

## City for Citizens, Citizens for City

Slovak Governance Institute in co-operation with the municipalities of Bratislava – New Town District (SK), Kashar – Tirana (AL), Prievidza (SK), Siret (RO), Vulcan (RO), and CSOs Prague mothers (CZ) and Co-PLAN – Institute for Habitat Development (AL) completed the project City for Citizens, Citizens for City supported by the Europe for citizens programme. The main aim of the project was to encourage civic engagement in public spaces, and present a wide range of online and offline tools for it. Following this aim we organized a series of participatory events and discussions for inhabitants who had a chance to meet their mayor, and present their suggestions on how to improve their neighbourhoods. Through repeated participatory events they also had a chance to intervene in public spaces. Experienced facilitators led most of the events that helped to make them inclusive and accommodating needs and preferences of locals in final interventions. All of these events brought tangible changes to selected public spaces, from renovation of parks, playgrounds or neglected transitional spaces that did not fulfil any function before to pick-nicks, public readings, and other interesting programme that revived public spaces. On the whole, all participating organizations and municipalities organized seven events, some of them repeated, which helped to create local communities in few cases.

The project outcomes were presented at the final conference, which took place in KC Dunaj in Bratislava from March 24 to March 27. The conference discussed civic engagement, volunteerism, urban development, and meaningful cooperation between municipalities, private and non-profit sector, and public. Besides presentations there were several practical workshops led by experienced trainers devoted to the topics such as work with volunteers, communication, participatory planning, and two legal workshops, which helped the participants to familiarize with the issues of illegal buildings and parking.

More information about the events organized within the project is available on the link below:





**The project «City for citizens, citizens for city» was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"**

**Applicable to the Action 1 – Measure 1.2 "Networks of Twinned Towns"**

**Action 2 – Measure 2.3 "Support projects initiated by civil society organizations"**

**Action 4 – "Active European Remembrance"**

Seven events have been carried out within this project:

**Event 1 – Discussion and volunteering event in Prievidza**

Participation: The event involved app. 80 citizens.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Prievidza, Slovakia from 13/09/2013 to 14/09/2013

Short description: The activities in Prievidza were organized in a cooperation of the initiative Parkotvor, SGI, and the Prievidza municipality, which all aimed for reviving the Skotna Park in Prievidza, Slovakia and transforming it with a help of locals reflecting their preferences.

The Skotna Park in Prievidza is located next to the Dlha Street (under the Marian hill) and is the widest greenery near the city centre. Nowadays the park is not fully used in accordance with its potential. There are few park benches, small coniferous forest, and a few fruit trees as a reminiscence of gardens that used to be here. There are several table tennis tables, which used to be a part of a bigger playground in the past.

The kick-off event was organized on Friday, September, 13. The event was very complex. It started with creative participatory workshops for kids in the park, continued with an informative guided walks for the wide public on past, present and future of the park. Local historians, architects, and urban planners, who talked about specificities of the park, hosted these workshops. Interviewers conducted 200 interviews with the locals during the day, which helped them to collect precious and interesting perceptions on the park. Visitors could also create their own emotional/mental map of the park, which identified places that they perceived positively or negatively, places that they wanted to keep or wanted to change. The most crucial part of the event was the public discussion with citizens, activists, architects, and representatives of the Prievidza municipality led by experienced facilitator Ing. arch. Zora Pauliniova. The main aim of the discussion was to identify citizens' needs and preferences in the park. The event was received with a great interest of citizens among different age groups. Apart from this event, which was planned in the project, SGI and Parkotvor in cooperation with the municipality of Prievidza organized several volunteering events during which they cleaned the park and accommodated several suggestions that were presented in the discussion. This first event was a catalyst for many others. It helped to create a vibrant community that "adopted" the park and has further plans with it.

## **Event 2 – Discussion and volunteering event in Siret**

Participation: The event involved 184 citizens.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Siret, Romania, from 28/10/2013 to 28/10/2013

Short description: The Siret municipality only organized the events in Siret as there was no local NGO involved in the project. However, two other institutions were invited to participate - a local high school and hospital. In Siret, there were four events realized. Within the first two events inhabitants were invited to a discussion on the public spaces. They were encouraged to present their ideas and suggestions about future town development and they also identified the downtown parks as public spaces that demanded urgent intervention. Based on suggestions from citizens, the external company developed a series of designs/proposals that reflected the ideas received from citizens. The municipality is continuously searching for the funding opportunities to realize these proposals.

Two other events organized on October 16 were volunteering events, which were also focused on the downtown parks. Local inhabitants, students and patients of the Chronic Psychiatric Hospital were included and had a chance to contribute to their improvement.

