Introduction

From comparative to country analysis

In addition to presenting comparative data, gathered from governments and civil society organisations through questionnaires, this report recognises that much in-depth knowledge can be gained by studying concrete examples of citizen engagement practices in different countries and policy areas.

The 14 case studies presented in this section reflect diverse contexts and experiences with citizen engagement. First of all, because the cases are drawn from different stages of the policy cycle, secondly because they reflect a wide variety of methods of public engagement, ranging from participatory budgeting to the use of online tools. Thirdly, because they come from different levels of government: some from the local or regional level, others from the national level. And last but not least, the cases come from many different countries, each with its own traditions and history of public engagement. These range from Switzerland, with its longstanding tradition of direct democracy and referenda, to Finland whose established representative democracy is distinguished by a strong "consultation culture" to Korea whose relatively recent experience of democracy has given rise to numerous innovative experiments in citizen engagement.

Although diverse, the case studies fall into four broad thematic groups: regional and urban development (Australia, Canada, Germany, Norway, UK); local participatory budgeting (Turkey, Korea); national level participatory programmes (Austria, Finland, France and Switzerland) and building capacity and tools for engagement (The Netherlands, New Zealand, UK).

Insights from practice

These country case studies were produced by members of the Steering Group, national experts as well as by OECD Secretariat staff and submitted in the first quarter of 2008. Information provided in the case studies is to be considered valid up to that date.

All case studies are built on the basis of a standard outline, but one which left ample latitude to capture the specific features of a given engagement initiative. To simplify the comparison between different cases, most cases also present a table representing some of the key features and questions regarding practices of citizen engagement. These tables can be found throughout the case documents, and a summary of these features of the specific practices can be found in Table II.1 on the following page.

Although the limited number of cases and their diversity makes it impossible to draw definitive conclusions, a number of common features can be identified:

- **Benefits:** Most cases identify the benefits of public engagement in terms of improved knowledge and input to the decision making process for governments, and increased awareness among participants.

- **Costs:** The costs of running an engagement initiative vary widely, depending on the type of engagement method used, the number of people involved and whether people are reimbursed for the costs of their participation.
- **Risks:** Several cases acknowledged the risk of not capturing all voices or even a fair cross-section of all voices. Several cases also cite the risk of increasing the administrative burden for the organising institution. Some cases indicate that if the process takes too long, consultation fatigue may set in.
- **Inclusion:** Efforts to engage a representative part of the population appear to differ widely. In some cases, specific measures are undertaken to strengthen participation from all parts of society. In other cases this seems less of an issue or is not pursued as a benefit in its own right. In some cases, it would appear that government officials do not yet recognise inclusion as an issue to be addressed.
- **Evaluation:** Here too, practice varies widely. Some cases of citizen engagement are evaluated by external bodies, some by a combination of participants and the government unit responsible for the engagement process. Evaluation may focus on the process of citizen engagement, on the results, on costs and benefits or on a combination. In most cases, the focus seems limited to evaluating the process with only limited evaluation of whether public engagement has actually brought about a change in policy or decisions.

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Table II.1. **Overview of main characteristics of the country case studies**

	Regional and urban development				
	United Kindgom	Norway	Canada	Germany	Australia
Topic	Regional Economic Strategy in Northeast England	Urban planning in Trondheim	Self-sufficiency agenda in New Brunswick	Social and structural improvement of Bremen	Participatory community summit in Port Phillip
Costs	Approx. GBP 250 000	NOK 100 000 (approx. EUR 12 500)	CAD 100 000	Approximately EUR 300 000 (varies per year)	AUD 230 000 for event plus AUD 40 000 for video production.
Risks	– Consultation fatigue – Loss of public support – Increased administrative burdens	– Limited variety of voices – Process did not allow enough time for discussion – Rules for discussion unclear – Domination of discussion by some participants	– Non-representativity of participants and their input – Not all input could be accommodated – Loss of momentum	– Sustaining participation over long period of time – Consensus principle (instead of majority) makes decision making a lengthy process	– A set of principles were used to manage and mitigate potential risks
Benefits	– New input to substantive issue at hand – Increased understanding of different points of view on substantive issue	– Advice from panel provided to the municipality – Better understanding of planning issues for participants	– Increased awareness among general public – Long term model for engagement was created	– Strengthened social cohesion and better quality of life – Added value for city authorities – Empowered residents	– Four annual action plans were drawn up for the 2007-2017 City of Port Phillip Community Plan
Inclusion	– 1 000 stakeholders involved – Mostly experts and/or stakeholders, – No specific effort to guarantee a representation of the general public	– Invitation to participate was sent to random selection – Selection made sure that equal number of men and women, different age groups and inhabitants of different parts of the city were involved	– Hundreds of people involved – Citizens, business, NGOs, marginalized groups – The small size and strong community network of New Brunswick was helpful in recruiting partipants	– Between 40 and 80 people from business, residents, etc. – Overrepresentation of women, underrepresentation of immigrants	– About 750 people from all walks of life representing the diversity of the Port Phillip community.
Evaluation	– Carried out by independent consultancy	– Carried out by independent researchers	– Not evaluated	– Carried out by 2 external institutions	n.a.

