



Developing students' communication and facilitation skills through the course “Participation management: tools for citizens engagement and community empowerment”



TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CHANGES AND PERSPECTIVES
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Through **community engagement** local people can articulate the knowledge of what and where local community issues are, and possibly the knowledge of how local community issues could be addressed, drawing on their lived experiences (Mbah, 2020).

Creating equitable citizen participation processes, that is establishing a dialogue among heterogeneous players is **not always easy**. Handling participatory processes correlates with growing workload for officials, and costs much (McDonnell, 2023). Besides, officials place little trust in the skills, intelligence and experience of ordinary people. Arnstein (1969, p. 217) hold that, “in most cases the have-nots really do perceive the powerful as a monolithic ‘system,’ and powerholders actually do view the have-nots as a sea of ‘those people’”. Citizen involvement often centers on the needs and goals of the party doing the involving, not the citizen. Thus, encouragement to participate in decisions through the building of long-term “partnerships” with local community groups is challenging. **Partnerships remain elusive unless partners can also articulate, debate and resolve their disagreement** (Ianniello et al., 2019).

The students are to be presented with concentrated theoretical information about citizen participation processes, and, complementary, with the full range of potential sources, templates and tools of participation possibilities.

Number of ECTS credits:	2
Student’s workload:	50
Independent work hours:	24
Contact work hours and planned learning activities:	26

REFERENCES

Sh. R. Arnstein, “A Ladder Of Citizen Participation,” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 216-224, 1969. DOI: 10.1080/01944366908977225

M. Ianniello, S. Iacuzzi, P. Fedele, and L. Brusati. “Obstacles and solutions on the ladder of citizen participation: a systematic review,” *Public Management Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 21-46, 2019. DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2018.1438499

J. McDonnell, “Municipality size and political participation: evidence from Australia,” *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 58, no. 1, pp. 70-87, 2023. DOI: 10.1080/10361146.2022.2132915

Table 1. Formats, channels and forms of citizens’ engagement at meso-level

For mat	Communication methods	Categories of engagement
Off-line participation	Word-of-mouth	Getting / Accepting information
	Face-to-face Hearings / Meetings	
	Holding public forums	Attending meetings
	-public hearings and meetings	Engaging in a committee
	Public presentations	Advising – articulating priorities (voting, signing petitions, etc.)
	Local radio and TV	Serving on the committee / Being a member of committee
	Print (posters, pamphlets)	
	Surveys to collect information on perception/ attitude surveys (Gathering input)	Responding to surveys / inquiries
	Workshops / Community capacity building and training	Engaging in community advisory task groups
	Joint problem-solving, joint decision-making, learning and joint sense-making	Club gatherings
E-participation (online engagement)	Website / social media (internet)	Negotiating with city/community leaders
	Publishing general information about the municipality	Volunteering, donating
	Hearings – live-streamed through the municipality's website	
	Calls to citizens to participate in offline/ online activities	

Students are to be educated and prepared for engaging with communities.

The course “**Participation management: tools for citizens engagement and community empowerment**” (2 ECTS) is intended to teach the importance of bringing people together to learn about the community, and teach the methods enabling to engage in problem solving, and acting to make positive change.

The project HEIsCITI - HEIs as Innovative Triggers of Sustainable Development in European Cities in Post Covid-19 era (<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2022-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000088825>)

aims at creating universal **curricula** (methodology and teaching tools) for all types of university courses **to teach students** the best **ways to animate and coordinate communication between citizens and local authorities** for inclusive and sustainable urban development in the post Covid -19 era.



Table 2. Course topics and distribution of working hours (contact)

TOPICS		Contact work hours			
		Lectures	Seminars	Consultation	Assessment
Theoretical part	Introduction to the course (aim, objectives, content, assessment strategy, resources)	2	2		
	Municipality’s policy context	2			
	The concept of citizen engagement (levels, forms, and methods; issues, guidelines)	4	2		
	Participatory tools	4	2		
Empirical part	Challenge introduction – municipality case				
	Engagement (emerges in practice): participatory action research (project), including using participatory tools – independent student work			6	
	Presentation of participatory action research (project)				2