

# **Social Sustainability & Citizen Engagement**

## **Urban Partnership Program II**

### **Karlovac**

#### **City Synthesis Report**

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# Karlovac

## City Synthesis Report

This Social Sustainability and Citizen Engagement Assessment was carried out by GONG – Citizens Organization to Oversee Voting (Croatia), Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development ([www.co-plan.org](http://www.co-plan.org)), and the Institute for International Urban Development ([www.i2ud.org](http://www.i2ud.org)), as part of the World Bank - Austria Partnership Program for Strengthening Local Governments in South-Eastern-Europe countries. This assessment constitutes the second phase of the Urban Partnership Program (UPP II). For more information, please refer to the SEE Cities: Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Cities Website (<http://www.seecities.eu/>). The analysis, results, and views expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone and do not represent the position of the World Bank Group or any of its member countries.

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# Karlovac

## City Synthesis Report

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## Introduction

As part of the World Bank Group-Austria Partnership Program for Strengthening Local Governments in South-Eastern-Europe countries, the World Bank Social Development Unit has developed a Social Sustainability and Citizen Engagement (SSCE) Initiative, which continues and expands on the successful approach of the social sustainability assessments undertaken in phase I of the Urban Partnership Program. These assessments addressed two dimensions of socially sustainable and inclusive urban development:

- *Social Accountability and Participation* to increase accountability in the delivery of services and programs and empower urban marginalized and vulnerable groups to participate in their cities' development; and
- Proactively addressing the challenges of *Marginalization* to identify the needs of socially excluded groups and associated inequalities.

The initiative aimed to increase knowledge and awareness about citizen engagement (CE) mechanisms among stakeholders, including vulnerable groups. The first phase of the project involved five pilot cities in four countries in South Eastern Europe (SEE): Banja Luka (BiH), Durres (Albania), Pristina (Kosovo), Sarajevo (BiH) and Skopje (FYR of Macedonia). The SSCE Initiative in UPP II builds upon the lessons and best practices that emerged during the first phase of the UPP, enhances the focus on the Citizen Engagement (CE) component, and expands its scope to include seven countries, and nine cities in this second cohort.

Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development in Tirana and the Institute for International Urban Development (I2UD) in Cambridge, Massachusetts have assembled a team of local experts to carry out research and fieldwork in this second phase in the following cities: Elbasan (Albania), Gjilan (Kosovo), Kumanovo (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Karlovac (Croatia), Ulcinj and Kolasin (Montenegro), Pancevo and Sabac (Serbia).

Phase 1 of this project resulted in detailed, analytical reports of each of the nine cities covering demographic, social, physical, economic, cultural, institutional and political issues. The results of this research are summarized in **Section 1 – City Profile**. The full reports are available upon request. During this initial stage, the city teams also identified vulnerable groups to be the focus of the second phase of the assessment. This selection was made on the basis of official information obtained from institutions responsible for the provision of various public services at a local level, findings from research studies made by international and national organizations, as well as other relevant documents (laws, provisions, local development strategies, etc.) and representatives from marginalized and vulnerable communities and NGOS consulted during the inception phase.

Phase 2 involved extensive fieldwork and consultation with community members and other stakeholders. Each city team carried out a multiple Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). The FGDs were held with each vulnerable group, often with men and women separated for part of the discussion. The teams also conducted FGDs with NGO representatives. The questionnaires used to conduct these discussions are available upon request. Focus group participants were recruited through a public call advertised via mailing lists and social networks and in cooperation with local grassroots NGOs that work with the identified vulnerable communities. In-Depth Interviews were carried out with at least two representatives

of three of the following groups of stakeholders: local government representatives, the business sector, and the NGO sector. Local Government Associations were also consulted and interviewed in the process.

**Section 2** provides a summary overview of the issues raised during the FGDs and IDIs. The summary is organized according to the three themes covered during the FGDs:

- Social inclusion vis-à-vis public service provision;
- Existing levels of social accountability and citizen engagement; and
- Opportunities and constraints for social accountability and citizen engagement.

For Phase 3, a Participatory Scenario Development (PSD) Workshop was held in Karlovac. The objectives of the PSD workshop were to:

- Raise awareness of the results of the previous two phases;
- Provide recommendations for the local government authorities, the wider civil society and intermediaries, i.e. NGOs, CBOs; and
- Map out solutions to reinforce socially sustainable city development and integrity in public services.

The workshop brought together stakeholders from multiple sectors and engaged them in identifying locally relevant pathways of autonomous and planned *change (improvements)* in the context of social accountability, sustainability and good governance.

The participants were encouraged to envision a future scenario for the introduction of various social accountability and social inclusion mechanisms. As a result, stakeholders developed a “sense of ownership” for the scenarios. Particular focus was placed on the use of ICT tools for drafting socially inclusive initiatives. Section 3 builds on the scenarios agreed on by the workshop participants, as well as their recommended detailed actions for implementation, and suggests three key interventions to set the City of Karlovac on a path towards greater accountability and citizen engagement.

Two Annexes are included in this City Report. Annex 1 presents the concept and application of the SSCE Index. Despite efforts to harmonize the Index application and disaggregate data among different respondents, each city collected data differently, resulting in findings that are not able to be read comparatively across cities. Findings nonetheless offer an evidence base for decision makers in each city analyzed. Annex 2 provides a representation of the questions that constitute the questionnaire distributed in the participating cities. Different colors represent different pillars or categories both horizontally and vertically. Horizontal scores represent the different aspects of Citizen Engagement (CE) including willingness and capacity on the demand side, willingness and capacity on the supply side, and feedback and monitoring. Read horizontally, the matrix gives a Citizen Engagement “pulse” on different sectors that correlate to other components of the Urban Partnership Program.

# 1. City Profile

## 1.1. General City Profile

Karlovac is the ninth largest city in Croatia, located in the western part of the continental Croatia region and situated in the narrowest part of Croatia, only 50 km from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The City of Karlovac is the administrative center of Karlovac County and due to its convenient location, represents the most important cross-traffic route that leads from Central Europe and the Danube region but also from the continental northern and eastern regions of Croatia to the Adriatic Sea. Administratively, Karlovac consists of 12 city districts and 26 local/neighborhood boards, the latter formally representing bodies through which citizens can participate in decision-making on matters of direct and daily impact on their life and work.



The City of Karlovac played a significant role in the Croatian War of Independence (1991-1995) and was greatly damaged. Alongside the general decrease of population in the entire country, the war contributed to a large decline in population of Karlovac (from 73,426 residents in 1991 to 55,705 in 2011 – a decrease of 24%). Karlovac is also known for its four rivers (Mrežnica, Kupa, Korana, Dobra) and numerous green areas. and is called “the city of beer” due to its famous “Karlovac Beer Days”.

According to the 2011 population census, the total population of the City of Karlovac is 55,705, representing 43.2% of the total population of Karlovac County. The large majority of the population is Croats,

representing 88.21% of the total population. The second largest group is Serbs (8.01%). Karlovac is an “old” city in its age structure; only 18.2% of residents are under 19 years old, while the population over 60 represents 26.8% of the population.

Less than half of the population is employed (20,041), mostly in the sectors of manufacturing (16.9%); wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles (15.71%); and public administration, defense, and social security (8.18%). Karlovac’s economic life is led by strong private industrial companies based on the production of meat, milk, weapons and beer. the *Development Strategy of the City of Karlovac* highlighted unemployment as one of the key problems based on a survey conducted among 400 residents.<sup>1</sup> As stated in the *Development Strategy of the City of Karlovac*, even though agricultural area covers 54.9% of the entire area of the city, only 30% is used for agriculture. Recognizing the issue, the City of Karlovac encourages development of all forms of agricultural production through co-financing from the local budget.

<sup>1</sup> *Development Strategy of the City of Karlovac for the period from 2013 to 2020*, City of Karlovac, page 6

## 1.2. Vulnerable Groups and Exclusion

The City of Karlovac shows a high level of social sensitivity. It regularly implements programs in the field of social welfare, through the Administrative Department of Social Services and campaigns for the most vulnerable single residents and families. According to data for the year 2010, from the Development Strategy of the City of Karlovac, more than 2,700 single residents and families or households received help through various programs which totals 4,600 persons or 7.60% of the total population of Karlovac.