Overview of main characteristics of the country cases studies *(cont.)*

	Participatory budgeting		National participatory programmes		
	Turkey	Korea	Finland	France	Austria
Topic	Participative budgeting in Çanakkale municipality	Participative budgeting in Buk-gu municipality	Citizen Participation Policy Programme	Environment Roundtable	The Forest Dialogue
Costs	TRY 35 000 (of which TRY 25 000 for projects)	Approx. EUR 17 700/year	n.a.	n.a.	Approx. EUR 76 000 per year (2003-08)
Risks	– Limitations in (financial) resources – Delays in implementation due to lengthy financial processes – Diffiiculties in management of project and participants	– Time consuming and inefficient budgeting processes – Increased administrative burdens – Increased citizen expectations/ demands	– Risk of lack of coherence and co-ordination given wide scope of policy programme – Risk of reaching only those who already deal with participation within the civil service	– Risk of achieving only a limited diversity among participants	– Risk of conflict of interest as Ministry is both the organizer of the process and a stakeholder – Risk that some stakeholders could not participate due to lack of time or resources
Benefits	– Increased awareness among public – Relevant input to substantive issue at hand – Better intra-institutional evaluation	– Budget information to citizens has improved – Increased number of consultations – Citizens put more trust in government	– Stronger connections established between separate projects undertaken by different ministries	– Raised awareness and provided opportunity for nation-wide debate – Contributed to shaping national environmental policy	– Dialogue produced a common vision for Sustainable Forest Management in Austria
Inclusion	– Approx. 0.6% of the total population participated in 2007	– Over 1 000 stakeholders from private, public sector, academia, NGOs etc. – Risk of exclusion due to digital divide	– All active civil society organisations were involved – The programme also engaged individual citizens through direct mailing, meetings, round tables, workshops and Internet	– Over 15 000 people took part in the regional meetings – Over 14 000 people took part in the internet forum – Limited participation by women	– All relevant federal organisations participate (81 in total) – Efforts to engage individual citizens (*e.g.* public meetings in which 350 people participated and an internet forum)
Evaluation	– Evaluation carried out by a joint group of participants	– Evaluation carried out by joint group of participants and civil servants	– Clear effectiveness targets are in the Government Strategy Document	– Final report published online	– Evaluation to be undertaken at the end of 2008

Overview of main characteristics of the country cases studies *(cont.)*

	National participatory programmes	Building capacity and tools for engagement		
	Switzerland	New Zealand	The Netherlands	United Kingdom
Topic	Standardized surveys on voter behaviour	Online Participation Project	Standards for public engagement	Building capacity for citizen engagement
Costs	Approx. EUR 120 000 per year	Staff costs	n.a.	n.a.
Risks	n.a.	– Use of a wiki as a platform for drafting government policy posed risks of: low take-up as unfamiliar platform, potentially offensive comments, limited capacity to react to volume of comments.	– Lack of agreed quality standards for the design and execution of citizen engagement processes no clear measure of the impact of citizen engagement on decision-making	– Few formal evaluations good and bad practice not captured and disseminated skills and experience are lost through staff turnover
Benefits	– Results can improve understanding of why a given proposal is rejected; helps Government improve its information policy	– Better quality policy guidance and contributed to fostering a sustainable community of practice	– Higher professional standards in public engagement ensure greater impact	– Public servants are better able to: identify when and how to consult; how to commission, monitor and evaluate public engagement exercises
Inclusion	– Survey takes representative samples of roughly 1 000 eligible voters	– Successful in overcoming barriers of time and distance given online platform – Less successful in including perspectives from different communities	n.a.	– A number of initiatives are underway to build capacity among citizens (*e.g.* to up-skill, encourage and empower citizens; demystify policy processes)
Evaluation	– Survey provides longitudinal data since 1977 for the evaluation of popular participation at the federal level	– Initial evaluation of the wiki conducted soon after launch	– The project evaluates 7 projects indepth and includes a web-based questionnaire of several hundred project leaders	n.a.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 11

