

# THE CHARTER OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## 1 INCLUSION

*diversity is richness*

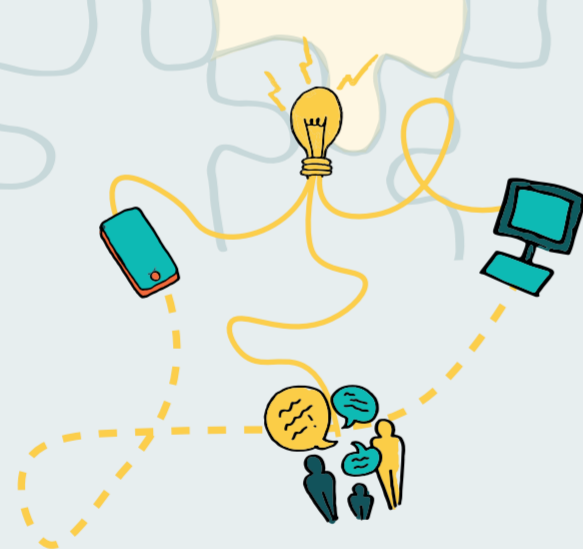
A participatory process can be defined as "high quality" if it **reaches and welcomes** anyone who has an interest in contributing to the subject in question, whether they are representatives of organized groups or individuals. The process must be **accessible** in terms of the time and spaces chosen, and the language used. It must give every person the opportunity to listen, reflect and express themselves, regardless of education, culture, gender, social level, age, or health condition.



## 2 TRANSPARENCY

*everything is clear and accessible*

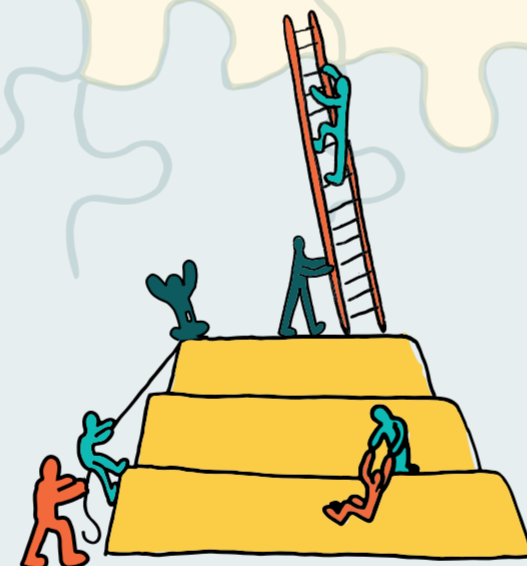
A participatory process is transparent when it makes available to the community **all the relevant information** relating to the object under public choice: the context in which it is placed; the objectives, the rules, and the progressive outcomes of the process itself. To guarantee this transparency, every actor in the process must commit to **responsibly** contributing information only from verifiable sources.



## 3 FAIRNESS

*parity and responsibility*

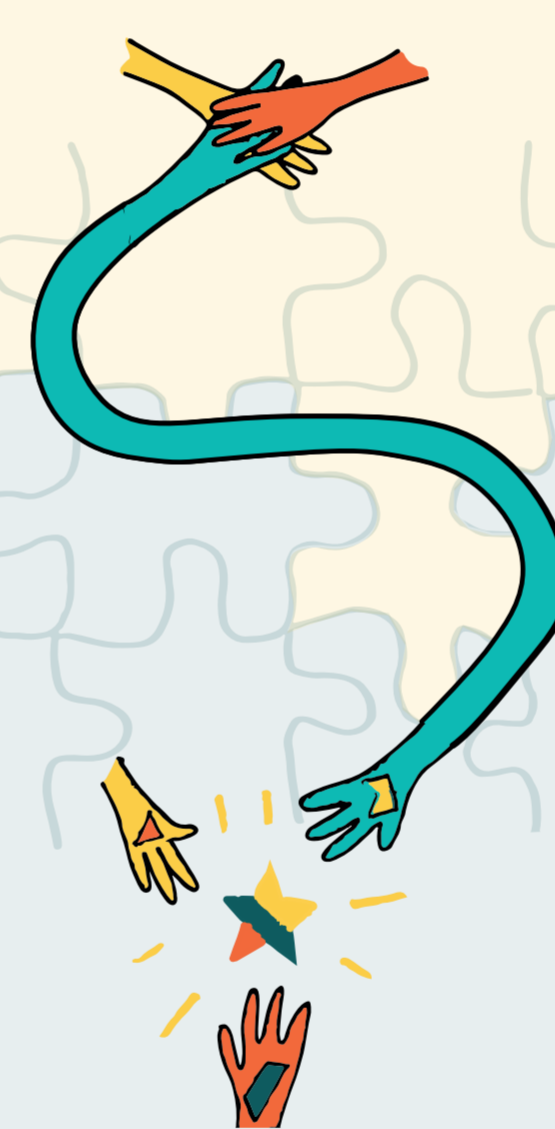
A participatory process which creates optimal conditions aims at **resolving inequalities and power imbalances**. It gives everybody the opportunity to contribute. It guarantees a balance between different points of view, **safeguards generational and gender equal opportunities**. Its founding value is fairness and looks responsibly towards people, living beings, the planet, and future generations.



