news in local newspapers, etc.). Citizens could also bring ideas, but it was important that these ideas were supported by the decision-makers. As a result of this specific focus on decision-makers, the inclusivity of the participants remained doubtful.

"Despite aims to foster broad-based participation, the organisers encountered hurdles in ensuring the Hackathon's accessibility and inclusivity, especially among youth. This challenge sparked debates on the effectiveness of mechanisms like age-based quotas for teams,

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[13] Summary of the evaluation in Gdansk, 2024

illustrating the complexities of creating truly inclusive community initiatives. Participants of the evaluation focus group discussion voiced concerns and diverse viewpoints on the best practices for engaging underrepresented groups, indicating a critical area for further refinement and targeted strategy development." [14]

3.5. Values and innovation

The evaluation framework scrutinised the presence and significance of 5 core values in the pilots, encompassing **inclusivity, innovation, urban justice, sustainability, and replicability.** These values align with the impact criteria outlined in D8.4 of Impact Assessment. However, in the pilot evaluation, attention has been directed toward the entire process, encompassing action planning, activities, and subsequent impact. In general, all pilots demonstrated the 5 values in varying forms and extents.

Inclusivity emerged as a fundamental element across all pilots, constituting a pivotal aspect of their initial objectives. The approaches employed to achieve inclusivity varied among the pilots.

R**eggio Emilia,** for instance, embodied inclusivity through a broad and transparent deliberative process. By segmenting the city into 9 areas and establishing a Citizen Council (Consulta) in each, the pilot aimed to encompass the entire city and all its inhabitants, irrespective of nationality or other specificities. Through training and ongoing interaction with elected councillors, the city continually enhanced participants' connectedness and knowledge. Nevertheless, participants observed disparities in citizen engagement, particularly the lack of youth involvement. Additionally, the representativeness of the local population by the Consulte was not emphasised, despite the overall openness of the process. [15]

In **Gdansk**, the inclusivity of the process hinged on striving for optimal representativeness of the local population at mini-public participatory workshops. The intervention involved the development of a scientifically prepared selection process as described above. Furthermore, the use of the Opera method during workshops ensured active contributions from all participants to collective reflection. Of course, the full representativeness was impossible to attain, owing to limited participation from less educated and socioeconomically deprived groups.

Conversely, in **Voru**, no specific selection process was devised to ensure the inclusivity of the Hackathons. Although one of the primary goals of the events was to increase public and political engagement of youth to deter their departure from the county, no specific measures were implemented to attract them to the events.[16]

The three pilot projects encompassed significant elements of **social innovation**. In **Reggio Emilia**, the establishment of local Citizen Councils can be deemed as an important form of social innovation. This initiative seeks to integrate deliberative tools directly into the administrative system, encompassing the entire city. If proven successful, it has the potential to introduce a new approach to deliberative local democracy.

In **Gdansk**, the social innovation lay in the utilisation of participatory planning as an initial step in identifying key actions to be included in the City Master Plan. Given that the Master Plan is

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[14] Summary of the focus group discussion held at the Voru Evaluation Event, March 2024

[15] results of the evaluation focus group interviews in Reggio Emilia, March 2024

[16] See summary of the Focus group discussion at the Evaluation event, Voru, March 2024

primarily a technical document, incorporating the input of citizens and local stakeholders signifies a novel approach. Furthermore, Gdansk intended to employ the Citizen Card as a means of engaging and mobilising residents. However, due to time constraints within the EUARENAS framework, this plan was only partially realised. Nonetheless, the city remains committed to further developing this tool.

In **Voru**, the pilot initiative was centred around a major innovative mechanism: the social hackathons. While generally, hackathons were originally conceived for gaming, they have progressively been utilised for social innovation as well, as exemplified by the Eu versus Virus Pan-European online hackathon organised in 2020 to generate ideas for combating the COVID-19 pandemic.[17] Social hackathons have also been employed as a tool of deliberation in several European cities, like the EU Sparks citizens hackathons championship for Climate change (https://eusparks.eu) The primary objective of hackathons is to provide a secure and stimulating environment for participants to freely devise solutions for a given social or other issue. In Voru, the aim was to employ this approach for top-down decision-making. However, this objective appeared to create tension between the fundamental value of social hackathons and the political goal identified by the Voru Development Agency, which was not significantly alleviated during the pilot phase.

The concept of **Urban Justice and sustainability** encompasses the integration of social and environmental justice with the inclusive access of all individuals to urban areas. This concept has been exemplified in **Reggio Emilia**, where the primary objective has been to promote social well-being and climate justice. Similarly, in **Gdansk**, the topics identified during participatory workshops have comprehensively covered these elements. Conversely, in **Voru**, while social justice issues are evident in the winning projects of the hackathon, there is a comparatively lesser focus on environmental justice and urban sustainability. This observation aligns with the results of impact assessment under WP8.[18]

