



# Interreg



## Danube Transnational Programme

### URBforDAN

# URBforDAN Participatory Approach and Workshop implementation Guidelines



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. About the URBforDAN Project

Management and Utilization of Urban Forests as Natural Heritage in Danube Cities (with acronym URBforDAN) is an EU co-financed project, which was designed to deliver a change in urban forest management and utilization of ecosystem services. URBforDAN project is being implemented in 7 Danube Cities – Ljubljana (SLO), Vienna (AT), Budapest (HUN), Zagreb (CRO), Cluj-Napoca (ROM), Belgrade (SRB) and Ivano-Frankivsk (UA). Its' implementation is closely observed by 3 associated partner cities – Prague (CZE), Sarajevo (BIH) and Podgorica (MNE), as well as by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Urban and Peri-urban Forests (UPF) in Danube Cities play extremely important role as “green city lungs” - preserving rich biodiversity of Europe and its vivid landscape. They also deliver many economically/socially important ecosystem services – UPF are key areas for experiencing natural/cultural heritage within cities, important tourist attractions, areas for recreation and high quality of living.

All URBforDAN Cities face similar challenges – all manage substantial NH areas (mostly UPF) within their city limits. Due to their characteristics they attract many users (citizens, tourists...), but also have many stakeholders (managers, owners, interest groups...) trying to manage those activities. Today, this is usually done without proper coordination of all stated key actors. UPF also lack appropriate infrastructure and equipment to cope with ever increasing number of users. Thus, UPF are under increasing pressure from diverse set of activities, arising conflicts and unsustainable use of resources – all leading to poor state of NH. Management of UPF in some cities is further challenged by the extreme fragmentation of the ownership (which is often mostly private).


This is why URBforDAN takes on the challenge of mobilization of key actors in URBforDAN Cities to ensure their active participation in integrated planning/management. Protection regimes, mapping/valuation of ecosystem services and development ideas will be combined through a participatory process to deliver Integrated multi-use Management Plans for UPF on strategic and operational level. UPF Danube Network will be established to strengthen the cooperation between key actors, ensure timely knowledge/best-practice sharing, dissemination/transferability of project outputs and enable further capitalization. UPF managers, owners and users will be equipped with management tools supporting multi-purpose use of UPF and exploiting new opportunities for sustainable development. Participatory Planning & UPF Management Guidelines will be developed, based on lessons learned and best practices used.

### 1.2. About URBforDAN Workshop Guidelines

The overall aim of this document is to support URBforDAN partners in implementation of Participatory Approach and all URBforDAN related workshops with key stakeholders. This is not a comprehensive guide for design and delivery of trainings, but rather a support tool for Project partners and workshop moderators/facilitators.

It was designed and developed by a team of external experts from the company ZaVita d.o.o., tasked to provide expert support to the City of Ljubljana (Lead Partner) and the URBforDAN Partnership.

## 2. How to implement the Participatory Approach



What is the Participatory Approach?

*“Public participation is the process by which an organization consults with interested or affected individuals, organizations, and government entities before making a decision. Public participation is two-way communication and collaborative problem solving with the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions.”*

Source: International Association for Public Participation – URL: [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)


Participatory approach to decision making incorporates public participation as an integral part of the decision-making process. In practice it enables ordinary people to play an active and influential part in decisions which affect their lives. In participatory approach:

- ✓ Work is based on mutual understanding and trust.
- ✓ Work is done in a constructive and open space for cooperation.
- ✓ Everyone has the right to actively and constructively participate.
- ✓ Local knowledge and context are highly valued.
- ✓ Participants co-create and shape outcomes.
- ✓ Participants are motivated not only to co-create Plans, but also to implement them.

*“Tell me and I will forget.  
Show me and I will remember.  
Involve me and I will understand.”*  
a Chinese proverb

Participatory Approach:

- ✓ Makes people aware that the decision-maker is “working on something” and can act as a communication and promotion tool.
- ✓ Provides an “early warning system” about public needs, concerns, as well as expectations.
- ✓ Raises awareness and increases sensitivity of the general public about the challenge in question.
- ✓ If public needs, concerns and expectations are taken seriously, it enables constructive cooperation between all key stakeholders in timely sharing of accurate information, as well as in design of possible solutions – making final plan widely accepted and endorsed. This makes it highly implementable and resilient.
- ✓ Creates learning platforms and allows exploration of new concepts and ideas.
- ✓ Generates “the will-power” and “critical mass” for change of mind-set, subsequently increasing the number of actors interested in its implementation.
- ✓ If implemented correctly, it will avoid or at least reduce costly time-delays.
- ✓ Contributes to a “positive image” of the decision-maker and increases understanding of its’ goals and actions.
- ✓ Builds trust between decision-maker, stakeholders and the general public.