Croatia has made great strides in recent years to work towards the political inclusion of vulnerable groups, particularly youth and national minorities. The Constitutional Act on The Rights of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia<sup>2</sup> entered into force in 2002 and defines the rights of national minorities in Croatia. According to Article 24, municipalities and cities/towns where members of a minority account for at least 1.5% of the population, or have 200 members, have the right to hold elections for local councils. Minority councils should have 25 members in counties, 15 in cities and 10 in municipalities. When there are not enough members to form a council and there are at least 100 of members of some national minority, they can elect one representative. Generally, based on the Article 31 of the Law, the authority of these elected councils or representatives is to suggest measures for improving the status of national minorities. They also have a right to suggest proposals for local radio and TV stations in dealing with minority issues.

According to the Law on Youth Councils, each regional and local self-government unit needs to establish a Youth Council as an advisory body representing the interests of youth. In 2014, a series of changes have been introduced to the process of election and operating of these councils. In the City of Karlovac, a sub-page of the main City's web site is dedicated to the Youth Council and the council operates its own Facebook page with currently 701 'likes'.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.3. The use of ICT vis-à-vis social accountability

Based on the 2011 population census, the total number of private households in the City of Karlovac is 21,266. Out of that total number of households in the City of Karlovac (21,266), 11,124 households (52.31%) own a personal computer (desktop or laptop), 9,884 households (46.48%) do not own a personal computer and information for 258 households (1.21%) is unknown.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, out of the total number of private households, 10,198 households (47.95%) use the internet, 10,777 households (50.68%) do not use the internet, while the information for the remaining 291 households (1.37%) is unknown. The percentage of households in the city of Karlovac that own computer and use the internet is slightly lower than the percentage of the number of households in the entire country.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.evision.hr/hr/Novosti/Stranice/ePortal-u-Grad-Karlovac.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/SavjetMladihGradaKarlovca/>

<sup>4</sup> Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Private households in Karlovac County by owning a personal computer and internet use, 2011 Census, available at: [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/censuses/census2011/results/htm/h02\\_01\\_20/h02\\_01\\_20\\_zup04.html](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/censuses/census2011/results/htm/h02_01_20/h02_01_20_zup04.html)

The Croatian government has recently presented the central web portal ‘E-consultations’ for public consultations, enabling citizens to take active part in law making by providing them with an opportunity to directly comment on law proposals, other regulations, strategic documents etc., with all comments being immediately visible to the general public. The use of the e-consultations portal is a legal obligation for all central government bodies (under the Law on Access to Information, Official Journal 25/2013 and 85/2015); regional and local governments can also use this portal, but can also organize public consultations via their own websites.

The official City’s website includes a subpage for public consultations. However, it has very low visibility and is accessible only after first opening three other sub-pages. It lists 10 entries since October, 2014. Some refer to public consultations, others to invitations for public presentations. However, although legally bounded, none of the consultations are followed by a report on conducted consultations, outlining accepted and refused proposals. The website also does not list the Annual Plan of Public Consultations, outlining all planned public consultations in the upcoming year. No activity of the City of Karlovac was recorded on the national portal ‘e-consultations’.

In terms of ICT solutions, in April 2013 the City introduced a new portal for citizens and legal entities to monitor the status of their requests towards the City. Its functions are only briefly described and, as the portal is intended only for citizens of Karlovac upon initial registration, a more detailed overview of its functions is not accessible. Based on a private sector media article, the City has three other internal ICT systems used in the everyday administrative functioning of the City: an ePortal for exchange of documents among city employees; eReceipts (in Croatian: eRačuni) for electronic processing of receipts which decreased administrative procedure to process them from 20 to 5 days, avoiding also lost receipts; and an eRegistry Office (in Croatian: ePisarnica) for digitalized management of official documents, avoiding the loss of documents.

#### **1.4. Local governance vis-à-vis accountability and engagement**

The authority of local and regional self-government is defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia<sup>5</sup> (Article 135), as well as Article 19 and 20 of the Law on Local and Regional Self-government. These two pieces of legislation have various provisions that directly oblige public bodies to consult citizens in developing legal and policy solutions, as well as encourage transparency. For instance, the Law on Local and Regional Self-government guarantees transparency of work, public sessions, and publication of documents; the right to direct participation for citizens (through referendums, petitions, etc.); and the right to form territorial self-government and functioning of territorial councils.<sup>6</sup>

Activities of the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs have a special role in improving conditions for citizen participation in decision-making processes. In 2009, based on the provisions of the National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2006-2011, their activities led to drafting of the Code on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, Other Regulations and Acts.

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<sup>5</sup> OG 56/90, 135/97, 8/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10, 05/14

<sup>6</sup> Adopted and updated from Bajok, I. and V. Škorić, Connected Communities: How Can Local Governments Initiate, Enable and Support Citizen Participation in Public Decision-making? in Citizen Participation in South Eastern Europe (eds. Vivian Lowndes) page 77-78, Open Society Institute

The new Law on Access to Information, which entered into force in March 2013 and 2015, introduced the requirements for all public bodies (at national, regional and local level) not only to proactively publish all draft acts for public consultations, but also to publish reports on outcomes of consultations. Reports must include feedback on all received comments, which includes explanations in cases when comments are not accepted.

The most comprehensive research on transparency of regional and local self-government in Croatia is LOTUS (in Croatian an acronym from Accountable and Transparent Local Administration and Self-Government), designed as a joint project between GONG and Association of Cities. So far, three research cycles have been conducted, the last one in 2014, encompassing all 576 local and regional self-government units in Croatia. This research has demonstrated that the key problem in Croatia is not an inadequate legal framework, but a lack of its systematic implementation in practice, compounded by low levels of capacities and resources – human, material, technical and financial – to perform all legally prescribed functions of local and regional authorities. In Lotus research from 2014, the City of Karlovac had scored 8.15/10, placing itself in 13th place out of 576 local and regional self-government units in Croatia. Comparing the results from 2009, 2011 and 2014, the City of Karlovac increased its score.

## **1.5. Accessibility to Public Services**

The City of Karlovac has large capacities both in terms of pipelines, as well as in terms of water intake and capped amounts. The water supply percentage is as high as 97%, with the exception of a couple of marginal settlements in the northern, eastern, and southern part of the city that still do not have the water supply. Due to the significant water loss from the water supply network (47%) caused by a large share of pipes being older than 40 or even 50 years, the city's Development Strategy has recognized that in the next period it is necessary to reconstruct pipelines to reduce that percentage to no more than 25%. The public sewerage system covers around 68% of the total administrative area of the City of Karlovac and includes 40,331 residents.

In cooperation with the Agency for Transactions and Mediation in Croatian Real Estate, the City of Karlovac has built a number of apartments under the “Subsidized housing construction program.” This program was introduced with the aim of meeting housing needs and improving the quality of housing for a wider range of citizens.

The City of Karlovac is home to a considerable number of war veterans. As such, and according to the Law on the Rights of Croatian Homeland War Veterans and their family members,<sup>7</sup> a “Housing Program for Victims of the Homeland War” is being made available. This program covers the organized construction of apartments and family houses with special adaptations for war veterans with disabilities, the purchase of finished apartments or apartments with a high degree of completion and the adjustment of family houses for war veterans with disabilities. Data on the number of beneficiaries of the program is not available.

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<sup>7</sup> Official Gazette 174/04, 92/05, 2/07, 107/07, 65/09, 137/09, 146/10, 55/11, 140/12

## 2. Summary of Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews

The GONG City Team organized a set of focus groups (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) from June 17<sup>th</sup> to September 21<sup>st</sup> 2016 in the city of Karlovac. In total, 49 participants (23 men and 26 women) took part in seven focus group discussions (FGDs) with various identified vulnerable categories: unemployed women, youth, Serbian national minority, PWDs, and neighborhood councils (as a substitute for war veterans<sup>8</sup>). For the categories of youth and national minorities, separate FGDs were held for men and for women, while due to logistical reasons this was not possible for PWDs<sup>9</sup> and, in the case of neighborhood councils, this was not seen as necessary.

The research team has also held 13 IDIs with stakeholders from civil society, city administration, City Council and academia, in order to gather additional insights on the current level of social accountability and citizen participation, as well as suggestions for improvements. The full list of interviewees is presented below.