 The examination of the **replicability** of deliberative processes within the pilot process was evident in **Gdansk** and **Voru**. Notably, **Reggio Emilia** did not repeat the use of the same tool within the piloting phase, as the focus was primarily on the full implementation of the citizen council in the city. The attempt to replicate the same deliverable tool in Gdansk resulted in different outcomes due to the specific characteristics of the area and the participants. The piloting team endeavoured to customise the method to suit local needs, particularly in the district of "Żuławy Gdańskie," which faces various socioeconomic challenges. Furthermore, the workshops were strategically planned in different locations to enhance accessibility for stakeholders from diverse areas. Additionally, measures were implemented to prevent the overrepresentation of certain groups and mitigate the influence of lobbyists at the meetings. Despite these contextual differences, the participatory workshops in Gdansk yielded suggestions that authentically reflected the needs of local communities.[19]

 In Voru, the Social hackathon was replicated twice during the piloting phase. Notably, there were slight organisational variations between the occasions. During the initial event, the hackathon was more open to suggestions from civil society, whereas at the subsequent event,

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[17] https://www.euvsvirus.org/

[18] EUARENAS Deliverable 8.4

[19] Evaluation report based on the focus group discussions in Gdansk, March 2024

the topics were predetermined by the organising committee in collaboration with the County and local authorities.

4. Policy Dimensions

In the subsequent chapter, an analysis of the policy dimensions of the pilot initiatives is conducted through various perspectives. Firstly, the nature of deliberation employed within the cities is examined, highlighting the methodological approaches adopted. Secondly, the chapter explores the principal indicators of transformation in the perception of deliberation, particularly focusing on its policy implications (the "signals of change"). Furthermore, the embeddedness of the pilots into the local policy ecosystem is analysed through indicators as the impact on the stakeholder ecosystem specifically addressing the interrelations among stakeholders involved in the process and the legally binding nature of these initiatives and their implications for governance and policy implementation.

4.1. The pilots in the orchestra of deliberation

The pilot cities identified the type of deliberation they intended to develop at the start of the project. These deliberations can be classified by using the "Piano of Participation" as presented in the Updated Conceptual Framework of EUARENAS (D.1.3). This framework proposed the introduction of an updated version of the Ladder of Participation by Arnstein (1969) to describe deliberative processes. "The 'Piano of Participation' borrows from music theory where chords symbolise the simultaneous inclusion of citizens and authorities in various phases of participation. When describing a complex process we recognize that the citizen's engagement varies in its different elements and phases, and whereas in some areas they might be in control, the general frameworks are often controlled by the authorities."(D.1.3., P.8.[20])

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[20] EUARENAS Deliverable 1.3.

*Figure 8: From the Arnstein Ladder to The Piano of Participation*
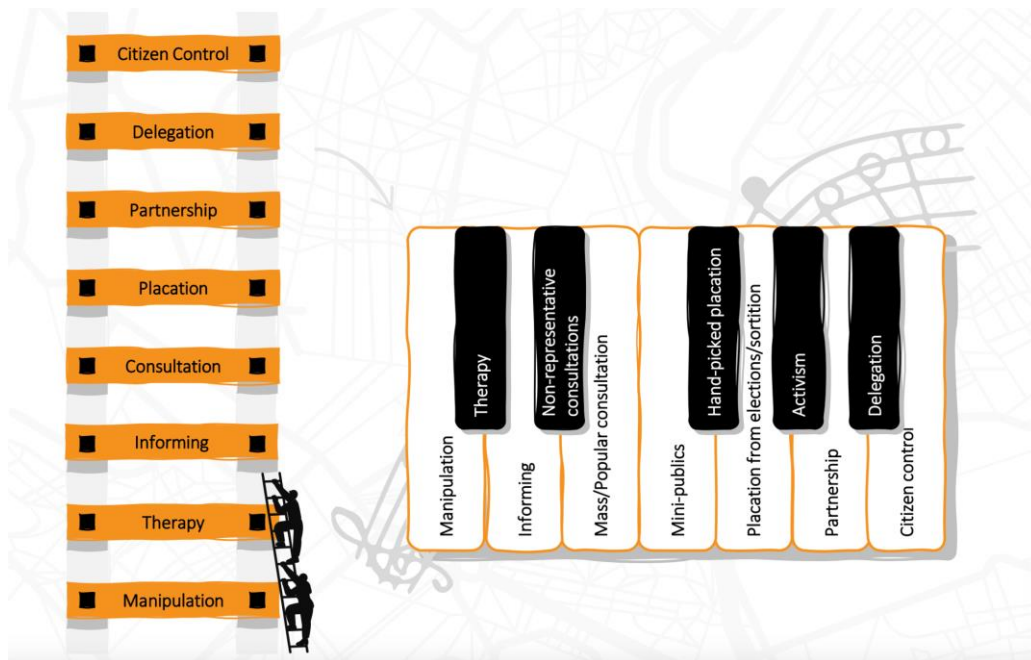
EUARENAS Updated Conceptual Framework, p. 9.

In each pilot case, one can identify an initially envisioned ideal deliberation form and a form achieved at the conclusion of the piloting within EUARENAS.