Executive Summary 13

Part I

Focus on Citizens: Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services

Chapter 1. **Why Invest in Open and Inclusive Policy Making?** 21
Chapter 2. **Open Policy Making: Work in Progress** 31
Chapter 3. **Inclusive Policy Making: The Next Step** 45
Chapter 4. **Evaluation Improves Performance** 57
Chapter 5. **Leveraging New Technologies and the Participative Web** 65
Chapter 6. **Principles to Support Practice** 77

Part II

Case Studies in Citizen Engagement

Introduction 83

Regional and Urban Development 89

Chapter 7. **Building Future Scenarios for Regional Development in Northeast England, United Kingdom** 91
Chapter 8. **Public Engagement to Achieve Self-Sufficiency in New Brunswick, Canada** 97
Chapter 9. **Public Involvement in Urban Renewal in Trondheim, Norway** 105
Chapter 10. **Improving Quality of Life in Distressed Urban Areas in Bremen, Germany** 111
Chapter 11. **Building on a Participatory Community Summit in Port Phillip, Australia** 119

Local Participatory Budgeting 127

Chapter 12. **Participatory Budgeting in Çanakkale, Turkey** 129
Chapter 13. **Participatory Budgeting in Buk-gu, Korea** 135

National Level Participatory Programmes 143

Chapter 14. **The Citizen Participation Policy Programme, Finland** 145
Chapter 15. **The Environment Roundtable, France** 151
Chapter 16. **The Forest Dialogue, Austria** 157
Chapter 17. **Standardised Surveys on Voter Behaviour, Switzerland** 161

Building Capacity and Tools for Engagement 167

Chapter 18. **The Online Participation Project, New Zealand** 169
Chapter 19. **Developing Professional Standards for Citizen Engagement, The Netherlands** 177
Chapter 20. **Building Government's Capacity to Engage Citizens, United Kingdom** 185

Part III

Practitioners' Perspectives: Why Now, How and What Next?

Introduction 195

Why Now? The Case for Citizen Engagement 197

Chapter 21. **Why Should Governments Engage Citizens in Service Delivery and Policy Making?** 199
Chapter 22. **Public Engagement Is a Must in a Multi-Stakeholder World** 207
Chapter 23. **Calling All Politicians: Take Your Citizens Seriously, or Be Marginalised** 213
Chapter 24. **And the Winner Is Trust and Credibility** 219

How? Engaging the Public Effectively 225

Chapter 25. **Participate, but Do so Pragmatically** 227
Chapter 26. **The Next Challenge for Citizen Engagement: Institutionalisation** . . . 231
Chapter 27. **Internal Communication: The Problem and the Solution** 235
Chapter 28. **Leveraging Technology to Engage Young People** 239
Chapter 29. **The Privacy Implications of Public Engagement** 243

Where? How Context Shapes Practice 249

Chapter 30. **Social Partnership in Ireland: A Problem-Solving Process** 251
Chapter 31. **The Right to Know in Mexico: The Challenge of Dissemination** 257
Chapter 32. **Participation at the Municipal Level in Italy: The Case of Bologna** . . . 261
Chapter 33. **People's Participation in Korea: Formality or Reality?** 267

Which? Exchanging Experience and Perspectives 271

Chapter 34. **Building Citizen-Centred Policies and Services: A Global Snapshot** 273
Chapter 35. **Democratic Innovations: Open Space Event** 281
Chapter 36. **Are You Listening? Youth Voices in Public Policy** 285

What Next? Shaping the Future Today 293

Chapter 37. **The Future of Open and Inclusive Policy Making** 295
Chapter 38. **Globalised Democracy** 299

Annex A. Legislation and Policy Measures for Open Government 303
Annex B. Oversight Institutions for Open Government 311

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Annex C. Members of the OECD Steering Group on Open and Inclusive Policy Making (2007-2008) 315

Annex D. Civil Society Respondents to the 2007 OECD "Questionnaire for Civil Society Organisations on Open and Inclusive Policy Making" 317