## **Event 3 – Discussion and volunteering event in Vulcan**

Participation: The event involved 100 citizens.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Vulcan, Romania, from 25/10/2013 to 25/10/2013

Short description: The project activities in Vulcan were implemented by the Vulcan municipality only since there was no other local partner involved. The activities consisted of two events - discussion and volunteering event. On October 25, the municipality representatives went to the streets of Vulcan to discuss the project with locals, to collect their ideas on volunteering and their perception of municipality and its work. Next day, the Mayor of Vulcan organized an open discussion and meeting with inhabitants in the Town Hall. More than a hundred inhabitants attended the event, among them high school students, teachers, volunteers, seniors, town hall employees and many others. The Mayor spoke about the municipality and its role and possibilities. Other municipality representative discussed volunteering and relevant legislation. They both encouraged the participants to come up with the ideas on how to improve public spaces and services in the town, discuss their problems with regards to urban development.

The discussion was followed by a series of volunteering events, which took place in Vulcan throughout December 2013. Approximately 150 citizens attended those events. The main aim of volunteering events was to support needy children in the region. The municipality organized creative workshops where inhabitants could both learn something new and create nice gifts for needy children. This event was well accepted and inhabitants agreed to repeat it annually before Christmas.

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### **Event 4 – Participatory planning and volunteering event in Bratislava**

Participation: The event involved 80 citizens.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Bratislava, Slovakia from 26/09/2013 to 26/09/2013

Short description: The project activities in Bratislava were realized in cooperation of Slovak Governance Institute (SGI) with the municipality Bratislava – Nove mesto. They decided to intervene in the playground at the Osadna Street in Bratislava. The playground at the Osadna Street is quite large and green. However, it is neglected and although it is visited by a large number of either parents with children living in nearby flats and houses or by teachers with children visiting nearby Preschool and Grammar school, yet there is no community created around the playground. Even regular visitors do not know each other.

SGI decided to find out the needs and preferences of the visitors of the playground and reflect these in the planned interventions. Therefore, it organized participatory planning event where the team of interviewers conducted around 40 interviews with locals and collected precious and interesting information about the playground, and its perceptions by children of various age, their parents, grandparents, and teachers. For the interviews, individual semi-structured interviews with the playground visitors - mothers, fathers, children, seniors, groups of Preschool pupils and Grammar school pupils from nearby Preschool and Grammar school at the Česká street were chosen as a research method. Interviewees were asked questions from a unified questionnaire, but also had a space to express their own suggestions and recommendations. The collected data revealed that visitors are happy that they have such big and green playground in the neighborhood. Still, they suggested several

financially non-demanding and easily implemented changes that will make the playground more attractive. When it came to less demanding interventions, they suggested repairing benches, creating a chalk drawing table at the wall, covering for the sandbox and fitting the wooden pallets around the sandbox in the front part of the playground or stocking the tennis table and growing new trees in the back part of the playground. Among more demanding interventions mentioned, a drinking water fountain, roof above the sandbox and new playground elements was suggested in the front of the playground and a new surface for the ball games pitch and ice rink during winter months. This participatory planning event was a great start for the following activities, such as volunteering activities or pick-nicks, which demonstrated to locals that it is up to them to create a programme in the park.

### **Event 5 – Discussion and walk in Prague**

Participation: The event involved 70 citizens

Location / Dates: The event took place in Prague, the Czech Republic from 23/10/2013 to 23/10/2013

Short description: In Prague the projects activities were implemented by the NGO Prague Mothers. Although they did not have any official partner in the project in Prague, they cooperated with the municipality - City District of Prague 2.

The first event that they organized was a community happening in the Klicov forrest in Vysocany, Prague which celebrated walking as an alternative for short distance transport in the city. The event with the character of an intimate neighborhood festivity included fire, roasting and homemade cakes. The visitors took part in a "battle game" within which they fulfilled various tasks. Besides questions with pedestrian topic, they also guessed how long it takes for various artificial materials to fall apart in nature, got to know and recognize types of trees etc. The event was a great success and contributed to community building.

The second project events organized by the Prague mothers in cooperation with the City District of Prague 2 was a meeting of representatives of the Prague municipality and citizens who discussed results and efficiency of the online project Chodcisobe.cz, which enables citizens to submit their complaints to the municipalities. The purpose of the meeting in the City Hall of Prague 2 was to present results of one and half year service of the online project Chodcisobe.cz and look for an agreement on improving communication between the municipality on one side, and online project administration and citizens on the other side to make cooperation between them as effective as possible. Presentations by project users, municipality representatives and following discussion revealed that the biggest problem are unclear competencies and a tangle of relations between City Districts on one side and the City resp. TSK (Technical Administration of Communications) on the other. The City Districts are mostly upset that complaints of citizens are often sent to them according to their localization and not according to the liability to solve them and finance the improvements. City of Prague is an owner of more than 90% of communications, but all the complaints are sent to City Districts that cannot be either solved or financed by them. During this event other projects such as „Ladíme Prahu“ (We are tuning Prague) of the Institute for City Development and Odkazprestarostu.sk of SGI in Bratislava, from which Prague Mothers took over Chodcisobe.cz were presented to the audience of the meeting.