Reggio Emilia aimed to establish a system of Citizen Councils (Consulte), strategically covering the entire city divided into 9 areas as part of the city's administrative structure. These Consulte are tasked with engaging inhabitants for their input and conveying their ideas to the relevant departments of the Local Authority. Agreed-upon ideas are formalised and signed in the form of "Area Pacts" between the city and its citizens annually, with the implementation of proposals being included in the city budget. The Consulte consist of elected members and non-elected members delegated by main organisations. The piloting process started with the preparation of a legal act to provide the framework for the functions of the Consulte. The long-term goal of Reggio Emilia is evidently the creation of a local governance structure in which citizens are treated as partners of the city. However, it is important to note that the Consulte do not possess any decision-making powers, and as such, terms such as "delegation" or "citizen control" are not applicable.

Throughout the EUARENAS project, the initial pilots of the Consulte were established and operationalized, the first list of citizen ideas had been collected and submitted to the Municipality, and the first 9 Area Pacts had been signed and incorporated into the city's 2025 budget. There is currently no evidence regarding the implementation of the projects outlined in the Area Pacts or the methods through which the Consulte could oversee their realisation and provide feedback to the citizens. This information may be forthcoming by the year 2025, extending beyond the EUARENAS project cycle. In conclusion, it can be deduced that Reggio Emilia has indeed succeeded in achieving a stage of "*placation with election*," and is poised to transition this success into a demonstrable and tested *partnership* with its citizens in the near future.

Fig 9: The chords of deliberation in Reggio Emilia (achieved and ideally planned)
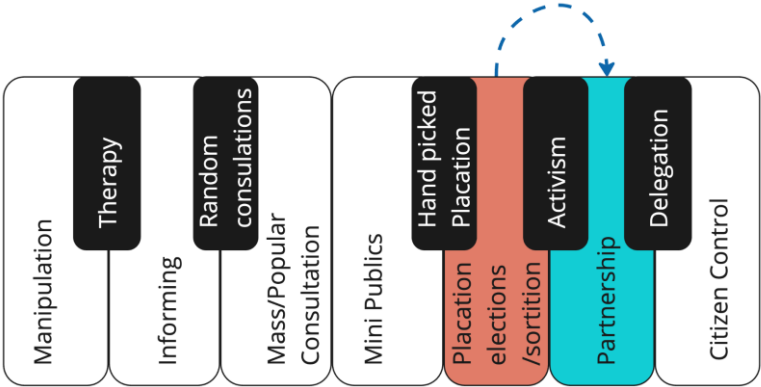
The initial objective in **Gdansk** was to establish a deliberative tool to facilitate collaboration among different departments of the city administration, as well as engagement with stakeholders and citizens, for the development of a new Master Plan for the city. The concept behind the Gdansk pilot was to implement a *consultation model based on the selection of a mini-public*, representing the social composition of a neighbourhood. The long-term goal of the Department of Social Development, which identified the piloting topic, is to foster *collaboration and partnership* among stakeholders, citizens, and various municipal departments to ensure that the master plan is responsive to local needs. During the pilot, the model for *consultation with carefully selected mini publics* was successfully implemented and replicated. Achieving full representation of local societies was not entirely feasible, particularly in the second series of workshops, due to the lack of interest from the most deprived social groups and the presence of "lobbyists." Nonetheless, in both cases, significant project proposals were identified by the public. The process of transmitting these suggestions to decision makers and incorporating them into a legally binding document is still under consideration and necessitates a lengthy process of political negotiation and reflection on the part of the pilot team.

Fig. 10: The Chords of deliberation in Gdansk (achieved and ideally planned)
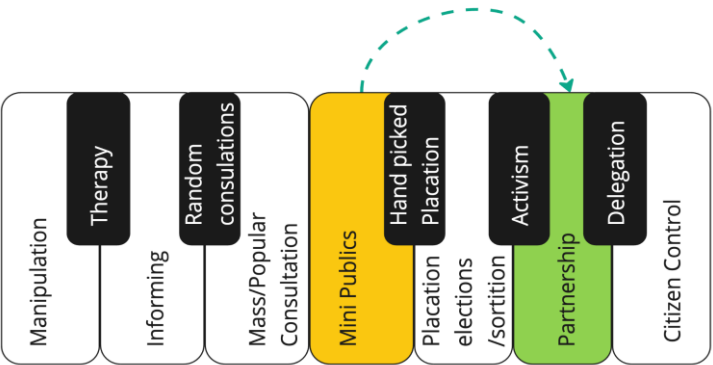
In **Voru**, the overarching objective of the piloting was to transform the existing Social Hackathons into tools for political decision-making. The concept of Political Hackathons aimed to elevate the Social Hackathons from a platform for *mass and arbitrary consultation to a more systematic form of deliberation*, where the selection of winning projects extends beyond simple jury selection and reflects a clear commitment from local municipalities to realising the proposals. The winning project of the Hackathon in September 2022, namely the creation of a

new curriculum in Setomaa, was indeed implemented and achieved by the beginning of 2024. However, on the global picture of the pilot it remains debatable whether there is a genuine partnership between citizens and municipalities in Voru, representing a more complex form of deliberation, or if the overall process has shifted the Social Hackathons from a forum for grassroots ideas to an event where participation is orchestrated to support a top-down intervention, introducing preconceived ideas to be discussed by the participants of the events.

