

## FOSTERING CITIZENSHIP

Support was granted to activities designed to engage citizens and civil society organisations in public life, public policy and the decision-making processes affecting neighbourhoods, communities, cities and the country as a whole.

**133** projects (including **51** targeted at children and youth)

**390 locations** where activities were carried out

**22 projects** were national in scope

**668 NGOs** and **340 public institutions** engaged in dialogue

**56,000 participants** involved (including children and youth)

**273 publications** and **websites**

**144 solutions** supporting dialogue with local and national institutions

**116 citizens' recommendations** incorporated by decision-makers

Projects strongly varied in theme and size and ranged from national to local projects and those dealing with problems affecting small communities.

### Education and training

Important project components included targeted education and training activities for both community members and officials (mainly local council members and local government staff) addressing such issues as local needs assessment techniques, running consultation meetings for community members, and the structure of local government. The training helped community members prepare for consultations and helped officials make adequate arrangements. Education activities for children and youth had a different focus. They were mainly designed to improve the knowledge and skills related to public participation and civic engagement. Young people learned how to organise work for volunteers, implement social projects and facilitate debates; they also attended a journalism workshop. In total, 14,642 individuals received training (including 6,605 children and youth).

### Public consultations

Public consultations facilitated by non-governmental organisations in partnership with various institutions, mainly local government, often addressed such topics as local strategies (e.g. the development of local culture, sports, the regeneration of deprived areas, social policy), planning public space (e.g. consultations regarding local zoning plans or decisions regarding the future of specific sites such as a parks, local markets, neighbourhood centres), and participatory budgeting (process rules and regulations) or a specific issue of access to beaches for individuals with disabilities. Consultations were arranged in various forms and used a variety of techniques. They were mostly traditional open meetings, workshops and surveys. However, certain innovative techniques were also applied such as: consensus conferences, participatory mapping walks (to assess local needs) or online tools (when the public is consulted on public space planning or when projects are proposed in participatory budgeting). Consultation meetings and workshops took place in 160 communities.

### **Local community initiatives**

Encouraged by non-governmental organisations, local residents also took part in activities benefiting the local community and launched grassroots initiatives to solve specific problems. Social recommendations or concepts were formulated and presented to local government. They addressed local facilities, social policy, amenities for pedestrians and cyclists. Moreover, children and youth were involved in community actions by holding debates regarding issues in the school and in the community and by volunteering in various projects (e.g. clearing the area around welfare centres), by organising social picnics, Paralympic games, multicultural festivals, and trips for children with disabilities.

### **Participants**

The initiatives aimed at increasing civic engagement involved over 56,000 individuals (including children and youth). They took part in training, implemented local community initiatives and participated in public consultations; 668 non-governmental organisations took part in the activities (in the role of project leaders, partners or participants of consultations) as did 340 public institutions (government departments, local governments, community centres, forest authorities, welfare centres, and schools).

### **Documentation and promotion**

A total of 273 publications (consultation reports, civic recommendations and strategies, instructions and manuals) came out and websites were launched to document and promote participatory processes.

### **Solutions supporting social dialogue**

The activities resulted in the launch of 144 solutions that support social dialogue with local and national institutions. They included participatory budgeting, public consultations' rules and regulations, and online platforms to facilitate consultations and communication with participating individuals and institutions. The most popular mechanisms of citizens' dialogue with authorities were: local youth councils in villages, neighbourhoods, towns and municipalities, senior councils and social dialogue committees (88 such dialogue bodies were established/ strengthened).

### **Citizens' recommendations incorporated by decision-makers**

During consultations or as a result of grassroots initiatives, 116 citizens' recommendations were incorporated by decision-makers at the local or national level. For example, there were recommendations that addressed national legislation regarding road signs that must be aligned with the needs of bicycle users, a concise local policy in support of better facilities for pedestrians in Lublin, upgrading three parks and squares (Jaworzno and Gdynia), local culture development strategies (Błazowa and Kleszczele), a sports strategy for the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Province, planning sustainable growth in Starogard County based on a low carbon economy, the regeneration of the town centres of Stary Fordon and Koszalin and the modification of traffic regulations in a residential area in Łódź. Concepts developed by children and youth were accepted in Warsaw (the regeneration of Konopacki Palace and the Florange factory) and in Toruń (plans to build an outdoor classroom and to upgrade the surrounding green areas of a school).