### *NGO representatives*

1. Denis Mikšić, President and Igor Kuštreba and Jelena Mužar Smenderova, Project Coordinators – NGO KA-Matrix (June 17th)
2. Ivan Mužar, Denis Frančišković and Ivana Francišković Orlom – NGO Eko pan (June 21, 2016)
3. Aleksandra Podrebarac, President, Head of Youth Centre – NGO Carpe diem (June 21, 2016)
4. Marijana Duduković, President – NGO Women's group 'Step' Karlovac (September 16, 2016)
5. Gordana Jurčević, President and Marica Poljančić – NGO for PWDs (September 7, 2016)

### *City administration, City Council, Youth Council and Council of Serbian minority*

6. Filip Trezner, President – Council of Youth (September 16, 2016)
7. Marina Lavrnić, Head of Council – Council of Serbian minority (June 20, 2016)
8. Damir Mandić, Head of City Council (June 20, 2016)
9. Marina Novaković Matanić, Vice-president of the Council and Representative of the opposition in City Council (June 20, 2016)
10. Marina Grčić and Andreja Navijalić, Heads of Department – Department for investment and EU funds and Department for social activities (joint IDI) (June 21, 2016)
11. Maja Purgar Ivka, Information officer/coordinator for consultations with interested public (June 21, 2016)
12. Željko Šafar, Officer for neighborhood councils in the City of Karlovac (June 21, 2016)

### *IDIs with academia*

13. Professor Ana Matan, Faculty of Political Science, with academic focus on deliberative democracy and resident of the City of Karlovac (June 17, 2016)

As themes discussed during FGDs and IDIs are fully interlinked and the information obtained in each setting is complementary, the findings are presented in a joint manner.

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<sup>8</sup> In preparing the FGDs, the category of war veterans did not express their willingness to get involved. This group was substituted by a group of representatives from neighborhood councils, which, during fieldwork, were recognized by various interlocutors as especially important for the theme of research.

<sup>9</sup> The focus group was held after a programme organized by the NGO of persons with disabilities in Karlovac County who, due to organized transport for beneficiaries to their homes, could not secure two separate groups. This one focus group was complimented by holding three additional IDIs (in total 13 instead of 10).

## 2.1. Social Inclusion vis-à-vis Service Provision

During the FGDs, it was confirmed that unemployed women, the Serbian national minority and persons with disabilities constitute vulnerable groups, while, due to the functioning public policy towards youth, they are less perceived as vulnerable both by themselves and by others.

With regards to underprovided services in the city, FGD participants have reflected based on their direct interests for the quality of everyday life. Youth have thus pointed to the lack of cinemas in the city, which was reiterated by PWDs. The desk review however suggested there was at least one initiative to have a stable program in the City Theatre “Zorin dom” every week. Movies are sometimes presented at a venue called Little Scene (*Mala Scena Hrvatskog doma*) since March 2016 by the Alliance of NGOs KA-operativa.<sup>10</sup> There is also a summer openair cinema organized by Kino Klub Karlovac over three weeks in July-August.<sup>11</sup>

Although progress has been made, persons with disabilities still point out insufficient physical accessibility to some services in the city (parking spots, adjusted walkways and ATM machines), and lack of appropriate public transport, which is dominantly compensated with the service provided through their NGO. The NGO of PWDs in Karlovac County has explained that after years of advocating, they have received two vehicles and a driver, financed jointly by the County and the City, with their own contribution from donations being collected over the years. FGD participants have commended the accessibility of the “Zorin dom” City Theater and the city administration. The issue of transport from rural areas of the City to its centre has also been pointed out by youth, as it limits their opportunities to take part in social activities in the urban area.

Representatives of the Serbian national minority point to the fact that certain, more rural settlements with greater Serbian minority populations still struggle with securing basic infrastructure, especially public lighting. The lack of interest to resolve this issue was framed both in the context of ethnicity and age, as these areas are usually populated with older people who are often unable to advocate for their rights. The lack of transportation and dependence on younger family members usually living in other urban areas has also been highlighted.

The FGD of unemployed women, with some of them being victims of domestic violence using a safe house, pointed out the difficulties of getting a place for their children in kindergartens. This relates to the fact that while being unemployed they do not receive points given to employed parents or those still in education, which would advance them in the priority lists. As some of them are living in a safe house but have permanent addresses in the counties they originally come from, they are not even eligible for kindergartens in Karlovac. The Karlovac Women’s NGO fulfils some of their needs, including free legal aid, taking part in EU projects to gain new skills, and day-care for children when going for a job interview. The economic marginalization of this group is seen as a key barrier for their interest to take a more active approach as citizens.

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<sup>10</sup>Radio Mrežnica portal, Title of the article: *Karlovac without cinema, but not movies as well* (April 2016), available at: <http://www.radio-mreznica.hr/vijesti/27-4-2016/karlovac-bez-kina-ali-ne-i-filmova>

<sup>11</sup>Karlovac tourist info: Title: *River side cinema*, available at: <http://www.karlovac-touristinfo.hr/hr/dogadanja-manifestacije/rijecno-kino>

## 2.2. Existing Social Accountability Levels

### 2.2.1. Views on the current state of local affairs

When asked to grade the current level of transparency and openness of the City of Karlovac, the FGD participants have graded it with the average grade of 3 (on a scale from 1 to 5), suggesting that there is space for improvement, but also that the City shows a certain level of openness. This is generally in line with results of the LOTUS research undertaken from 2014, where the City of Karlovac scored 8.15/10, placing itself on rather high (13th place out of 576 local and regional self-government units in Croatia).

With regard to the activity and position of civil society at the city level, according to the National Register of NGOs, in February 2016, there were 688 active NGOs in the City of Karlovac. Large shares of them include voluntary fire-fighting communities and organizations promoting sports, culture, specific professions and animal rights, while around 40 of them have been identified as working in the area of social development, democratisation, promotion of human rights and some specific vulnerable target groups such as persons with disabilities, women, children, youth, war veterans and alcoholics. Out of these 40 relevant NGOs, 24 have a website or active Facebook page, although in four cases the website only has contact details, meaning that only 20 NGOs in this sector have some visibility of their activities and opportunities for potential outreach.

### 2.2.2. Methods for obtaining information about public services

Most FGD participants get information about the activities of the City and in the city through two local online portals – “Trend<sup>12</sup>” and “KA portal<sup>13</sup>”; some have additionally pointed out the local TV “4 Rijeke” (Four Rivers). Participants in the Youth FGD also mentioned the “Portal za Mlade<sup>14</sup>” initiated in 2009 specializing in issues relevant to the young people in Karlovac City and, since 2012, in Karlovac county.

A limited number of respondents stated they use/follow the City’s main webpage and its Facebook page. Since preparing the Analytical Report, the City has launched a new website, and the research team have noted some improvements in its redesigned structure and newly added content. For instance, the Council of Youth has more space to share information on its work and activities. However, additional information on the mandate and activities of the minority councils, as well as their working hours with beneficiaries, could be presented (beyond only offering their contact details).

As stated in the interview with the Information Officer, the idea behind the redesign was to present information by some broader themes of interest to the citizens<sup>15</sup>, as opposed to the previously adopted approach that followed the structure of the City’s departments. It was however confirmed during the fieldwork that neither the citizens nor the formal bodies (such as mentioned youth or minority councils) were directly involved in the redesign. There is, however,

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<sup>12</sup>[www.trend.com.hr](http://www.trend.com.hr)

<sup>13</sup>[www.kaportal.rtl.hr/](http://www.kaportal.rtl.hr/)

<sup>14</sup>[www.portalzamlade.info](http://www.portalzamlade.info)

<sup>15</sup>Current themes include economics, communal system, building/housing, education and culture, sports/youth/NGOs, call for proposals/announcements, urbanism, EU, social programme, finances/public procurement, neighbourhood councils and forms/templates sorted by each department.

a separate tab on the website now ('Tell us'<sup>16</sup>) to collect suggestions on the improvement of the website, though suggestions already submitted and the feedback provided is not presented.

### **2.2.3. *Methods for inquiries/complaints about services and participation***

With regard to making complaints to the City, the FGD participants usually turn to their intermediaries, namely NGOs or Councils who can then take action, usually towards city officials relevant to the subject. Some citizens also try "to knock on doors" themselves, often unsure of where to turn. The official website does not have a section on complaints.