Fig 11. The Chords of Deliberation in Voru (achieved and ideally planned)
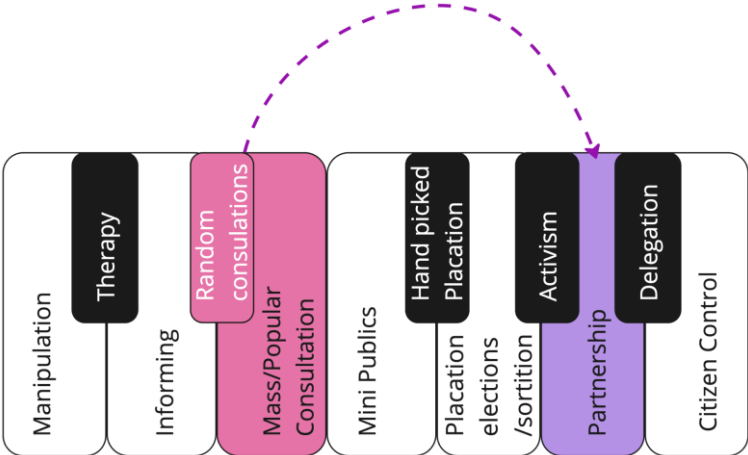
4.2. Signals of Change - the policy impact

The types of deliberation achieved by the end of the pilots and those planned as the ideal objectives of the cities, as presented above, provide an overarching view of the policy impact of the deliberative processes. The achievement of the situation by the end of the pilot, such as the eventual future achievement of the ideal objectives of the cities are in reality the results of several smaller changes brought about by the activities conducted during the participatory processes. These changes are referred to as "*signals of change*" with their significance and volume varying across different cases. The signals of change may encompass slight improvements in municipalities' attitudes towards the idea of deliberation or signify a clear turning point in the political approach of the local authority. The following section will outline the most notable signals of change in the cities achieved during the piloting.

In **Reggio Emilia**, the political commitment of the municipality to initiate the pilot and effect policy change has been evident from the outset, and the observed signals of change align well with anticipated outcomes. Notably, during Phase 2 of Implementation, subsequent to the election and establishment of the Consulte, the municipality displayed an increased interest in engaging in dialogue with elected councillors and incorporating their needs into the finalisation of the legal Act. They also became more receptive to diversifying the tools for engaging councillors and enhancing the digital platform (Hamlet) used for this purpose, which became an additional focus during phase 3 of implementation. Another signal of change was the growing awareness among municipal employees of the roles of the Consulte, partly due to the intensive training activities conducted during Phases 2 and 3 of the piloting. Additionally, the challenges faced by the councillors in assessing and summarising the demands from citizens were taken

into account, leading to an extension of the planned deadline for this activity to allow more time for thorough work.[21]

 In **Gdansk**, the signals of change observed during the second phase of implementation revealed an increasing openness and positive approach towards deliberation among various municipal employees. The pilot team noted the emergence of "discussions and ideas for reshaping the design/processes of the municipality to be more capable of implementing participatory processes." The workshops, as well as the evaluation meetings (focus group interviews) following the initial series of workshops, garnered the participation of key stakeholders and municipal representatives, drawing attention to the success of the project. This clear signal of change was translated into the City Architect "commissioning" the Euarenas pilot team to replicate the workshop series in another area of the city. [22]

In **Voru**, the most significant change brought about by the Hackathons was the heightened awareness of the role of the Hackathon as an innovative ideation and policymaking tool—a "catalyst for enhancing the local social and communal innovation ecosystem." This strategic shift from a singular event to a continuous process underscores the initiative's adaptive nature and commitment to long-term community engagement and development.[23]

4.3. The embeddedness of the pilots in the local level

During the project cycle, the social and political embeddedness of the pilots has been evolving in different ways in the three cities.

The **stakeholder ecosystem** has been strengthening in all cities. In **Gdansk**, the relationship dynamics among participants, stakeholders, and the city evolved notably throughout the process. Initially, there was a disparity in knowledge and perspectives between professionals and residents, creating a barrier where professionals were perceived as imposing ideas rather than engaging in collaborative discussions. This initial disconnection highlighted a challenge in aligning different viewpoints towards a common goal. As the workshops progressed, there was a shift towards fostering understanding and collaboration. The climate became more open to listening and incorporating diverse ideas. Participants started to appreciate the importance of balancing varying perspectives and seeking common ground to address complex issues effectively. This transition marked a crucial turning point where dialogue and mutual understanding became key drivers in shaping the outcomes. [24]

In **Reggio Emilia**, the stakeholder ecosystem had already been settled in the frame of the previous projects (Quartiere Bene Commune) and the preparations of the creation of the Consulte. Nevertheless, the participants emphasised the strengthening of the collaboration between the partners, through a better understanding of the needs of inhabitants and stakeholders, and the gap between the local authority and the inhabitants was immediately decreased at the start of the project.[25]

In **Voru**, the stakeholder ecosystem became reinforced due to the regularity of the Hackathons, including citizens, NGOs, and decision makers. The key stakeholders were the Voru

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[21] Phase 1, 2 and 3 evaluation templates for Reggio Emilia

[22] Phase 1, 2 and 3 evaluation templates for Gdansk

[23] Voru focus group discussion, evaluation event, March 2024

[24] Summary of the evaluation focus group with activists, Gdansk, March 2024

[25] Summary of the focus group interviews at the evaluation event, Reggio Emilia, March 2024

Development Agency, initiator of the pilot, and the municipalities of Voru county who were in the focus of this new deliberative tool. However, citizens, and especially one of the main target groups of the Hackathons, the youth, remained underrepresented during the entire piloting.[26]

The embeddedness into the local political system is less evident in light of the analysis of the **impact of the pilots on the legal structures** of the cities. A clear change in the regulations linked to the pilot can be observed only in **Reggio Emilia,** where the overall piloting process was based and accompanied by the settling and adoption of a new Act regulating the roles and competencies of the Consulte within the municipality. If this Act provides a clear guarantee of the sustainability of the structure, the impact of the future Area pacts on the city and on the relationship between inhabitants and the administration is still not clearly measurable at the end of the pilots.