## 4 COOPERATION

*together is better*

A participatory process promotes collaboration among all the parties involved using a perspective of **co-creation, reciprocity, and co-responsibility**. This favors the construction of social capital and a **shared sense** of working for the **common good**.



## 5 EFFECTIVENESS

*creating change*

A participatory process recognizes that the exchange of people's opinions, knowledge, and experience can increase the quality of public policies at different local levels and can generate empowerment and have a **positive impact on society**. To be effective, the process must focus on issues of **shared relevance** and aim to achieve change.



## 6 TRUST

*cultivating relationships*

A participatory process cultivates transparency and **respect between people**. It ensures the legitimacy of different ideas and the recognition of different roles, and thereby generates mutual trust. To maintain this trust over time, it is fundamental that the **commitments made** at the end of the process are implemented and **responsibility is shared**.



## 7 INVOLVE

*every voice counts*

A quality participatory process takes care to identify, and **actively approach** all the people who can enrich the discussion by bringing a different point of view, analyzing the issues, problem-solving and contributing to making decisions. This involvement of the **community** must be activated in all the **phases**, from programming and design to implementation, monitoring, and the evaluation of the results over time.

## 8 INFORM

*to increase knowledge*

In a quality participatory process, the aim must be to overcome information asymmetries and create an **equal exchange of knowledge** among all the subjects involved. Following this principle, the participatory process will be accompanied by the **continuous communication** of emerging relevant information and of the different phases of the discussion. This information must be provided in a **transparent and accessible** form to all people and in all phases of the process.

## 9 FACILITATE

*expand and guarantee oppositions*

One of the fundamental principles of participation is that **all instances and points of view are valued**. This helps to bring out different positions, favors the exchange of knowledge and promotes both listening and discussion. In order to manage conflict and see it not as a threat but as a generator of change, competent **third-party facilitators are used to guarantee the process**. Their facilitation must be impartial, "equidistant" (or "equi-close") to the different positions, and, while attentive to the needs of future generations and ecosystems, must be oriented towards immediate concrete results.

## 10 CO-CREATE

*generate what does not yet exist*

A participatory process values individual talents in the **search for shared choices**. It designs projects bearing in mind the resources, times, and methods suited to individual needs, and in so doing transforms participation into **collective intelligence**. Whoever designs the participatory process does so with care and flexibility, using methodologies that **facilitate dialogue and promote creativity**, both in person and remotely. The aim is to go beyond the simple addition of individual opinions, to activate an understanding of and response to common expectations which go in the direction of the common interest.

## 11 EVALUATE

*measure to improve*

Evaluation is essential in the **different phases** of a participatory process (ex-ante, ongoing and ex-post) in order to **orient actions** and assess the paths taken, the results obtained (even if different from the initial expectations), and the impacts generated. Evaluation must be conducted using **adequate methodologies**, common metrics, and indicators. It should involve those who participated and those who promoted and facilitated the process. The results must be made public and be accessible so that **improvement** can be continuous.

## 12 ACCOUNT FOR

*justify outcomes over time*

A responsible participatory approach is able to account for **the outcomes which have been achieved** during all the phases of the process. These are responsibly, and transparently made public. The impact and the added value of the participation are evaluated. All the parties involved in accounting for the implementation of the commitments taken over time must **motivate any variations**. This is important to strengthen citizens' trust and to guarantee credibility in the co-creation process.

# THE CHARTER OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## INTRODUCTION

### WHAT IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

Participation in democratic life is derived directly from the right of citizenship and of popular sovereignty in the Italian Constitution and in numerous local and regional statutes in Italy.