Annex E. Glossary 320

Boxes

0.1. Guiding Principles for open and inclusive policy making 17
1.1. Building citizen centred policies and services 26
1.2. Australia: Citizen summits help shape long-term strategy 29
2.1. Civil society organisations: Evaluation of progress in open and inclusive policy making 33
2.2. Civil society organisations: Views on principles 35
2.3. The Netherlands: Code of conduct for professional consultation 36
2.4. Czech Republic: Setting new standards for public consultation 36
2.5. Finland: Building the capacity and culture for public participation among civil servants 37
2.6. Austria: Building capacity for public participation 38
2.7. European Commission: Putting principles into practice 39
2.8. European Commission: Accountability and participation in supranational decision-making 39
2.9. Relevant OECD principles 40
2.10. Constitutional provisions for openness 40
2.11. Italy: Tuscany region guarantees rights to participation 41
3.1. UK: Developing engagement profiles 47
3.2. The Netherlands: Piecing together the profiles of non-participants 47
3.3. Austria: "Children to the Centre" 48
3.4. Austria: Developing a social integration strategy through an inclusive participation process 52
3.5. European Commission: Fostering eInclusion 52
3.6. France: The high school participatory budget of the Poitou-Charentes region 53
3.7. UK: The Innovation Fund 54
4.1. Austria: Evaluation helps government identify people's expectations and needs 60
4.2. Canada: Building on multiple sources of evaluation 62
5.1. Ministerial meeting charts the course towards an open and inclusive Internet economy 67
5.2. UK: Leveraging the web for a "national conversation" 69
5.3. France: Engaging users in designing online services 69
5.4. US: Intellipedia and Diplopedia 70
5.5. OECD: Designing and launching Wikigender 71
5.6. Portugal: Using a social network site to engage with citizens abroad 72
5.7. New Zealand: The ParticipatioNZ Wiki 73
5.8. UK: FixMyStreet.com 74
6.1. Guiding principles for open and inclusive policy making 79
11.1. Vision statement 125

18.1. Why use a wiki? 171
18.2. Wikis in government: Potential risks and mitigations 171
35.1. About "Open Space" 283

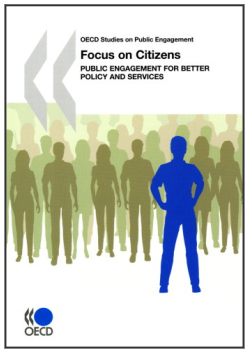
Tables

2.1. Actions taken to apply principles in practice: some examples from OECD countries 38
4.1. Advantages and disadvantages of internal, independent and participatory evaluation 61
II.1. Overview of main characteristics of the country case studies 85
7.1. SHiNE: Key characteristics 93
8.1. The Self-Sufficiency Agenda: Key characteristics 100
9.1. Trondheim urban renewal project: Key characteristics 109
10.1. WiN and Soziale Stadt projects in Tenever: Key characteristics 114
11.1. Port Phillip Community Summit: Key characteristics 120
11.2. Guiding principles for the Port Philip Community Plan Steering Committee 122
12.1. "I Know My Budget" campaign: Key characteristics 133
13.1. Participatory Budgeting (PB): Key characteristics 137
14.1. Citizen Participation Policy Programme: Key characteristics 148
15.1. The Environment Roundtable: Key characteristics 154
16.1. Austrian Forest Dialogue: Key characteristics 160
17.1. Vox surveys: Key characteristics 164
18.1. The Online Participation Project: Key characteristics 170
19.1. Mapping four dimensions of the impact of citizen engagement 181
19.2. Developing standards for citizen engagement: Key characteristics 182
20.1. Building capacity for engagement: Key characteristics 187

Figures

1.1. Policy performance and democratic performance 22
1.2. What are OECD countries' goals with respect to government? 28
1.3. What are OECD countries' goals with respect to citizens? 28
2.1. Principles for which greatest progress has been achieved 34
2.2. Principles which are the most difficult to meet 35
2.3. Resources devoted to promoting open and inclusive policy making 37
2.4. Main targets of support for open and inclusive policy making 41
2.5. Identifying the costs for government 42
2.6. Identifying the risks for government 43
3.1. What barriers are people facing? 49
3.2. Why don't people participate? 49
3.3. Measures to lower barriers for government information 51
3.4. Measures to lower barriers for consultation and participation 51
3.5. Measures to increase uptake of government information 52
3.6. Measures to increase the appeal of consultation and participation initiatives 53
4.1. What proportion of open and inclusive policy making initiatives are evaluated? 58

4.2. Countries have different reasons for evaluating open and inclusive policy making 59
4.3. Countries evaluate a range of factors in open and inclusive policy making 60
4.4. Self-evaluation is the norm. 62
5.1. OECD governments use ICT to inform more than to engage people 70
5.2. OECD governments are exploring new online options to inform and engage citizens 71
5.3. Shifting paradigms: from Participation 1.0 to Participation 2.0. 73
12.1. Mapping participation in Çanakkale city management 130



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