What is the added value of the Participatory Approach?

### How to ensure effective implementation of the Participatory Approach?

Participatory approach will be effective only, if the decision-maker fully accepts public participation in light of a constructive attempt to improve final decisions. This decision is clearly visible in the way workshops and other public participation events are organized and carried out by the decision-maker and his team.

To ensure effective implementation of the participatory approach we need to:

- ✓ Ensure full understanding of the current situation and challenges.
- ✓ Set clear focus and goals.
- ✓ Ensure early identification of critical issues.
- ✓ Present the decision-making process and key steps for public participation.
- ✓ Actively engage and involve participants in key steps.
- ✓ Create constructive and open platform or space for cooperation and exchange of opinions.
- ✓ Present clear, understandable and argued rationale for the final decision, as well as how public participation improved the decision-making process.

Creating constructive and open space for cooperation is essential for successful implementation of the participatory approach in practice.

This can be achieved through the following steps:

- ✓ Invite all relevant actors.
- ✓ Announce expectations, agenda and expected timeline.
- ✓ Create relaxed and constructive atmosphere - have fun!
- ✓ Don't give lectures, rather make an introduction and facilitate a workshop.
- ✓ Openly invite all participants to express their opinions - however, stay on topic!
- ✓ Ensure active involvement of all participants and encourage discussions.
- ✓ Celebrate diversity of opinions, but try to generate consensus.
- ✓ Make sure you use your time efficiently and always finish on-time.
- ✓ Summarize key conclusions.
- ✓ If you organize sequential workshops (e.g. in different planning steps):
  - Make sure you explain to participants how the results from the previous workshop were used in progress of the project.
  - Announce next workshop, its' rough date and content.

### How to create constructive and open space for cooperation?

### Who is facilitator?

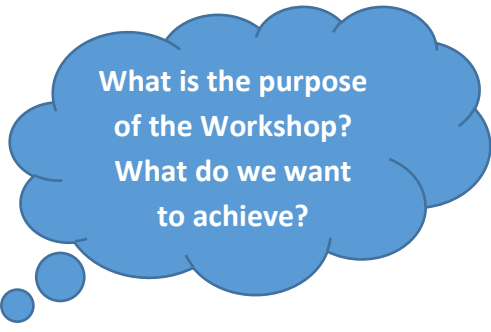
Facilitator designs and facilitates the workshop – in effect he/she is the workshop leader. Its main task is to engage and involve all participants, facilitate their discussions and increase group effectiveness. Facilitator must act as unbiased neutral party (without own agenda) and should not display any preference for any of considered solutions. Regardless of his/her background, facilitator should avoid acting as an expert and should remain its focus on the quality of the participation process. It is his/her job to build safe and constructive environment for confrontation of opinions – not participants. Facilitator must remain flexible and adapt to unexpected situations.

### 3. How to organize and implement Participatory Approach Workshops

There are two aspects of each workshop, meeting, training or event we must always consider – content issues and organizational issues.

#### 3.1. Key content related issues

In URBforDAN project there will be at least 4 types of workshops and other events devoted to Public Participation. To some extent they will be similar in their design, however their intent will be quite different. This is why it is important to ask yourself the following questions before deciding how to implement a workshop:



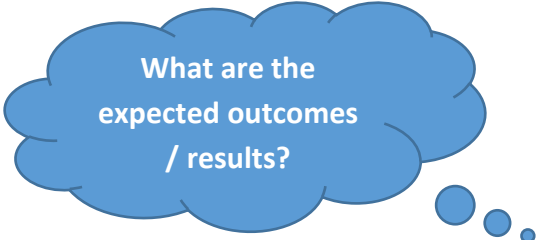
**What is the purpose of the Workshop?  
What do we want to achieve?**

Different purposes dictate different approaches to organization and implementation of the workshop. For example – we can meet to “share information”, “define challenges”, “identify alternatives”, “brain-storm about new opportunities”, “make decisions”, “plan actions”, etc.