Based on the report with regard to implementing the *Law on Access to Information*, there were 11 requests for public information in 2015. During the FGDs, participants rarely knew about the possibility to ask question through this formal channel, nor about their rights in the process. The City's website, in line with the Law, has the contact details of the Information Office, links to the Law, and forms to be used when submitting requests. Beyond this legal minimum, there is however space for a more user-friendly explanation of what rights citizens have with this Law, including the entire procedure divided into steps and timeframes. On the other hand, based on the information provided by the Vice-president of the Council and representative of the opposition, in one mandate, more than 800 questions were asked to various city departments and public companies.

In terms of ICT solutions, in April 2013 the City introduced a new ePortal for citizens and legal entities to monitor the status of their requests towards the City. The portal is intended only for citizens of Karlovac upon initial registration. A detailed overview of its functions is not accessible. Almost none of the FGD participants and interviewees were familiar with this ICT tool, while some have suggested it is not functioning.

Additionally, a GIS system for managing traffic infrastructure was initiated in a pilot format in 2013 to enable a more efficient management of traffic infrastructure, where employees of various institutions with the authority to deal with the situation receive information on their smart phones. Again, citizens did not know about this function and it is not presented on the City website, indicating significant room for better presentation and promotion of these already existing ICT tools.

## **2.3. Opportunities and Constraints for Social Accountability and Engagement**

### **2.3.1. *Perceived obstacles to participation in decision making***

In 2009, based on the provisions of the National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2006-2011, the *Code on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, Other Regulations and Acts* was drafted. The Code's provisions were envisaged to also be applied by local authorities when adopting general acts regulating matters in their jurisdiction that directly meet the needs of citizens, or other matters of interest for the public benefit of citizens and legal entities within their territory or

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<sup>16</sup><http://www.karlovac.hr/recite-nam/2987>

within the field of their activity. Given that standards in the Code are not addressed in detail, the Government Office for cooperation with NGOs has also prepared supporting *Guidelines for the implementation of the Code*.

Moreover, the new *Law on Access to Information*, enacted in March 2013 and amended in 2015, introduced the requirement for all public bodies (at the national, regional and local level) not only to proactively publish all drafts of regulations for public consultation, but also to publish reports on the outcomes of such consultations (Article 11). It is suggested that reports include feedback on all received comments, which includes explanations in cases when comments are not accepted.

Since November, 2013, the City's website lists 17 entries, referring to public consultations on drafts of regulation/strategic documents and invitations for public presentations. So far, only two reports after consultations were published – both for urban plans, which are to be published in accordance with the Law on Spatial Planning (NN153/13). In contrast, the last published consultation outside spatial policy was announced on July 15, 2016 with regard to the *Decision on criteria and procedures for allocating properties owned or managed by the City to the NGOs*. The Decision was enacted at the City Council's session on September 28, 2016, but prior to that, the report outlining received suggestions and feedback was not published.

From December 2014 until December 2016, a local NGO Eko-pan is implementing the EU-funded project entitled "Participatory Budgeting: Citizens' Subnational Budget Watch" in order to increase budget transparency and promote principles of good governance in Karlovac. The City does not have a formal role in the project (as a project partner or associate), although certain level of cooperation during the preparation of the 2016 budget was established with the Department of Finances. However, the project was not designed to allocate a concrete part of the budget to be directly proposed/decided by the citizens. Through the process of preparing the 2016 budget, only the project web site [www.boljickarlovac.org](http://www.boljickarlovac.org)<sup>17</sup> was used to publish information. The implementing NGO Eko-pan has also pointed out that the form attached for providing suggestions<sup>18</sup> is limiting, as it asks from citizens not only to propose suggestions, but also to suggest where these funds can be deducted, which is seen as a role of the city administration. Moreover, it is asked from citizens, in only 8 days, to propose a value for their suggested actions<sup>19</sup>.

The publishing of public documents and period for consultation remains a constraint to greater accountability and engagement in Karlovac. An especially important example in this regard is the recently published Budget proposal for 2017, presented under section "News", as well as on the local portal "Trend" (though it is not presented in the above-discussed section on "Public consultations"). Only in a supporting attached document "Introduction from the Mayor" does the proposal state the deadline for submitting suggestions, which gives citizens only 8 days, although the Law suggests 30 days. By reviewing the practice from previous years, the same time frame of eight days was given<sup>20</sup> and a report on conducted consultations was not published. In all initiated consultations on the budget over the last these years, as an additional barrier, the proposals could only be submitted in hard copy to the City Registry, not by email.

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<sup>17</sup> Collected suggestions and feedback from the City are presented here: <http://boljickarlovac.org/odgovori-2015>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.karlovac.hr/novosti/nact-proracuna-grada-karlovca-za-2017-godinu/6805>

<sup>19</sup> <http://boljickarlovac.org/node/11>

<sup>20</sup> For 2014 budget, the proposal was published on November 7<sup>th</sup> and consultations closed on November 14<sup>th</sup>; for 2015 budget on October 28<sup>th</sup> and closed on November 5<sup>th</sup> and for 2016 budget it was published on November 10<sup>th</sup> and closed on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

During the conducted FDGs and IDIs, this practice of not providing feedback on received suggestions was especially highlighted and assessed as dangerous as even citizens who take the time and effort to participate lose faith in the purpose of their participation if not receiving any formal feedback. This is especially worrying in the light that the high number of the respondents assessed that they have rarely or never participated in such consultations and that there is generally a high level of apathy among their fellow citizens. One respondent expressed that people just feel “they cannot do anything”.

Despite these constraints, a key opportunity for the identified vulnerable groups to engage with the municipality is through the formal advisory bodies of the City Council, namely the Council of National Minorities and Council of Youth. The Council of national minorities, after being elected in May 2015, has so far not taken part in any of the Council’s sessions and it was observed they had some misunderstanding on the way they should be invited, not being aware that publicly announced Council sessions serve as an invitation. A review of the City Council subpage suggested that the announcements are made only two to five days in advance of the next session<sup>21</sup>.

### **2.3.2. *Participation in activities related to social accountability and engagement***

With regard to the Council of Youth, the general consensus among the consulted FGD participants and interviewees is that the Council is very active and is gaining increasing visibility among the youth. Their mandate is governed by the City Program for Youth in the City of Karlovac 2015-2020, the second strategic document of its kind in the City of Karlovac. This City Program for Youth was based on extensive quantitative and qualitative research around youth needs, including a survey of 311 respondents, eight focus groups with more than 100 participants and interviews with 37 individuals and seven representatives from the city working with youth. In September 2016, the first external evaluation of the program was presented at the City Council, which is a pioneering case in contrast to other sectorial local strategic documents (for culture, rural development, sports and tourism), which so far have not undergone evaluation, but also do not have accompanying yearly monitoring reports<sup>22</sup>.

On the other hand, After being elected in May 2015, the Council of National Minorities has so far not taken part in any of the Council’s sessions and it was observed they had some misunderstanding on the way they should be invited, not being aware that publicly announced Council sessions serve as an invitation.

Significant efforts during the field work has been put into investigating the potential of neighborhood councils in the City of Karlovac, which also resulted in bringing them together through an additional FGD. There are 38 neighborhood councils in the City of Karlovac, with 7 to 11 members each. FGD participants and interviewees often expressed their view of these councils only as political bodies, and many of them do not perceive them to be places of meaningful participation. However, in 2016, a new initiative entitled “KA-KVART” was proposed by the Head of the City Council, earmarking 287,000 HRK (38,000 EUR) for 10, out of 31 received project applications for small communal actions initiated by the neighborhood councils.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.karlovac.hr/gradsko-vijece-12/sjednice/198>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.karlovac.hr/vazne-poveznice/vazniji-dokumenti-brosure/139>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.karlovac.hr/novosti/odabrani-projekti-kakvart-a/5433>

The general assessment by the consulted interlocutors is that the city of Karlovac has a relatively active civil society, but surely with space for improvement. A constraint to their further development, pointed out by almost all consulted NGOs, is the fact that funds from the local budget are between 5000 and 10000 HRK (800-1200 EUR), which has resulted in some NGOs turning only to EU funds and do not apply for this local support anymore. On the other hand, it was commended by the NGO respondents that the City willingly enters into partnerships for EU-funds, and the Head of department for EU funds and investment pointed out to the Rulebook governing this procedure, which starts by sending a formal request to this department.