In **Voru**, the results of the pilot generated some clear changes in the regulatory system of the winner municipality, Setomaa, where a new teaching curriculum has been adopted during the cycle of EUARENAS. In the future, similar punctual changes might be expected in the local municipalities, linked to the projects selected during the Hackathons.

In **Gdansk**, the participatory workshops have not led yet to any changes in the local regulatory system, although by the end of the first series of workshops, a clear engagement could be identified on behalf of the local district municipalities and the Department of the City Architect of Gdansk.

5. Social and Community Dimension

The **social and community dimension** was the third theme of the evaluation framework, as one of the core goals of Euarenas was to engage inhabitants in their cities. In order to reach this goal, the pilot cities were asked about the **motivation** of the citizens to participate, analysing motivation **under three prisms**: motivation to participate in the deliberative process (contextual conditions, local practices specialties), evolution of such motivation during the piloting process, motivation for the repetition of the pilots.

The evaluation framework went further by **gathering insights on the impact of such participations on the local communities**. The three pilots revealed the complexities of engaging citizens in participatory processes, especially the youth that the three cities struggled to reach as participants. Each pilot city faced unique challenges but common themes emerged regarding motivation and community engagement: the need for different specific approaches to said community engagement, the importance of building trust between citizens and local governments and the critical role of facilitation in inclusive and productive discussions. The insights gained from this part are valuable for shaping future participatory initiatives by emphasising the need for **flexibility**, **transparency**, and a **deep understanding of local contexts to empower citizens in shaping their urban environments**.

In order to mobilise people for their first workshop, **Gdańsk** outreached the citizens through an extensive mobilisation campaign highlighting the opportunity for residents to help define the area's future development. The positive reception of the first series in the district of Piecki-Migowo contrasted with the challenges faced in the Żuławy Gdańskie district, a semi-rural part of the city outskirts, where lower living standards and a lack of previous participatory initiatives necessitated a different approach. While stakeholders viewed the process positively, citizen

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[26]Analysis of the focus group interviews, Voru, March 2024

engagement was hampered by scepticism toward the municipality's intentions and the top-down nature of the project. The fact that the initiative was part of an EU project further fuelled this distrust, making participants feel used rather than empowered. To address this, workshops were planned in multiple locations, using local web pages to reach citizens more effectively.

The workshops had positive impacts on the community leaders, who were involved in the planning processes. Indeed, facilitation was largely appreciated (evaluated positively) and played a crucial role in fostering community bonds during discussions.

In **Reggio Emilia**, the **sense of belonging and community** was reinforced as participants engaged in the co-programming and co-designing of public policies. This involvement did not only increase their awareness of local issues but also fostered collaboration among various community members, some of them shared that they felt they had skills and competences to offer.

A key outcome was the strengthened relationship between the administration and inhabitants, with citizens feeling they had a say in shaping municipal policies. The process also led to the inclusion of new actors, particularly young people (even though they remain a small number) and those of foreign origins, reflecting a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Participants took pride in their contributions, and the high level of engagement in council activities underscored a successful participatory framework; they sometimes naturally organised themselves as interest groups in specific topics.

The experience of learning by doing was evident as citizens better understood their roles within the participatory process, sometimes acting as mediators between the administration and the wider community. The emergence of new communities through these collaborative efforts was another significant achievement, showcasing the potential for participatory processes to rebuild trust in local governance.

In **Voru**, the pilot focused on hackathons aimed at fostering youth engagement, though young people were among the least motivated to participate. The organisers faced difficulties in making the hackathons accessible and inclusive, leading to discussions about the effectiveness of age-based quotas and the broader challenge of creating truly inclusive community initiatives.

"The organisers encountered hurdles in ensuring the hackathon's accessibility and inclusivity, especially among youth. This challenge sparked debates on the effectiveness of mechanisms like age-based quotas for teams, illustrating the complexities of creating truly inclusive community initiatives."[27]

The ambiguity in the focus of the Hackathons—whether on deliberative and participatory processes or as tools for municipal-led innovation—further complicated youth engagement. While the events were designed to be centred around citizens, the primary focus often shifted toward the municipalities, excluding the intended target groups, especially the youth.

Despite these challenges, the hackathons did contribute to indirect learning about participatory tools, and to foster new relationships and connections among participants. The winning projects, which centred on social well-being and inclusion, reflected the broader community's priorities, even if youth engagement remained a significant challenge.

