CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT TOOL

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT TOOL TO SUPPORT DIGITAL CO-CREATION

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- This **tool** is **designed to help practitioners plan and adjust co-creation initiatives** that involve citizens in policy-making and/or service delivery **through digital technologies**. It summarises the findings of the 'Policy Report on Inclusive Digital Co-creation' (Deliverable 1.4.1) into a quick and handy overview of key findings and practical organisational recommendations.

- **How to navitage** the tool?

  - You can reach consecutive pages like in any PDF-file or jump straight ahead by clicking the coloured elements (e.g., brown boxes or terracotta question mark circles) on each slide.

  - On the left-hand side of each slide, you will also find two symbols that will take you either back to this initial slide (i.e., the terracotta house) or to your previous slide (i.e., the terracotta back arrow).

CO-CREATION

- Within the BECODIGITAL project, we consider co-creation as defined by Torfing et al. (2019, p. 802):

"A process through which two or more public and private actors solve a shared problem, challenge or task through a constructive exchange of different kinds of knowledge, resources, competences and ideas that enhance the production of public value [...] or services."

| DISCOVER A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE | WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU START | WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN YOU START |

Source: Torfing, J., Sørensen, E., & Røiseland, A. (2019). Transforming the Public Sector Into an Arena for Co-Creation: Barriers, Drivers, Benefits, and Ways Forward. *Administration & Society*, *51*(5), 795–825. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399716680057

A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE
THE CORONA CONSULTATIONS (1/2)

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The Corona Consultations implied **a three-phase priority formulation initiative** carried out and coordinated by Sciensano between November 2020 and January 2021 at the request of then Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Frank Vandenbroucke and his cabinet. The initiative's objective was to inform vaccination policy and lay out a vaccination strategy accepted and supported by the Belgian citizenry.

Ten debating moments (5 Dutch-speaking and 5 French-speaking of approx. two hours) about COVID-19 vaccination were organised on the same pattern. They included a deliberate outtake of citizens that were selected based on age, gender, language spoken at home, educational attainment and (un)willingness to get vaccinated in order to guarantee diverse opinions and capture a multitude of societal concerns. In total, 103 citizens were recruited from a sample of 5,802 citizens who had completed a COVID-19 Health questionnaire by Sciensano in the past and had indicated a willingness to debate COVID-19 policy.

In **phase 1**, information and Q&A opportunities were provided by experts in pharmacology, immunology, medicine and virology to prepare citizens for the debate in Phase 2.

A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE
THE CORONA CONSULTATIONS (2/2)

In **phase 2**, and through moderation, citizens discussed the desirability of (a) mandatory vaccination and (b) the exclusion of citizens based on their vaccination status, using funnel and 'veil of ignorance' debating techniques. Although they did not partake as such, experts remained present throughout the debates as fact-checkers—a purely supportive function. The results of these discussions were briefly summarised and presented directly to the minister and his cabinet members in a third and final phase. During the final presentation in **phase 3**, citizens could also ask pertinent questions directly to the minister. To do so, however, they first had to submit the questions using the chat function of the video conferencing tool. Other citizens could vote on the questions they found most relevant.

Corona Consultation results were purely advisory and held no binding consequences. All phases were organised online and supported through Miro-boards.

Two vital recommendations to consider before starting

1) **Ensure a thorough preparation** of the co-creation initiative, considering the following elements:

- **Formulate SMART objectives** in which the 'R' of relevance is paramount. it makes no sense to involve citizens digitally solely for the sake of digital possibilities or to choose a topic for participation solely for the sake of that topic. Instead, ensure that the chosen objectives have societal relevance that stakeholders, such as citizens.

- **Ensure internal consensus** and unanimity **on** these **objectives**, as well as clear agreements and **monitoring strategies** to track their progress.

- In light of the objectives, **consider** exactly **which external stakeholders you need, in what role** (e.g., a supporting one) **and when or at which phases** of your co-creation initiative.

- **Allocate sufficient internal support, financial resources and skilled personnel** to guide a co-creation initiative from start to finish, to assist or steer where needed, and to maintain or deepen contacts with stakeholders.

1) **Ensure a thorough preparation** of the co-creation initiative, considering the following elements:

- **Allow sufficient time to complete the process** you genuinely want to run and believe is necessary to achieve the outset objectives. There is no point in rushing through a co-creation project and skipping vital steps (even if they are time- and resource-intensive), as this will not benefit the final products.