### **2.3.3. *Suggestions for Improvement***

#### ***Development of a City strategy to deal more explicitly with social accountability and citizen participation***

The Development Strategy of the City of Karlovac does not deal with goals such as communication with citizens, e-governance, and the universal provision of public services, or does so in a limited way. For example, Goal 2 - Priority 4 deals with Capacity building of civil society, although without explicit reference to direct communication with citizens. On top of this, there are three horizontal themes relevant to the subject, claimed to be built into all other measures but not having specifically allocated measures: (1) Informational society, with a mention of e-governance; (2) Promotion of equal opportunities and human rights and (3) Partnership and building democracy. It is thus strongly advised that, in the next cycle of strategic planning, more attention is given to proposing concrete measures with regard to strengthening social accountability and citizen participation.

#### ***Increased visibility of the National Minority Council on the City's website***

A limited number of respondents stated they use/follow the City's webpage and its Facebook page, despite the re-launch of the website with a redesigned structure and newly added content. Although reference to the national minority councils now exists, additional information on the mandate and activities of the minority Councils, as well as their working hours with beneficiaries, could be presented beyond only offering their contact details.

#### ***Transparent feedback on the newly redesigned City's website***

Citizens were not directly involved in the redesign of the new City's website (through a survey or a focus group), nor were formal bodies such as Councils consulted. There is, however, a separate tab on the website ("Tell us") to collect suggestions on how to improve the website, though submitted suggestions and provided feedback are not presented. These inputs and feedback should be published in order to get an overview of received inputs and actions taken.

#### ***Establishing an online complaint mechanism that offers rapid, transparent responses***

The City's website does not have a section on complaints. However, good examples in Croatia exist, potentially to be adopted in the City of Karlovac, such as the case of the official portal of the City of Rijeka ('Moja Rijeka'), which has its famous section 'Tužibaba' for direct complaints to the City, where all complaints and answers to them are available for review and sorted in categories: public transportation, public institutions, communal issues, reporting vandalism and other.

#### ***Promoting the Law on Access to Information in a more user-friendly way***

During the FGDs, participants rarely knew about the possibility to ask question through the stipulations of the Law on Access to Information, as well as their rights in the process. The City's website, in line with the Law, has the contact details of the Official for Information, links to the Law, and forms to be used when submitting requests. Beyond this legal minimum, there is however space for more user-friendly explanations about what rights citizens have with this Law, including a description of the procedure divided in steps.

### ***Better presentation of two already existing ICT tools for citizens***

In April 2013, the City introduced a new ePortal for citizens and legal entities to monitor the status of their requests towards the City. While the portal is intended for citizens of Karlovac, almost none of the FGD participants and interviewees were familiar with this ICT tool; others suggested that it does not work. There is also a GIS system for managing traffic infrastructure, initiated in 2013 to enable more efficient management of traffic infrastructure. Again, participants did not know about this function and it is not presented on the City website, indicating significant space for better presentation and promotion of these already existing ICT tools.

### ***Investigating new areas for introducing ICT solutions, with a focus on the management of public property***

There is a general consensus that developing ICT tools is useful and beneficial. However, aside from suggestions to develop a unified digitalized database of all city-owned property to monetize their use and secure transparency in their allocation, more concrete suggestions were not put forward.

### ***Obligatory publishing of reports after closing public consultations***

The City's website includes a subpage for public consultations. Since November 2013, it lists 17 entries, referring to public consultations on drafts of regulations/strategic documents and invitations for public presentations. So far, only two reports have been published after consultations – both for urban plans. Specific education for city official is thus strongly encouraged, by internal resources or external associates. It is also critical that any further public consultation is always published on the appropriate webpage. All this is especially critical in light of the fact that the practice of not providing feedback on received suggestions results in citizens losing faith in the purpose of their participation.

### ***Rethinking new ways for collecting suggestions on the annual budget***

The 2017 budget proposal for the City could be presented better on existing platforms (i.e. on appropriate subpages) and the period for suggestions made longer (30 day standard), more transparent, and more accessible. For instance, in all initiated consultations on the budget over the last few years, suggestions could only be submitted in a hard copy to the City Registry, and not by email. Furthermore, no reports on consultations conducted have been published. All of these elements represent a barrier to the citizens to propose meaningful suggestions. As the budget is a technical issue, further education and presentation of the budget is crucial to build a foundation for participation. After its completion, the experience of the EU-funded project by NGO Eko-pan should be analysed with the City.

### ***Citizens' attendance at the Council's sessions should be encouraged by additional instructions***

As also indicated by the results of the LOTUS research, direct citizens' attendance at the Council's sessions was not observed as a practice among consulted interlocutors. A document explicitly stating the procedure for citizens' attendance of local council sessions, the maximum number of persons to be admitted and procedure for granting priority by order of application is not published online, but should be considered to open this participation possibility up to the citizens.

### ***Neighborhood councils should be further revitalized, with stronger links to annual budget planning***

The 38 existing neighborhood councils have strong potential to play a role in strengthening accountability and engagement in the City of Karlovac, despite citizens current views of them as political bodies that do not offer meaningful opportunities to participate. This could be achieved by continuing the new initiative "KA-KVART," which provides funds directly to the councils for small communal actions. Further transparency about the application and selection criteria is suggested. This initiative should also be followed by a regular process of involving neighborhood councils in the yearly budget preparations for their other, more substantial, communal needs, which go beyond actions they can execute with donations or volunteering hours. The "K-KVART" Facebook page should also be maintained and used to post information relevant to the neighborhood councils, as it has a potential to raise their visibility and present their work to citizens.

### ***Monitoring and evaluation of strategic documents and organizing sectorial debates with experts and the general public***

In September 2016, the first external evaluation of the City Program for Youth 2015-2020 was presented at the City Council – a pioneering case in contrast to other sectorial local strategic documents (for culture, rural development, sports and tourism), which have not undergone evaluation, and do not have any accompanying yearly monitoring reports. Providing regular feedback to experts and the general public on the status of agreed project, programs and public policies is critical to involve them. In Croatia, based on the Law on Regional Development and Guidance published in 2015 by the Ministry of Regional Development, and in accordance with EU funding regulations, counties and cities are obliged to submit yearly annual reports on their Development Strategy, as well as to conduct mid-term and final evaluations<sup>24</sup>.

### ***Feedback from the Croatian Association of Cities***

Croatian Association of Cities (in Croatian: 'Udruga gradova') is a national, non-partisan association of cities, established in 2002, gathering today 121 cities. In their view, the citizen engagement on the local level is enabled on a formal basis in different forms, such as attendance at the City council sessions, involvement in different working or advisory groups, through neighborhood councils, etc. However, in spite of these existing legal opportunities, actual citizen engagement is present only in a limited way and varies significantly between different local self-governments.

One of the key factors influencing these differences is primarily proactivity, meaning willingness to invite citizens to participate and organize dialogue on locations more close to them. A developed civil society, as well as a tradition of citizen engagement are also critical. Following

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<sup>24</sup> [http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2015\\_11\\_121\\_2295.html](http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2015_11_121_2295.html)

emerging global trends, ICT-based solutions to support these processes are in the last 3-4 years being more prominently developed. These most commonly include online applications for two-way communication with citizens, but some cities have also developed visual presentations of their annual budget, even budget games to make budget more close to the citizens, as well as ICT-supported complaint systems, e-delivery of some public services and open data portals. Although increasing number of cities use ICT-supported solutions, further space for expansion is still present. Besides their own initiatives and EU projects, the Association of Cities is not familiar with other comprehensive programmes in which Croatian self-governments can take part, such as UPP, dealing with the theme of social accountability and citizen engagement.

### **3. Scenario Development Outcomes and Recommendations**

The Participatory Scenario Development Workshop (PSDW) for the city of Karlovac was conceptualized based on the preceding project phases (drafting analytical report and conducting extensive fieldwork) and logistically organized through collaboration between the City of Karlovac and GONG.

The event was held on November 4, 2016 in the City Hall of Karlovac, gathering around 30 participants, including representatives of the city administration, their public companies and institutions, representatives of the City council, local NGOs and county development agency.

Invitations to the event were sent to all interlocutors included in the fieldwork. Through the active approach taken by the City, this was additionally expanded to all city administration departments, members of the City council, public companies and institutions founded by the City. The invitation to the event was also publicly announced on the City's main web site.

During the opening speech, the Head of the department for EU funds and Investment, Mrs. Marina Grčić highlighted the City's willingness and commitment to matters pertaining to citizen engagement and invited to active participation during the event.