Later in the day the Prague Mothers organized a "sightseeing guided walk" for participants in the streets of the City District of Prague 2 to show a real impact of the online project Chodcisobe.cz on life in the City of Prague. For instance the City District of Prague 2 installed along the FN building (University Hospital) pillars, which

prevent cars to park deep into the pavement and thus ensure wheelchair users and parents with prams have sufficient space to move around on the sidewalk. This measure based on citizens' complaint submitted through Chodcisobe.cz is an excellent example how citizens could achieve a change if they are engaged.

### **Event 6 – Participatory and volunteering events in Tirana**

Participation: The event involved 170 citizens.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Tirana, Albania from 16/09/2013 to 23/10/2013

Short description: The events in Tirana, Albania were organized in cooperation of CO-Plan Institute for Habitat Development and the Kashar - Tirana municipality. First, the days between 16/09/2013 - 30/09/2013 were dedicated to the participatory planning workshop facilitated by a moderator, and experts in the field of urban planning, architecture, and art design, and to consultations with the community concerning the issue to be resolved, their vision, expectations, and suggestions to be taken into account by the workshop team. The aim of the events was to gauge the community needs and expectations to ensure that the urban intervention was participatory and reflective of a genuine community concern. CO-Plan held three consultative meetings, at different times of the day, so to maximize the number of community involved in the recreational site designation and implementation. All residents living in the area shared in common the concern of lacking public spaces, which was particularly worrying in the case of children and the elderly, as two of the most exposed groups to the street perils. In most cases the community members were grateful and approving of the ideas suggested by the workshop participants; children expressed precise wishes concerning preferences in colors and concrete children cartoons which were also accommodated in the project.

Second, the days of 01/10/2013 – 23/10/2013 were dedicated to the implementation of the urban Intervention on the site. The aim of the event was to realize the urban intervention based on the project and elements developed during the workshop. Over a period of nearly three weeks, the team had to work on a number of processes in order to prepare the site to 'host' the recreational area. First, in collaboration with the local authorities the terrain had to be cleaned, and leveled, removing waste and excessive construction materials, which had been deposited on site. Further, the area had to be marked, clearly assigning the positions where the elements would be incorporated, for optimal safety of the children playing. As the elements were transported to the site, a talented painter fulfilled children's wishes by painting a mural consisting of their favorite cartoon or film characters such as Mr. Bean, Hello Kitty, Spiderman, etc. Most elements required for intensive manual work and time in order for the cement to settle, and paint, dry.

The day of 24/10/2013 was dedicated to the inauguration of the urban Intervention, which was a Recreational Area for mainly for the children and the elderly, and the community. The aim of the event was to launch the recreational area and encourage citizens to not only maintain it, but also to use this as a model that could be implemented in other neighborhoods also. The event was organized on site, with the participation of the local authorities, workshop moderator, project coordinator, residents, and children. Residents and the local authorities were very appreciative of the result and of the original approach adopted in preparing the recreational area elements through recyclable materials. The local authorities agreed to maintain the site in collaboration with the students.

## **Event 7 – Final conference *City for citizens, citizens for city* in Bratislava**

Participation: The event involved 130 citizens.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Bratislava, Slovakia, from 24/03/2014 to 27/03/2014

Short description: The conference organized in Bratislava discussed volunteerism, cities, online and offline activism that improves them, and meaningful cooperation between municipalities, private and non-profit sector, and public. It posed different important questions such as *How are our cities? What do we know about them? Who identifies himself/herself with public space – municipality, public or is it a no man's land? Who should be involved in decision-making concerning public space? What is the role of an individual and what can s/he change? What data do we have about the cities? How do we work with these data?* International and Slovak guests tried to respond these and many other questions.

The conference lasted four days and had very diverse program. First day was mainly dedicated to the project and its outputs. All project partners attended the event and presented their project outcomes. Second day was dedicated to the topic of volunteerism. Some Slovak initiatives were presented, and discussion with the municipalities followed. Local and foreign online tools for improving the cities were presented on the third day. The fourth day was dedicated to local Slovak initiative that improves public spaces. Besides presentations there were practical workshops led by experienced trainers. The workshops discussed work with volunteers, communication and creating good and solid arguments for your cause, participatory planning and two legal workshops advised on the topics of illegal buildings and parking.



CITY FOR CITIZENS





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