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[27] Analysis of the focus groups, March 2024

6. Knowledge exchange, learning dimension

The EUARENAS pilots, as part of a larger research project, were significant spaces for **knowledge exchange and learning**. This aspect encompasses several facets. First, through the application of action research throughout the pilots (refer to Parts I and II), the pilot processes served as opportunities for self-learning and self-improvement for the cities involved. Second, the pilots acted as connections between theory and practice within the EUARENAS project, offering a chance to enhance the theoretical knowledge produced during the project, and to enable a shift in perspectives and approaches for both the pilot cities and the other project partners. Lastly, the pilots facilitated an overall improvement in the understanding of participatory culture within the pilot cities and beyond, as part of the broader project.

6.1. Self improvement through Action Research

The pilots were all executed following a conscientiously prepared Action Plan based on a longer preparation period (preparation cycle) including needs assessment, evaluation of the initial state of art, identification of the main expected changes to be achieved, etc. However, the implementation of the pilot processes included a **significant number of improvisations** that were necessary due to the innovative character of the actions and the sometimes-unpredictable reactions generated at the local level. All three pilots were, at some point, based on a **"learning by doing"** process, where the spontaneity of the activities also depended on the previous experiences of the piloting teams, the strength of the political and stakeholder ecosystems, the readiness of the local inhabitants to get involved in the processes, the quality of the facilitators, etc. During the evaluation meetings held in March 2024, all cities highlighted the positive impact of the EUARENAS piloting on the improvement of the local knowledge and competencies for implementing participatory processes.

In **Gdansk**, the pilot team developed a methodology for adapting the mini-public participatory workshop method to the different districts of Gdansk in a way that is representative of the local society. Action Research supported this innovation by helping the team structure their activities, focus on key areas, and navigate impact assessments. The project revealed how isolated the different city government departments of Gdansk operate and highlighted the communication gaps within the city structures and with the citizens. The piloting allowed them to improve their flexibility in this communication with the citizens, and the clear communication of the workshops' results towards the city administration.

In **Reggio Emilia,** the Action Research (AR) contributed to the improvement of the analytical skills and methods of the team. AR provided a structured framework for the organisation of systematic self-analysis, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This systematic approach allowed for a more thorough and reflective analysis of their processes and outcomes. The process highlighted the need for time and focus to understand and measure true impact, emphasising the distinction between immediate results and long-term impact, encouraging Reggio Emilia to think beyond short-term metrics.

In **Voru**, a significant learning outcome of the AR was the realisation of the Hackathon's potential as an integrative force within local governance structures. By aligning Hackathon objectives with municipal strategic planning, the initiative enabled a collaborative approach to addressing community challenges, highlighting the importance of synchronisation between grassroots innovation and local governmental planning.

6.2. Participatory Culture and Changing Perspectives

The impact of the learning process during the piloting was noted to significantly contribute to the improvement of participatory culture in the cities. This, in turn, triggered a change in vision among certain stakeholders, particularly the local authorities. In **Gdansk**, the piloting led to an enhanced understanding of participatory processes among city leaders, with the City Architect actively contributing and endorsing its adaptation in another area of the city. Moreover, community leaders, stakeholders, and citizens who actively participated also benefited from a more comprehensive understanding. However, it was observed that citizens did not uniformly achieve the same level of understanding. Despite active participation, the issue of confidence still surfaced during discussions.[28]

While in Gdansk the completion of the first series of workshops and their evaluation triggered a **noticeable positive shif**t in the attitude of the municipality, in **Reggio Emilia**, the piloting served to bolster the existing engagement of the city and stakeholders in promoting participation. Rather than a change in perspective, the **process deepened through the acquisition of new tools for self-analysis,** planning, and workflow systematisation.[29]

 In **Voru**, the Hackathons made a spontaneous contribution to deepening the **community culture** among participating inhabitants and stakeholders. Participants expressed sentiments of gaining new ideas, friends, contacts, and valuable lessons, characterising it as an ongoing process. They felt a sense of purpose and pride in being part of such a significant event, with an overall positive impact on the development of the local community. However, despite the success of certain aspects, doubts arose regarding the improvement of the cities' vision and approach to deliberative processes.[30] The political hackathon model, a key outcome of the EUARENAS piloting, appeared to represent a top-down approach, building participatory processes on a preconceived strategy. This model might create the impression of a reverse shift in perspectives, from grassroots to a top-down approach in Voru.

6.3. Learnings for the overall project - adaptability

The findings from the pilot have been integrated in various ways into the knowledge produced by the EUARENAS project by linking them to the different work packages and activities.

WP1 introduced an extended series of discussions focusing on the pilots within topics such as dialogue between consensus and conflicts, the dichotomy between bottom-up and top-down approaches, urban populism, participation, the participants of deliberation, and the concepts of governance and deliberation. While the discussions allowed the cities to exchange their ideas and experiences informally, outside of the framework of the usual WP4 Action research and piloting work, it provided a foundation for the development of the updated Theoretical Framework of EUARENAS (D.1.3).

WP2 collaborated with the piloting in the preparation of the concept and the tools to be used during the Action Research process (see Part I and II).