- **Provide a clear plan, including time estimates and standards or guidelines** for fulfilling your individual role within the initiative (from a co-worker perspective). A **strong internal learning culture** can also help to reduce resistance to involving external parties in policymaking, service delivery, or the development of new applications. By sharing brief success stories with colleagues, co-workers learn that there is nothing intimidating about involving citizens and that the specialised skills required can be readily acquired.

- To enhance your organisation's learning potential, also **seek opportunities to learn from external parties' experiences and expertise**.

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2) Actively **evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of analogue, digital, hybrid, and mixed co-creation designs,** considering (a) the outset objectives, (b) the necessary internal inputs and/or resources, (c) the planned activities or activation methods in relation to the target audience, and (d) the desirable outputs and outcomes, including how to measure them.

- **Be aware that digital participation methods have limitations**. Online participants are more easily distracted and quicker to drop out of activities. One-to-one conversations are difficult to facilitate online, and online interaction tends to build less trust, making it harder for participants to overcome insecurities, particularly at higher policy levels that often address more complex topics, such as expectations for a Belgian justice system that provides services through digital technologies.

- **Be aware that digital participation methods can inconvenience some citizens** (particularly those who are digitally less literate). **Consider offering offline alternatives** to digital steps in your co-creation process to lower barriers to participation.

WHEN STARTING (1/3)

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- **How will you involve citizens** in your co-creation initiative? By having them …
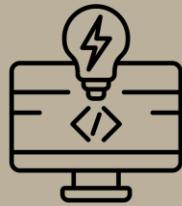
| IDEATE	VOTE	DELIBERATE	HELP DELIVER SERVICES
Examples include: ideation platforms, google forms or surveys	Examples include: voting features on a participation platform	Examples include: MS Teams or Zoom discussions with fellow citizens	Examples include: Apps that allow the reporting of public defaults or the training of algorithms

DIGITAL IDEATION
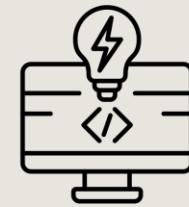
Examples include:
ideation platforms, social media comments google forms or surveys

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- These **pre-conditions** prove **determental to citizens' willingness to engage** in digital ideation:
  - Hedonic motivation ❓
  - Digital efficacy ❓
  - Civic efficacy ❓
  - Interest in politics and policymaking ❓

- Also important:
  - Perceived social pressure ❓
  - External efficacy ❓
  - Community attachment ❓

E-VOTING

VOTE
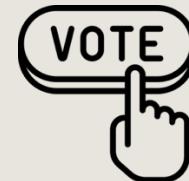
Examples include:
voting features on a participation platform and social media polls

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- These **pre-conditions** prove **determental to citizens' willingness to engage** in e-voting:
  - Hedonic motivation ❓
  - External efficacy ❓
  - Digital efficacy ❓
  - Interest in politics and policymaking ❓

- Also important:
  - Civic efficacy ❓

VIRTUAL DELIBERATION

Examples include:
MS Teams or Zoom discussions with fellow citizens, with or without support of collaborative tools

- These **pre-conditions** prove **determental to citizens' willingness to engage** in virtual deliberation with fellow citizens:

  - Hedonic motivation ❓

  - Digital efficacy ❓

  - Time availability ❓

  - Interest in politics and policymaking ❓

- Also important:

  - Age with older citizens more likely to engage

  - Educational status with those not-university educated more likely to participate

  - Occupational status with those unemployed more likely to engage

DIGITAL CO-DELIVERY OF SERVICES		Examples include: Apps that allow the reporting of public defaults (e.g., a pothole in the raod) or the training of algorithms

- These **pre-conditions** prove **determental to citizens' willingness to engage** in digital co-delivery of public services:

  - Hedonic motivation ?

  - Time availability ?

  - Civic efficacy ?

  - External efficacy ?

- Also important:

  - Occupational status with those unemployed more likely to engage

Three additional recommendations to consider when starting:

1) **Ensure people are aware they can participate.** Do not assume that a single communication or advertisement will be sufficient, nor that people will have seen it. Communication requires sustained effort, the use of various channels (e.g., website, social media, radio, television, newspaper ads), creativity (e.g., asking an influencer with roots in a particular community to help you advertise) and a tailored approach to the target group (e.g., organising information sessions on location in particular neighbourhood centres).

2) **Provide frequent, timely and two-way feedback** on citizens' contributions. When citizens can submit preliminary ideas, knowing they can be further developed and strengthened through feedback, this removes a barrier to participation. Moreover, this type of feedback can reinforce the feeling that someone is reading their contributions and that they are not merely anonymous or obscure additions to a platform.