Representative of the World Bank, Ms. Astrid Meixner provided a general overview of the Urban Partnership Programme (UPP) and Social Accountability and Citizen Engagement Component. The introductory session closed with a presentation by the local city team of the steps so far conducted in the City of Karlovac within the UPP.

The second part of the workshop had the goal of introducing participants to the main findings emerging from both desk and fieldwork. Findings were organized under three main these (see below) and presented interchangeably by two key representatives of the local city team – Maja Horvat and Nives Miošić. During the presentation of the findings, where needed, the relevant part of the City's website or public documents were displayed. This part of the workshop was concluded by offering recommendations as a way forward, indicating some good practices/inspiring examples of actions, focusing on the local context. A short (15min) documentary on the theme of the participatory budgeting in the City of Pazin was also presented.

A central part of the event focused on participatory scenario development addressing the main areas identified through the findings, including the following:

#### **1. Access to and quality of public information**

- City's web site
- Implementation of Law on Access to Information
- ICT solutions

#### **2. Opportunities and challenges for citizens' participation**

- City's sub-webpage 'Consultation with interested public'
- Participative budgeting
- Strengthening the role of existing model of neighborhood councils

#### **3. Social inclusion as a prerequisite of citizen participation**

- Persons with Disabilities
- National minorities
- Unemployed women.

All participants were given the possibility to decide on the preferred theme to further discuss in small groups. After group discussion, all three groups presented their findings, stimulating further exchange and comments among the groups and with the local city team.

Reference to the event was published on the City main web site. The event was also followed by the local TV 'Four rivers'.

The following summary outlines the proposals put forward by the attending participants, to be further elaborated in the proposed Action Plan.

### **3.1. Theme 1: Access to and quality of public information**

The presentation of findings and discussion on this theme resulted in issues and corresponding solutions, as presented below:

#### ***3.1.1. Existing problems and corresponding potential solutions***

a. Insufficient information among citizens about the existence and their rights under the Law on Access to Information

As visible by the annual implementation report, based on the *Law on Access to Information*, there were 11 requests for public information in 2015. Citizens still rarely know about the possibility to ask questions through this formal channel, as well as their rights in the process. The City's website, in line with the Law, has the contact details of the Information Officer, links to the Law, and forms to be used when submitting the request.

**Solution:** Beyond this legal minimum, there is space for a more user-friendly explanation about what rights citizens have by this Law, including the entire procedure divided into steps and time frames.

b. Unclear functionality and low visibility of already existing ICT solutions

In terms of ICT solutions, in April 2013 the City introduced a new ePortal for citizens and legal entities to monitor the status of their requests towards the City. The portal is intended only for citizens of Karlovac upon initial registration and a more detailed overview of its functions is not accessible on the website. Citizens are not familiar with this ICT tool, while some have suggested it is not functional. During the PSD Workshop, it was confirmed that this tool is not in active use.

Another existing ICT tool is the GIS system intended for managing traffic infrastructure. In a pilot format, it was initiated in 2013 and enables a more efficient management of traffic infrastructure, where employees of various institutions with the authority to deal with traffic situations receive information on their smart phones. It is envisaged that the representatives of neighborhood councils report issues. Again, citizens do not know about this function and it is not presented on the city's website.

**Solution:** Internally check/clarify the functionalities of these tools and prepare a short guide so the citizens and legal entities know how to use them. Prepare promotional material and increase the visibility of these ICT tools.

c. Underdeveloped direct citizens' complaint system

With regard to making complaints to the City, citizens usually turn to their intermediaries, namely NGOs or Councils who can then take action, usually towards city officials relevant to the subject, but some of them also try “to knock on doors” themselves, often unsure of where to turn. The official web site does not have a section on complaints.

**Solution:** Put in place a simple, but active online complain system, inspired by other local examples - such as, the City of Rijeka. Their official portal ‘Moja Rijeka’ has its famous section ‘Tužibaba’ for direct complaints to the City, where all complaints and answers to them are available for review, sorted into categories: public transportation, public institutions, communal issues, reporting vandalism and other. The activity of this section is significant, with 5-8 complaints per week.

### **3.1.2. Vision: (desired situation)**

The City of Karlovac actively and directly communicates with its citizens through the upgrading of its existing website

**Specific Proposal: Increased interactivity on the newly redesigned website, which would allow for more direct and active communication with citizens**

#### **WHAT**

In 2016, the City of Karlovac redesigned its web site, with the idea of presenting information by some broader themes of interest to citizens, as opposed to the previously adopted approach following the structure of the City’s departments. This redesigned structure of the new website was also followed by new content. However, although resources have been invested to redesign the City’s website, the site still offers limited possibility for direct interaction of citizens with the City administration.

An upgrade of existing ICT tools is thus desired and needed, based on the good example of the City of Rijeka (‘Moja Rijeka’) or more sophisticated example of the City of Zagreb (‘Moj Zagreb’). Following the later example would enable the municipality to merge its complaint system with a GIS system and promote an interactive and visually appealing complaint system for issues in the communal arena.

#### **WHY**

To offer citizens an easy and active complaint system to interact with the City with regard to their communal problems.

#### **HOW**

Upgrade of the current GIS application with functionalities towards the interaction with citizens, not only as currently being only an internal management tool. This should be followed by strong promotion through local media.

#### **WHO**

City of Karlovac, under the lead of the Information officer, Communal department and communal public companies.

#### **WHEN**

1-2 years

#### **INDICATORS**

New functionalities of the ICT tool designed, Number of media entries promoting the tools, Number of complains, Response time to the complaints.

**HOW MUCH** Human resources needed for preparation and later service provision. Tentative financial estimate for development: 25-30,000 € Possibilities for financing to be followed by the EU funds under European Social Fund (ESF) - 'Good governance' priority.

## **3.2. Theme 2: Opportunities and challenges for citizens' participation**

### **3.2.1. Existing problems and corresponding potential solutions**

a. Increase the number of consultations and secure feedback on conducted consultations with the public on regulation and other policy solution

The new Law on Access to Information, enacted in March 2013 and amended in 2015, introduced at the level of the law the requirement for all public bodies (at the national, regional and local level) not only to proactively publish all drafts of regulations for public consultations, but also to publish reports on the outcomes of consultations (Article 11). It is suggested that reports include feedback on all received comments, which includes explanations in cases when comments are not accepted. The official City's website includes a subpage for public consultations. Since November 2013, it lists 17 entries, referring to public consultations on drafts of regulations/strategic documents and invitations for public presentations. So far, only two reports after consultations were published – both for urban plans (the Law on Spatial Planning (NN153/13) additionally stipulates their publishing). All this is especially critical in light of the fact that the practice of not providing feedback on received suggestions results in citizens losing faith in the purpose of their participation.

**Solution:** The obligatory publishing of report after closing public consultations, including an overview of received suggestion and objections, including feedback if the suggestion is fully accepted, partly accepted or declined. Specific education for city officials is also strongly encouraged, by internal resources or external associates, to understand this obligation and to gain new skills in fulfilling it. It is also critical that any further public consultations are always published on the envisaged subpage for this purpose, with the possibility to additionally highlight its visibility on the website.

b. Inappropriate model of collecting feedback on the annual local budget

The budget proposal for 2017 was presented in November 2016 on the City's web site under the "News" section, as well as at the local portal "Trend," although it was not also presented on the central section 'Public consultations'. Only in a supporting document "Introduction from the Mayor" does the proposal outline the deadline for submitting suggestions, which in total lasts only eight days, although the Law as a standard suggests 30 days and the same was envisaged in the City's Annual Plan for Public Consultations. By reviewing the practice from previous years, the same time frame of eight days was given and a report on received objections was not published. In all initiated consultations on the budget over these last few years, the proposals could only be submitted by hard copy to the City Registry, not by email. No reports on conducted consultation have been published. All these elements represent a barrier to the citizens to propose meaningful suggestions.