WP3 served as an important resource for the piloting, as each piloting city also provided a case study analysis strongly linked to the piloting. Additionally, the structure of the questions and

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[28] Interview with Marek Wolski, EUARENAS team coordinator in Gdansk, and Ripple Effect map, Gdansk
[29] Interview with Giulia Bassi, E35, Reggio Emilia
[30] Interview with Aivar Nigol, team leader in Voru

indicators observed in the case study analysis contributed to the reflection of the piloting evaluation frame (D.3.3).

The pilot cities were directly involved in the Foresight activities within **WP5** and provided a strong knowledge background for the analysis, as well as for the reflection on their local activities. The Community reporting activities created within WP3 and 5 were also used in the Preparation phase of the piloting for assessing the needs and context of the pilot city before the evaluation of the state of the art (Zero evaluation).

The piloting was in close interaction with **WP8** for impact assessment. Most of the tools generated within WP4 for the evaluation of the pilot activities (the zero Action plan, the zero evaluation template, the periodical evaluation templates, the impact assessment forms - see Part I and II) were also used as a resource for the assessment of the project's impact. The templates were also completed by impact assessment interviews with the pilot cities and general discussions in the frame of the WP4 weekly meetings. These results, described in D8.4, served as an important resource for the Pilot evaluation frame as well.

In EUARENAS, the pilots and the overall research activities were in strong interaction with each other, and the mutual learning also provided a good basis for improvement to the local pilot teams. The knowledge accumulated during the EUARENAS pilots is extremely complex, covering a wide range of information and data, including conceptual and methodological knowledge, life experiences and personal stories, observations and feedback from participants, numerical data, participatory observations, results of community-based assessments and focus group interviews, and so on. The above summary provides a brief overview of this complexity and could certainly be augmented with further details. All the documents cited in this report are accessible for further analysis.

IN CONCLUSION - Recommendations for transferring deliberative processes

The analysis of the three EUARENAS pilots demonstrates the complexity of deliberative processes and the multitude of external and internal factors that need to be considered when transferring a tool or practice from one context to another. It also emphasises the importance of creativity, innovation, and the readiness for continuous improvisation, feedback, and dialogue in order to adapt activities to local contexts and challenges. Drawing on the music analogy introduced in D1.3. within the conceptual framework of EUARENAS, one may link the process of transferring deliberative tools to jazz improvisation. Contrary to popular belief, jazz improvisation is grounded in a set of rules and predetermined themes. It requires a deep understanding and mutual attentiveness among musicians, enabling them to synchronise, play together, and innovate as necessary. "The trick to Jazz improvisation is playing music with both spontaneous creativity and intentional conviction." [31] What may seem like complete freedom and spontaneous decision-making on the surface is, in reality, underpinned by extensive preparation, shared reflection, the establishment of a framework, and ongoing feedback and co-creation. These are the hallmarks of deliberative processes: the adaptation of a set of tools and methods for the sake of good accordance and harmony of the actions and the results.

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[31] https://jazzaspensnowmass.org/what-is-jazz-improvisation/

In conclusion, several general recommendations have been compiled for cities looking to initiate a deliberative process by adopting any of the tools presented in the EUARENAS experimental toolbox (D.4.4.https://euarenas-toolbox.eu/).

Preparation:

Before commencing deliberative processes, cities must focus on **selecting the appropriate tools** and determining how these tools will be applied. According to the EUARENAS toolbox, transferability pertains to the effective application of elements, principles, methodologies, and lessons learned from one participatory or deliberative initiative to different contexts or settings. This involves assessing how participatory methods, engagement strategies, decision-making frameworks, and outcomes achieved in one context can be adapted, scaled, or replicated to address similar issues or challenges elsewhere while considering unique contextual factors. It is crucial to thoroughly understand the local context before selecting a tool and assess its transferability to the situation, rather than attempting to adapt the tool to the local situation after its selection.

Preparations before initiating a process may involve a narrative-based **needs assessment** that includes local inhabitants, stakeholders, and representatives of the local authority. Additionally, a **quantitative and qualitative analysis** of the area, encompassing the geo-political context at local, regional, and national levels, the area's socio-economic position, existing policies, political structures, traditions of democracy and deliberation, pre-existing plans and strategies, and the overall stakeholder ecosystem is essential. To conduct this pre-assessment, various citizen science methods and approaches can be used, such as: Citizen Storytelling and Community reporting, Empathy mapping, stakeholder mapping and methods associated with system thinking, which can be combined with traditional social and economic analyses. Subsequently, the selected deliberative tools need to be evaluated in light of the local context.

Planning and implementation

Planning and improvisation are intertwined in deliberative processes. It is crucial to have a strong and stable coordination team that can oversee the overall activities, participant feedback, and assess changes in the political context. The use of action research (AR) and its various tools, as presented in Part I and II of this report, is strongly recommended. The **AR approach** offers a framework for the process and enables practitioners to continuously learn from experience, allowing for incremental improvement of interventions based on real-life experiences. It also allows the coordinators to obtain continuous feedback on their results and provide information on the achieved results during the process.