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3) **Showcase** (digital) co-creation **success stories** and best practices both **externally and internally**. By keeping all stakeholders informed of the final results, you build a connection with the project, which can help sustain stakeholder involvement in the future or generate excitement for a new edition of the project. Furthermore, if citizens see what is possible through previous achievements, they will be more inclined to participate. Withal, these examples conclusively demonstrate that co-creation is not merely a hollow concept. For longer-duration co-creation initiatives, it may also be beneficial to highlight interim results or progress to maintain motivation, both externally and internally. Internally, showcasing good examples and small achievements can also initiate cultural change, as colleagues now have concrete evidence that citizen participation can yield promising results.

EXTERNAL EFFICACY (1/2)

- **What we are talking about, when we talk about 'external efficacy':**

  - On the one hand, it pertains to citizens' trust in organisers' sincere intentions. It emanates from a firm belief that the (semi-)governmental actor that invites digital co-creation (a) will be responsive to our demands and contributions, (b) has the means and sincere intention to involve us in a meaningful way and (c) can be trusted to perform decently, deliver qualitative services and bring about change when required.

  - On the other hand, it pertains to citizens' overall trust in the value of citizen participation and ability to ignite societal change and/or innovation.

EXTERNAL EFFICACY (2/2)

- **How to strenghten** citizens' sense of external efficacy?

  1) **Ensure that the initiative objectives have societal relevance** that citizens can relate to. After all, giving them the feeling that they can contribute to something beneficial or innovative for society seems to increase individual motivation. This also implies that citizen participation should ideally **not** be **a hollow gesture**, merely for appearances' sake—also known as 'tokenism'. When citizens feel that they are only involved in minor issues, the so-called 'park bench problems', this will reduce their willingness to sacrifice valuable time.

  2) Adopt a **clear, transparent line of communication** about the project, its objectives, progress, and expectations for all stakeholders to avoid false or conflicting expectations. Also **explain how the results will be analysed** and ensure the analysis covers the subject matter and is as accessible as possible to all.

  3) **Showcase** (digital) co-creation **success stories** and best practices. If citizens see what is possible through previous achievements, they will be more inclined to participate. Withal, these examples conclusively demonstrate that co-creation is not merely a hollow concept. For longer-duration co-creation initiatives, it may also be beneficial to highlight interim results or progress to maintain motivation.

INTEREST IN POLITICS AND POLICYMAKING AT YOUR POLICY LEVEL

- **What we are talking about, when we talk about 'interest in politics and policymaking':**

  a genuine interest in the state of current political affairs at a given policy level. This usually involves actively following the news (e.g., via newspapers, radio or television) and a willigness to exercise one's civil rights (i.e., voting in elections).

- **How to leverage** citizens' interest in politics and policy-making at your policy level?

  1) **Elaborate on the link between politics, policymaking, service delivery, and their contributions**. When citizens believe civic participation is meaningful and trust that the organising public entity will act on their input, it can boost their motivation to participate.

  2) **Inspire citizens by showing how this connects with their everyday lives and by challenging their views**. To do this, consider reaching out to citizens in environments that appeal to them or are connected to the theme, such as libraries, where people go to gather knowledge and meet others. Hence, an ideal location to gather innovative and diverse ideas.

HEDONIC MOTIVATION

- **What we are talking about, when we talk about 'hedonic motivation':**

  the purest of motivations (i.e., intrinsic motivation) to engage because one anticipates a sense of enjoyment, fun or personal gratification.

- **How to increase** citizens' motivation?

  - **Make it clear that citizens can participate and that there is** always **something to gain from co-creation** → In this communication, also **emphasise what participation can yield for citizens**. In doing so, focus in particular on intangible rewards (such as enjoyment, gratification, belonging, meaningful contribution to their neighbourhood and surroundings, learning something new, or increasing the number of one's acquaintances), as material rewards are repeatedly cited in the literature as undesirable and potentially crowding out intrinsic motivation

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PERCEIVED SOCIAL PRESSURE

- **What we are talking about, when we talk about 'social pressure':**

  the implicit and explicit social cues we receive—or more precisely, perceive to receive—about the desired behaviour. Subconsciously, we pose ourselves the question of what our environment thinks about us co-creating (digitally). The answer is likely directly shaped by whether or not people close to us value participation in this or similar initiatives themselves. And whether they will likely motivate or even invite us to engage. In more extreme instances, we may even experience (dis)approval and thus direct pressure (not) to participate.