**Solution:** More comprehensive solutions have been discussed, in light of the experience with an EU project introducing participatory budgeting. Moreover, from December 2014 until December 2016, a local NGO Eko-pan implemented the EU-funded project entitled “Participatory Budgeting: Citizens’ Subnational Budget Watch” in order to increase budget transparency and promote principles of good governance in the city of Karlovac. During the fieldwork and PSD Workshop, dissatisfaction with yielded results was observed. The City did not have a formal status on the project (as a project partner or associate), although a certain level of cooperation during the preparation of the 2016 budget was established with the Department for Finances. The project was not designed to allocate a concrete part of the budget to be directly proposed/decided by the citizens, as was the case with a project conducted in the City of Pazin in collaboration with GONG, administrated by the neighborhood councils as a unit of participation. Through the process of preparation for the 2016 budget, they did not use City’s subpage “Public consultations”, but only the project web site.

c. Low or no citizens’ attendance at the Council’s sessions

**Solution:** Development of a document explicitly stating the procedure for citizens’ attendance at local council sessions, the maximum number of persons to be admitted, and the procedure for citizens’ attendance explicitly granting priority by order of application. Promotion on various levels.

d. Revitalization of existing 38 neighborhood councils

There are a total of 38 neighborhood councils in the City of Karlovac, as bodies envisaged by the City’s Statue as the first level of direct citizen participation. The City also has an Official for neighborhood councils, acting as a formal link between the councils and the City. Citizens often expressed the view of these councils as only political bodies, and many of them do not perceive them to be places of meaningful participation.

As a way of revitalizing these bodies, in 2016, a new initiative entitled ‘KA-KVART’ was proposed by the Head of the City Council, enabling 287,000 HRK (38,000 EUR) for 10 out of 31 received project applications for small communal actions.

**Solution:** As a result of the ‘KA- Kwart’ programme, a new Facebook site has been launched with 1225 ‘likes’ as of November 2016, now administrated by the city Official for protocol, where the progress of their projects, including pictures, was regularly published. After the end of the programme, other information relevant to the neighborhood councils was presented, which has the potential to raise their visibility and present to the citizens their work.

Further clarification on the role of neighborhood councils in budget preparations is needed, involving them earlier than the current practice at end of the year, with the possibility to influence the budget beyond only applying to the new programme ‘KA-Kwart’.

Offering some ‘non-political’ programmes/events at the premises of these councils is encouraged to motivate citizens to get involved.

### 3.2.2. *Vision (desired situation)*

A participatory budgeting practice is in place and used, with clear rules, enough time offered to interested public and with clear feedback loop. After some trial-and-error, the City implements a comprehensive system of participative budgeting which allows for both meaningful engagement of citizen and neighborhood councils, as their representatives at the lowest level of policy-making.

***Specific Proposal: Transforming the practice of annual budgeting with more meaningful engagement of citizens and their neighborhood councils***

<b>WHAT</b>	Open the possibility for citizens to influence the annual budget as a direct way of participating in policy-making, which both gives them better understanding of operating of the local administration and trust in their decisions.
<b>WHY</b>	The city has already tried to implement some innovations in participatory budgeting, led by a local NGO, but with limited long-term results. Collaboration with the City was not properly conceived and the current practice of eight days for feedback on the budget and late structural involvement of the neighborhood councils is thus still in place.
<b>HOW</b>	More comprehensive solutions, taking into account existing efforts. Action Plan aimed at proposing multiple, equally comprehensive scenarios to choose from.
<b>WHO</b>	Department for Finances, Information Officer
<b>WHEN</b>	1 year
<b>INDICATORS</b>	Number of received inputs on annual budget, Time left to citizens for their feedback, Published reports with feedback from the city administration
<b>HOW MUCH</b>	Demand on existing human resources, without direct financial costs.

## 4. Key Considerations for Next Steps

Based on the results from the three stage process, the City of Karlovac, in collaboration with the Local City Team, decided to focus the action plan in developing strategic and operational actions, which in the future could significantly improve the level of social responsibility and involvement of citizens in decision-making processes in the city. Strategic actions refer to those that are more complex set of activities and therefore seek more attention and resources. The operational actions, on the other hand, are those actions that do not need significant financial and other resources, and yet have the potential to contribute to the improvement of the existing practice of availability and quality of public information and involvement of citizens in decision-making processes.

Although the city of Karlovac actively, promptly and comprehensively communicates with its citizens through the available online instruments, through this process (the social sustainability and citizen engagement audit), decided to further its already initiated work on the re-designation of the website to make it a more active tool of direct communication with citizens - through a structured method of asking questions and / or making a complaint. The latter will make better use of communication technology, building on similar examples such as "<https://moj.zagreb.hr>". The City Action Plan is aimed also at improving the quality of the feedback provided to the interested members of public.

During the Socially Inclusive Cities regional conference held in Zagreb at the end of March 2017, city representatives announced that the Action Plan has already been adopted by the city and was finalized in February 2017. The first proposed activity for the City of Karlovac towards which it is making progress consists of transforming the existing GIS system for internal administrative use into a tool that can be accessed by citizens to provide a platform for inputs in terms of objections and proposals for city development. The Action Plan already contains a sub-measure to promote the complaint tool, complete with a media strategy to promote the new tool and inform the public of its existence and functionalities.

## ANNEX 1: SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT INDEX

### Concept Note

The objective of the SSCE Index is to assist municipalities, civic groups and NGOs to develop a set of indicators that gauge progress towards increasing social accountability and citizen engagement, particularly among marginalized communities or vulnerable groups.

The Index originally emerged from the Social Sustainability Audit of UPP I (2012-2013), which functioned as a tool used by City Teams to assess the supply and demand of information and participation in a given municipality and the state of feedback/monitoring mechanisms based on the three data gathering phases – Municipal Profile, FGDs and IDIs, and Participatory Scenario Development Workshops. This index has been revised in content and application to demonstrate greater conceptual linkages with the other three UPP II initiatives and alignment with the World Bank’s Citizen Engagement Framework.

The consortium built upon the Index developed during UPP I and tried to preserve as much of its content as was relevant to the new conceptual organization of the new Index. While the Social Sustainability Index assessed the supply and demand side factors of Transparency and Participation and the feedback mechanisms that create a continuous process, the SSCE Index assesses the supply and demand sides of willingness and capacity for citizen engagement, as well as the feedback mechanisms that create a continuous process and the use of ICT to broaden the reach of CE initiatives and streamline CE processes.

### Conceptual Framework of the SSCE Index

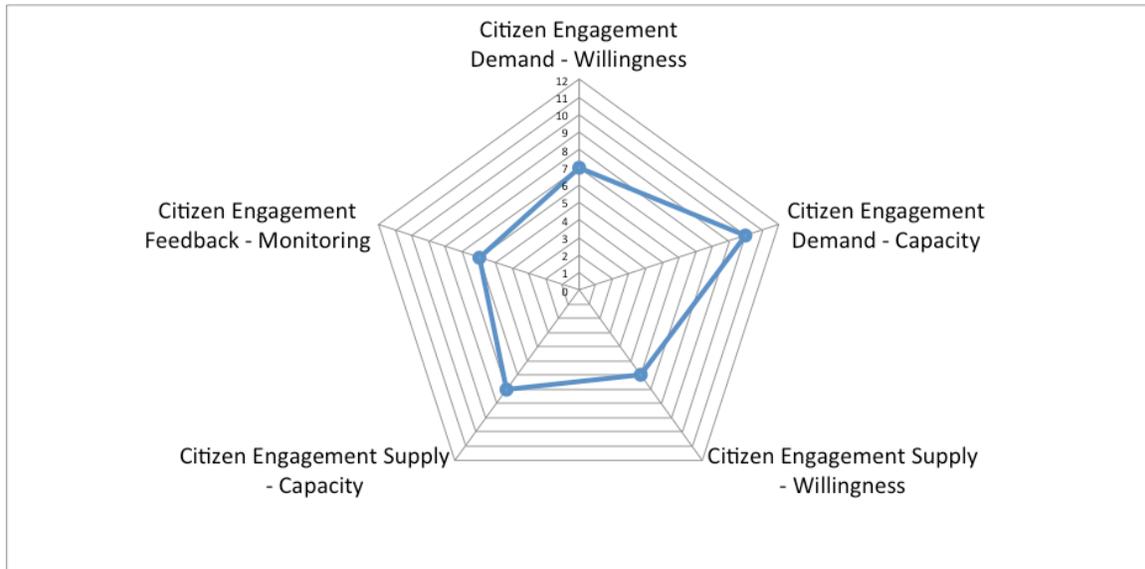


The SSCE Index is structured as a series of six questions for each of the five pillars of citizen engagement being investigated throughout this project cycle based on the three concepts of Willingness (demand and supply); Capacity (demand and supply); and the Feedback/Monitoring that serves as the connective tissue. In addition, the same six questions can be read in a way that gives an additional reading of the thematic strengths and weaknesses of social accountability and citizen engagement initiatives in each municipality (a “pulse” on perceptions of citizen engagement in areas related to other components of the UPP).