When planning the process, it is important to identify **the expected impact and the level or type of participation** the project aims to achieve. As observed with the pilots: the more concrete the plan, the less vague the expectations concerning the impact are. Since the impact-based approach to the action plan is not a common way of acting in local governments, it needs more attention in order to be able to foresee a more precise path to achieve long-term effects. Nevertheless cities usually have a tendency to overestimate the strength of their participatory processes, which may be necessary for their motivation to sustain the project even in the face of difficulties. Therefore, it may be interesting to identify both an ideal long-term goal and a more realistic short-term goal. Indeed, beyond the time frame of the projects, the coordinators are advised to consider **longer timeframes of at least 5 years** to allow for a more comprehensive

assessment of impacts and to observe significant changes. This would enable a deeper understanding of the long-term effects of interventions. Further aspects are recommended to consideration during the planning and implementation of deliberative processes such as:

- Recognizing the **diversity of their objectives and contexts**, deliberative processes need to adopt tailored approaches to ensure that interventions are context-specific and relevant. This enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of participatory processes.
- Adequate **allocation of time and resources** is essential for the successful implementation of iterative processes. Ensuring that projects are well-resourced will enable them to adapt effectively to emerging needs and challenges.
- Developing i**ntegrated communication strategies** to enhance coordination and stakeholder engagement is vital. Clear, consistent communication helps align objectives, share insights, and foster a collaborative environment.
- **Continuous capacity building** for local teams and stakeholders needs to be prioritised. This will ensure that the skills and knowledge required for effective participatory processes are sustained beyond the project's lifecycle.
- Enhanced mechanisms for **collaboration and experience sharing** among partners and with other cities that have already implemented the tool are crucial such as regular workshops, joint activities, and dedicated platforms for discussion that can facilitate mutual learning and support.

Evaluation, Impact assessment, Sustainability and Transferability

Similarly to the processes themselves, the evaluation of deliberation is a complex task. It is highly recommended to approach the evaluation as a **continuous ongoing activity** to be realised in parallel with the project activities. Following the approach of the Theory of Change presented in Part I, the evaluation provides continuous feedback on the project implementation and maintains the iterative character of the overall process.

For evaluating the impact and results of deliberative processes, it is advised to utilise a **mixed-methods approach.** This involves combining **narrative-based assessments with real-time data** collection and tools such as digital dashboards or participatory monitoring systems. Such an approach is crucial for a dynamic and responsive evaluation process, enabling projects to track changes effectively as they occur and offering a clearer picture of impacts and outcomes in real-time.

It is important to define clear and realistic impact indicators and be able to treat these indicators in a flexible way. There is also a need to be aware of potential changes in impact that might occur due to external or internal reasons. It is recommended to positively assess all changes that may occur in the area or within the participant stakeholders as a result of the project. In order to better highlight these changes, it is advisable to distinguish between **immediate signals of change** that may be captured during the process and **longer-term impacts** that can be identified beyond the process cycle. While quantitative metrics and evaluation methods are often chosen as long-term impact indicators, it is often necessary to look for suitable metrics among qualitative or mixed ones in order to notice and map the signals of change. Regular interim analysis with discussions and assessment tools can help capture better small incremental changes and provide a more accurate assessment of the interventions.

The development of **sophisticated and adaptable impact assessment tools** tailored for individuals more oriented towards the practical aspects of deliberation is essential for capturing both immediate results and long-term impacts. It might be useful to use several impact assessment tools and mix qualitative and quantitative methods during one project allowing

access to complementary information. For instance, using tools requiring **individual** (such as Impact Plus tool, for instance) and **community-based assessment** (for instance, the Ripple effect mapping). These complementary tools should be designed to accommodate the complexity and unpredictability of community-driven projects, while ensuring as accurate and reliable assessment as possible.

Deliberative processes need to achieve **sustainable results** and ideally be transferable to other contexts. The sustainability of the deliberative process is strongly connected with the impact/signals of change generated on the different participants, structures, and areas concerned by the process. The rigidity and path dependence of public sector institutions is an obstacle to the survival of even successful experiments. The organisations hosting and coordinating the deliberative process must have the capacity (skills, time, organisational design etc) to manage such a dynamic process and combine the pulsating and spontaneous nature of civil society with the stability and predictability of institutions. There is a risk that structural capacity of organisations may remain overlooked in the fascination of innovation and experimentation in citizen engagement.

However, it is also important to highlight that ideally the **deliberative process needs to lead to results that are further channelled into the local decision-making processes.** One crucial consideration for this is the existence or potential for the future existence of a legal framework for the project. The ongoing feedback and effort to establish this legal foundation are essential for the seamless transfer of the results of the deliberative process into policy-making. The pace of this process may vary based on local internal and external conditions; however, the indications of change must consistently demonstrate an increasing interest, openness, and adaptability of the deliberative process on the part of local decision-making bodies.

Deliberative processes are, first of all, **experimental processes** following the "learning by doing" approach. Stakeholders, participants, decision-makers, and coordinators are constantly learning from the results of the process and from each others' experiences. The EUARENAS experience made it clear that deliberative processes are also to be considered as opportunities for **learning, innovation, and exchange** for everyone who is part of the process independently of their initial status or role in the deliberation channel. Participatory processes, as **arenas of learning and exchange**, become the elements of a permanent transfer of tools, experiences, methods, and approaches between cities, regions, decision-makers, stakeholders, and citizens, and all the other participants of local deliberation.

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