- **How to increase** the sense of social pressure?

  - **Make** individual **participants' contributions** in digital co-creation **visible** to fellow citizens by removing anonymity, while recognising that this may create an additional barrier for some groups.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

- **What we are talking about, when we talk about 'community attachment':**

pertains to how well-connected we feel to our neighbourhood or community. When they co-create, we might be apt to do so too. Or, when co-creation affects them, we might feel inclined to contribute for their sake.

- **How to leverage** citizens' community attachment?

  - Accept that citizens with a strong local network may already be using other channels to influence policy or to provide the services they need. Instead, **build on** the **well-established networks** some participants already have to gain access to the subgroups they belong to. This is particularly interesting at the local level, where it is often possible to build on strong social structures, such as voluntary work (associations) or a thriving community life and civil society.

CIVIC EFFICACY (1/2)

- **What we are talking about, when we talk about 'civic efficacy':**

  pertains to how capable we feel to make a meaningful contribution in co-creation or citizen participation—do we, for example, posses the necessary skills (e.g., civic ones when co-creation involves presenting, explaining or discussing one's ideas), topical knowledge and resources to make a valuable contribution.

- **How to strenghten** citizens' sense of civic efficacy?

  1) **Emphasise** that every contribution matters and **truly everyone can** (learn how to) **participate** (meaningfully). Stress the accessibility of the initiative and any supporting measures available to citizens

  2) Adopt a **clear, transparent line of communication** about the project, its objectives, progress, and expectations for all stakeholders to avoid false or conflicting expectations. Also **clarify what knowledge and skills are required** (internally) and what guidance is available in this regard.

- **How to strenghten** citizens' sense of civic efficacy?

3) **Empower** by adequately preparing **participants** and providing sufficient support throughout the initiative (in both digital and content-related aspects) to avoid adverse knowledge and skill imbalances.

  - **Make participation digestible** by breaking it down into small, easily achievable steps. Within each step, carefully consider which information and support citizens need first and which they will require later. For example, it makes no sense to ask citizens to submit proposals for AI solutions when they (a) do not know exactly what AI entails, nor (b) the social problems it is supposed to solve.

  - **Differentiate learning materials**. Provide background information that appeals to different learning needs or preferences (e.g., texts, videos, quizzes etc.) and that adhere to these three standards: (a) accessible and, hence, requiring no prior knowledge to digest; (b) connecting to citizens' daily lives and, hence, recognisable; (c) containing fun and engaging elements to spark enthusiasm. Gamification techniques can also be used for the latter purpose.

  - **Provide participation support where needed**. Consider using coaches or other personal points of contact for this purpose. These can provide in-depth or content-related guidance (e.g., by referring citizens internally to the right people within the organisation for more information) and surface-level guidance (e.g., by helping citizens put their ideas into words or meet the formal requirements of a proposal). Although this recommendation is resource-intensive, it has been cited in various cases as highly valuable for keeping citizens motivated.

DIGITAL EFFICACY

- **What we are talking about, when we talk about 'digital efficacy':**

  pertains to a basic confidence in one's skills to contribute digitally or to learn how to quickly when one does not yet possess the right skills.

- **How to mitigate** citizens' sense of digital efficacy?

  1) **Consider offering offline alternatives** to digital steps in your co-creation process to lower barriers to participation (e.g., a citizen survey that can also be completed on paper, with ideas added to the platform by a staff member for analysis; a datawalk, workshop or focus group using storyboards and future scenarios to collect ideas). In other words, consider how to obtain the same input from the same target group using alternative methods.

  2) **Complement** digital steps **with offline activation methods** to attract other participants and gain different insights and ideas. Various cases have shown that it is more effective not to wait for participants to come to your participation platform, but to approach these groups in person and thus actively reach out to them. This not only lowers the (digital) threshold to participation, but it also allows you to link your initiative to their daily lives.

  3) **Empower participants—Provide digital support where needed** (e.g., a help function or physical locations where people can seek assistance or borrow equipment, such as headphones for an online meeting).

TIME AVAILABILITY

- **What we are talking about, when we talk about 'time availability':**

  refers to the perceived time investment expected of citizens in relation to the time they have available and are willing to devote.

- **How to deal with** citizens' time availability?

  - **Specify** the **amount of time required** to contribute. Never ask stakeholders for more.

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