Corresponding to above options we must also decide on the level of public participation we expect. For example – we usually expect one out of the following 5 types of public participation – “to inform”, “to consult”, “to involve”, “to collaborate”, “to empower”.

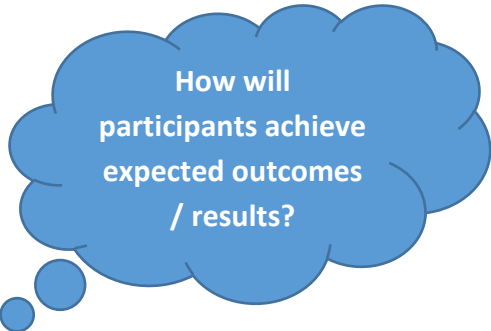
Answers to above posed questions will to a large extent shape the design of the workshop and dictate its organizational aspects.

This is a very logical continuation of the thinking process from the previous step. We can expect a diverse array of outcomes / results, depending on the purpose of the workshop. For example – we can expect “better informed and aware group”, “a list of challenges”, “a decision”, “a fully developed action plan”, etc.



**What are the expected outcomes / results?**

Regardless of the type of outcome / result, we need to know it before we can ask ourselves the following question...



**How will participants achieve expected outcomes / results?**

The first dilemma we must resolve in this step is linked to different approaches to implementation of the workshop. For example – a workshop can be based on a “presentation-discussion approach”, “groupwork approach”, “round table approach”, “confrontation of opinions and arguments approach”, etc. When deciding on the overall approach we must always consider answers from previous steps, as some approaches are more suitable for achieving different purposes and outcomes / results.

The second dilemma is linked to type of our participants, their motivation, their needs and expectations, as we need to identify best ways to motivate them for active participation. In different

social environments different techniques can be effective, thus facilitators must be creative. For example – we can use “ice-breakers” if we need to relax the atmosphere or raise the level of activity of participants (e.g. after heavy lunch); we can also use “group-work exercises” to prevent participants from hiding in the mass, to mix stakeholder groups or to get answers from specific stakeholder groups; we can decide and take participants for a “field work” to present concrete problems in real time and space, etc.

The third dilemma is linked to presentation of baseline information. Here we must ask ourselves which information must be available to participants and which presentation technique should be applied. There are many techniques and tools available nowadays and facilitators should be creative in this respect. But we must always keep in mind who our participants are and to what technique they will respond best.

The fourth dilemma is linked to the necessity to finalize workshop outcomes / results. We all know that time is very elusive, especially when participants have fun and get creative. Subsequently, time management and effectiveness of the groupwork is essential in ensuring workshop outcomes / results. This is also why facilitators must know from the start which level of finalization of outcomes / results do we need to ensure. For example – is it enough, if we deliver only draft versions or is it fundamental to finalize and adopt outcomes / results.

It is also important to consider the decision-making process, which will be employed at the workshop – if this is relevant. There are possibilities how a decision can be reached – for example:

- **“The group decides”** – there are few possibilities within this approach, for example - unanimous decision making, majority voting, etc.
- **“The leader decides based on group discussion”** – again, there are a few possibilities within this approach, for example – the leader decides based on argued recommendation from the group, the leader decides having only listened to group discussion, etc.
- **“The expert decides”** – the person who knows the most decides.
- **“The leader decides”** – the person who holds the power decides.

Follow-up is the last, but actually one of the most important steps in workshop organization steps, especially when we are talking about a series of workshops. Participants need to know that their efforts and ideas were taken seriously and actually used for the purpose of URBforDAN project.



It starts with workshop assessment – usually participants are asked to assess several aspects of the workshop on a quick questionnaire. Analysis of such questionnaires can reveal and shortages of the workshop, which can be very useful for organization of next workshops.

A workshop report will be prepared for all URBforDAN workshops, describing the aim of the workshop, as well as its outcomes / results and key conclusions of the discussion. Additionally, facilitators can consider other follow up options – for example “a press release”, “Facebook/Instagram/Twitter feeds”, “publication of workshop outcomes / results on the web-page”, etc.

In URBforDAN project special attention must be put on the transparency of the participatory approach. This means that every following workshop must start with a brief report on how outcomes / results from the previous workshop were incorporated in URBforDAN project.



