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Involving citizens in Spatial Planning - The example of Luxembourg

Luxembourg, 25 September 2018

Through participation citizens have the possibility not just to comment on a process, but to effectively influence the development plans for the area they live in. On the other hand, public authorities can receive new, fresh ideas and reinforce the legitimacy of their decisions.

That is the main outcome of the seminar organized yesterday, September 24, by ESPON EGTC and the University of Luxembourg – which is also the Luxembourgish ESPON Contact Point- that contributed to the debate for the reform of the Master Programme for Spatial Planning of Luxembourg.

Spatial planning is a core issue for ESPON and public participation is being addressed in a number of its projects that are related to [Metropolitan Areas](#) or [European Regions](#). In this event a number of stakeholders had the opportunity to meet together and exchange experiences from their national and local practices on the topic.

Opening the event **Mrs Pascale Junker**, from the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure of Luxembourg stressed the importance of public participation in the new Luxembourg Master Plan. As this participative process is the first of its kind that will widely include the civil society and cross-border workers, Mrs Junker also highlighted the need for Luxembourg to learn from other countries' approaches.

Mrs Lidia Gryszkiewicz, the co-founding partner at the Impact Lab, presented how they designed and implemented the strategy for collaborative changemaking for the purpose of revising the Master Plan in Spatial Planning in Luxembourg and put emphasis on involving a wide range of people -more than 500 in total. The aim of this consultation, as Mrs Gryszkiewicz said, is to develop a shared vision -which means focusing on collaboration and not just consultation.

Planner-developer, **Mr. Lex Faber**, from Zeyen+Baumann, also involved in the revision of the Master Plan, debated about the definition of a successful public consultation underlining the fact that zoning plans need to build on existing structures, which leaves less room for vision.

In the panel discussion that followed the Luxembourgish Master Plan, other examples of public participation from Ireland, France, Belgium and the Netherlands were also presented.

Mr. Colm McCoy, from the Fingal County Council, offered the experience from the public consultation of the "Project Ireland 2040" focusing on the need of a clear strategy that will define the aims and objectives, identify the key stakeholders and built opportunities for participation.

Mr. Benoît Leplomb, from the Region Grand Est, France referred to the consultation process on its future SRADDET (regional sustainable spatial plan), emphasizing its cross-border dimension and pointing that there is a lot more interest in strategic vision compared to consultation around regulations.

Dr. David Evers, from the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency and ESPON Contact Point (ECP) for Netherlands, focused on the tradition of his country on collaboration and compromise arguing also that timing is essential as sometimes too lengthy public consultation process may scare off developers. But too short may bring a feeling of tokenism.

Mr. Sven de Bruycker, from Capital Region Brussels, that was also one of the stakeholders in ESPON's project [SPIMA](#), said that Brussels is a very diverse city and still a developing region -only established in 1989- that is still very much in a learning mode in terms of public participation, that is an important aspect in place-building and in creating a new identity for an area.

During the final session of the event, Mr. **Clément Corbineau** from Spatial Foresight, presented the results of the ESPON Project [ACTAREA](#) on behalf of the project consortium. He focused on how soft governance -that is related to Strategic medium to long term objectives and relations between levels, sectors and types of actors- can help to create a connection between participants and generate a 'community of intent'.

The event was hosted in the Campus Belval, of the University of Luxembourg and it was part of a series of events that ESPON is organising in West Europe (Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the UK) in 2018 and 2019 examining new developments in national and regional spatial planning. The next one will be held in Brussels on 24 October 2018.



Note to the Editors

ESPON is the European Territorial Observatory Network that provides scientific analyses and advice for territorial and sectoral policies in a number of contexts including economy and finance, unemployment, foreign direct investment, circular and low-carbon economy, healthcare, migration, etc. ESPON supports the discussions on the future of EU policies, notably the Cohesion Policy, as well as the upcoming preparation for the next generation of strategies and programmes at national, regional and local scales. ESPON is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. More at: www.espon.eu

The ESPON 2020 Programme is a pan-European programme managed by the Luxembourgish Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure on behalf of all EU Member States, Island Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland and co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund under Interreg.

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