In the City of Karlovac, disseminating the Index to all interlocutors with whom the research team interacted during the data gathering phase was deemed as too time-consuming. Nonetheless, the

Index was used to inspire interviews and focus group guides/protocols. The Index was thus filled in after finalizing all research phases by the city research team, serving in this way as a summary of the overall research findings.

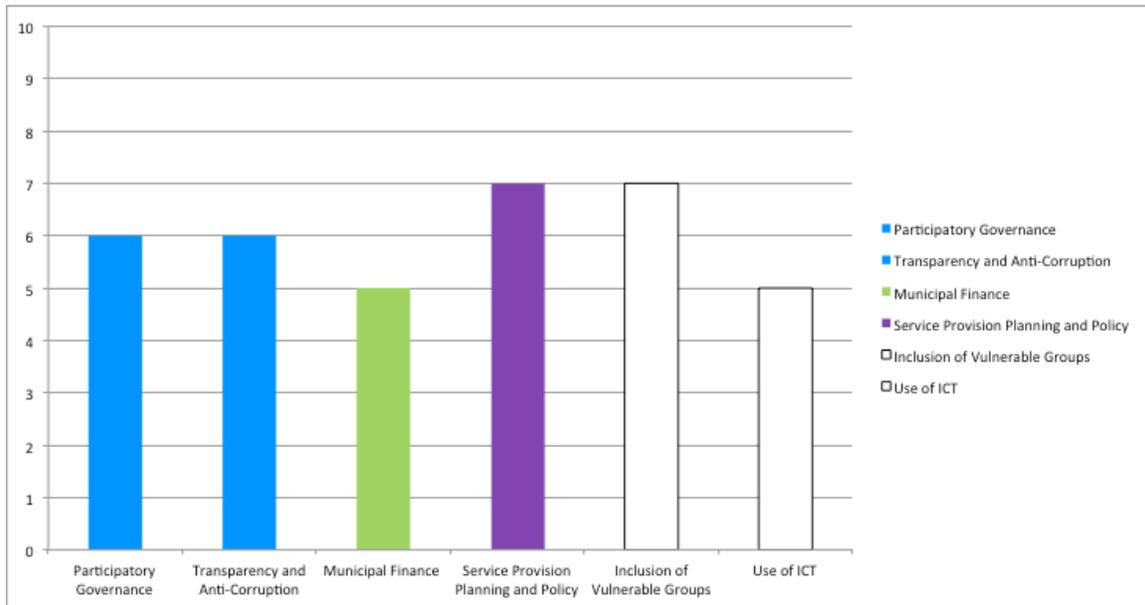
### Index Results for Karlovac



The highest score is recorded in the area of “Citizen Engagement Demand-Capacity” reflecting the existence of CSOs representing certain vulnerable groups, the availability of information on the City’s website, as well as the existence of neighborhood councils. The lowest score is recorded in the area “Citizen Engagement Supply Side – Willingness” since, for instance, there is not a specific document (charter) outlining the responsibilities of both the government and citizens; the city administration still does not present municipal budgets to neighborhoods as part of the formal fiscal preparation cycle. In other aspects, there are elements that partially exist or partially function. For example, there is still no evidence of active attendance of citizens at the City Council sessions, no annual citizen service satisfaction survey, and the grievance (complaints) system does not use ICT technologies.

In order to see how social accountability and citizen engagement initiatives at the municipal level relate with themes such as anti-corruption, municipal finance, and urban planning and in order to find synergies between the SSCE program and other components of UPP II, responses of the participants in FGDs, IDIs and PSD workshop were analyzed by topic. These “pulse” scores for Karlovac are calculated below.

## Citizen Engagement Pulse Scores for Karlovac



(Note: Detailed scores by question are available upon request.)

The City of Karlovac shows relatively similar results in all aspects, with somewhat higher grades in Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups and Service Provision Planning, and scoring lower in the use of ICT and Municipal Finance. This can be explained by the fact that ICT is mostly used to disseminate information rather than providing services. Furthermore, there is no ICT-supported way of filing complaints or asking questions. Regarding Municipal Finances, the City has yet to adopt new practices of participatory budgeting in order to make the process more open to citizens.

**ANNEX 2: INDEX QUESTIONS AND SCORING FRAMEWORK**  
(WITH RESULTS FOR KARLOVAC)

	Participatory Governance (0,1,2)	Transparency & Anti-Corruption (0,1,2)	Municipal Finance (0,1,2)	Service Provision, Planning & Policy (0,1,2)	Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups (0,1,2)	Use of ICT (0,1,2)	
<b>CE Demand – Willingness</b>	1. Do citizens attend and actively participate in city council meetings?  0	2. Is there an anonymous way to report municipal fraud or corruption?  1	3. Is there demand for participatory budgeting processes from citizens or CSOs?  2	4. Do platforms exist through which civil society discusses municipal service / planning / policy?  2	5. Are minority or vulnerable communities represented in the current city council?  1	6. Do citizens and CSOs engage with the municipality online?  1	<b>Total CE Demand Willingness Score 7 (out of 12)</b>
<b>CE Demand – Capacity</b>	1. Are there elected neighborhood councils or equivalent structures?  2	2. Are citizens given sufficient notice about upcoming city council meetings or public forums?  2	3. Are citizens aware of how the city's budget is spent?  1	4. Do citizens know where to go to report a municipal issue or grievance?  1	5. Do NGOs exist that actively engage in representing the interests of vulnerable groups?  2	6. Are citizens able to reliably access municipal information online?  2	<b>Total CE Demand Capacity Score 10 (out of 12)</b>
<b>CE Supply – Willingness</b>	1. Is the municipality accountable to other institutions in terms of implementing mechanisms of citizen engagement?  2	2. Is there a document (charter) outlining the responsibilities of both government and citizens that is publicly accessible?  0	3. Does the city administration present municipal budgets to neighborhoods as part of the formal fiscal preparation cycle?  0	4. Is there an active information desk available to citizens?  2	5. Are vulnerable groups consulted in preparing strategic policy documents, budgets, etc.?  1	6. Does the municipality have an open data policy?  1	<b>Total CE Supply Willingness Score 6 (out of 10)</b>
<b>CE Supply – Capacity</b>	1. Does the city hold meetings/ consultations with the public to gain information on issues that are important to citizens?  1	2. Is citizen-accessible information updated regularly through various platforms?  2	3. Does the municipality have financial resources for investment in citizen engagement or a participatory budget?  1	4. Is there an annual citizen service satisfaction survey?  0	5. Does the city have a program to engage with vulnerable groups or CSOs that represent them?  2	6. Are there municipal staff with ICT training or the opportunity for such training?  1	<b>Total CE Supply Capacity Score 7 (out of 12)</b>
<b>CE Feedback / Monitoring</b>	1. Are neighborhood councils (or similar structures) effectively linking the citizens to the city (or municipality)?  1	2. Are citizen grievances responded to or addressed in a timely and transparent manner by the relevant departments / service providers?  1	3. Are citizen or civil society inputs incorporated into municipal budgets?  1	4. Are time limits for responses to citizen grievances / reports abided by?  2	5. Has the municipality addressed key issues of concern to vulnerable groups based on their inputs?  1	6. Do grievance/ complaint systems use multiple types of technology?  0	<b>Total CE Feedback Loop Score 6 (out of 12)</b>
	<b>Total Participatory Governance Score 6 (out of 10)</b>	<b>Total Transparency &amp; Anti-Corruption Score 6 (out of 10)</b>	<b>Total Municipal Finance Score 5 (out of 10)</b>	<b>Total Service Provision, Planning, and Policy 7 (out of 10)</b>	<b>Total Inclusion Score 7 (out of 10)</b>	<b>Total ICT Score 5 (out of 10)</b>	<b>SSCE SCORE 36 (out of 60)</b>
	↑ Cities without Corruption (CE Pulse)	↑ Cities without Corruption (CE Pulse)	↑ MFSA (CE Pulse)	↑ UPSA (CE Pulse)			