### 3.2. Key organizational issues

#### Who to invite and how many?

To avoid overcrowding and off-topic discussions make sure you invite only topic relevant participants. On the other hand, it is vital that representatives of all key stakeholder groups are present. In the participant selection process, it is wise to ask yourselves:

- *Are they interested in the topic and why? What is their motivation for participation?*
- *Do they possess adequate background and knowledge to be able to participate?*
- *Are they representatives of their institutions / stakeholder groups and can they speak in its name? What is their expected position on the topic?*
- *Do participants from different stakeholder groups know each other and are they compatible? Can we expect conflicts?*
- *Do they have special needs or expectations? Do they understand the language?*
- *How many people we want to invite? All of them or just their representatives?*

Selection of the venue and its organization can also contribute to the success or failure of the workshop, as the venue sets the conditions in which the workshop is held. When selecting and organizing the venue, one should consider the following check-list:

- ✓ Venue selected for the appropriate number of participants and in line with workshop needs – pay attention that you have enough space (is additional exercise space needed) and that venue suites your needs (e.g. accessibility, natural light, outdoor space, etc.).
- ✓ Venue reserved and reservation confirmed.
- ✓ Meeting room organized for the appropriate number of participants and in line with workshop needs – pay attention when selecting the sitting order, as some facilitation techniques have special demands – e.g. islands, U-sitting order, plenary sitting order, etc.
- ✓ Reception desk set-up and equipped (e.g. presence list, name-tags, materials, agenda, etc.)
- ✓ Catering ordered and confirmed.
- ✓ All moderators / facilitators selected, appropriately informed and confirmed.
- ✓ Agenda prepared and confirmed by all moderators / facilitators.
- ✓ Presentations from all moderators / facilitators prepared, collected and reviewed.
- ✓ All needed workshop tools available and tested (e.g. microphone, projector, computer, flip-charts, pens/markers, facilitation tools, etc.).
- ✓ Minutes-writing, photography and collection of outcomes / results organized.
- ✓ Translation ensured (if needed).
- ✓ Workshop follow-up organized.

#### Organization of the venue and catering

#### Announcement and invitation of participants

We have to make sure that workshop announcement is done in appropriate (don't present just key information, but also explain the purpose of the workshop) and timely manner (at least 14 days prior to the event). Confirmation must always be requested in order to know how many participants will attend. If food is served, do not forget about special needs – e.g. vegetarians, etc.



### 3.3. Plan for the unexpected

No matter how much effort we put into planning and organization of a workshop, there is always a chance that something will not go according to the plan. This can not be avoided; thus, we must be prepared to react and adapt to new circumstances.

Some things are out of our control, but we can still prepare for “plan B” – for example:

- **Bad weather** – if we plan outdoor activities this might affect us, so make sure that you have a spare room or a roof over a part of the open area, which you can use, if needed.
- **Unwilling participants** – we should always try to get to know our participants or at least their needs, challenges and expectations, however this is not always possible. In such cases you can use several techniques to motivate participants to participate – for example ice-breakers, group-work, questionnaires, etc.
- **Availability of tools** – we are so used to certain tools (e.g. PowerPoint presentations, computers, etc.) that we are taken by surprise when suddenly – for example – there is no more electricity. To mitigate this, we should always consider a “low tech” alternative approach.
- **Unexpected participants** – we usually know who we are inviting to the workshop, however sometimes it might happen that an un-expected participant shows-up. For example – you have all your nice presentations and videos set-up for a 2-hour workshop and then a blind person shows up. Or some foreign participants who don’t speak the language. Such cases are rare; however, it is the responsibility of the moderator / facilitator to make sure that all participants can participate – if you are not alone, one of your colleagues can sit next to such persons and assist them.
- **Unexpected events** – sometimes unexpected events might interrupt a workshop. They might be pleasant (e.g. Santa visiting you with presents) or not (e.g. an organized protest). In this case it is the role of moderator / facilitator to decide whether to accept or reject the interruption and navigate the workshop accordingly. Usually, a 15-minute break will allow you to focus on the unexpected event and then return the focus back to the workshop.

Of course, in real life there are many more un-planned scenarios that might and will happen. We should expect them, understand them and invite colleagues/participants to help us solve them. Remember, we are not alone in the workshop and such events might make our workshop memorable, thus even further strengthening our message.