**There are many ways citizens can take part in a democracy:** through the vote, membership of a party, of a civic organization or interest group; through the promotion of petitions and referenda and the proposal of new laws and legal observations; through protests.

There is, however, also another way of involving citizens and this is called **participatory** or **deliberative democracy**. It works alongside representative democracy, reinforcing it with 'participatory processes' constructed to facilitate dialogue and the meeting of different points of view. These forms of participation are promoted in documents and guidelines by organisms such as the European Community and OECD. They are, however, not yet widely used throughout Italy, although some Regions have passed laws and set up organisms to support participatory processes. Italy has, however, signed the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Open Government Partnership Project which both indicate that the **involvement of local communities is indispensable to the construction of effective equalizing public policies**.

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

Participatory processes **co-create and co-implement policies and strategies, projects and public services** in a wide range of contexts, through an egalitarian collaboration between public administration and civic society. They reinforce the trust of citizens and **produce public value**. Participation is one of the pillars of Open Government. This is a culture of governance that promotes the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and the participation of stakeholders in the support of democracy and inclusive growth (OECD 2016). In order to guarantee these results, however, these processes must be planned with great care and meet certain requirements.

**The Charter of Public Participation** describes **6 values** and **6 principles** which guarantee a quality of participation that is inclusive and efficacious and which generates the empowerment and co-responsibility of all the actors involved. These practices are now assuming a fundamental role in a historic phase which is characterized by a loss of faith in institutions. The European Commission's Recommendation 2023/2836, December 2023, insists on the promotion of the participation of civic society and citizens in the design of public policies. This Charter can be used as a **guide** to plan, manage, monitor and evaluate participatory processes which are equalizing and generative.

## THE PROTAGONISTS OF THE CHARTER

*Promoting entities, promoting organizations*

AIP2 - Italian Association for Public Participation

with

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Cittadinanzattiva  
Department of Civil Service - Italy Open Gov  
IAF Italy - International Association of Facilitators  
INU - National Institute of Urban Planning  
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## PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

### TEN YEARS ON: 2014-2024

The Charter of Participation, written in 2014, was a list of principles designed to promote the quality of participatory processes. Ten years later it was revised and amplified through a **wide-ranging national participatory process**.

The revision process started in 2023. It was promoted by AIP2 (Associazione Italiana per la Partecipazione Pubblica: Italian Association for Public Participation), IAF Italia (International Association of Facilitators Italy), INU (Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica), Cittadinanzattiva, ActionAid, the Regions of Emilia-Romagna, Puglia and Tuscany, and the the Open Government Partnership within the Department of Public Administration. More than 300 representatives of institutions, civic society and young and older citizens actively contributed to the project in presence, online and on the national platform Participation Hub.

### THE PHASES

The revision took place during events, workshops, debates and webinars. It followed four phases:

- **Listening** - collecting observations on the relevance and clarity of the 10 principles in the original text;
- **Co-creation** - examining the observations and merging them into a shared vision;
- **Sharing** - public consultation on the ParteciPA platform to improve the updated draft;
- **Restitution** - presentation of the Charter at the Festival of Participation at Bologna in September 2024.

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

The nearly 800 contributions collected confirmed the validity of the principles in the 2014 text, while highlighting the need to update them to face current challenges, such as sustainable development, increasing social complexity, and new technologies. The goal is to ensure greater flexibility, inclusiveness, and concreteness in participatory processes and the result is an expanded Charter with a new structure that includes:

- **6 values that orient the quality of the participation:** These are inclusion, transparency, equity, cooperation, effectiveness, and trust;
- **6 principles that guide the actions:** These are the need to involve, inform and facilitate citizens; and to co-create concrete participatory paths oriented towards the collective interest, which can be evaluated and monitored over time.

### AN ILLUSTRATED CHARTER

The new Charter has been redesigned **to speak to people from all life experiences**. For this reason, particular attention has been paid to an inclusive, gender-sensitive language, and to illustrations that favor collaborative symbols and avoid competitive or excessively hierarchical images.

WORKING TOGETHER  
IMPROVE  
DECISION-MAKING

6 VALUES  
AND 6 PRINCIPLES  
IN 1 WORD:

PARTICIPATION

DO YOU WANT TO USE  
THE CHARTER? YOU CAN.  
FIND OUT HOW...

**Adherence to the Public Participation Charter is free and open.**

Public bodies can adopt the Charter with a resolution of the Cabinet or the City Council. Civil society organizations, Associations, and Third Sector organizations can cite the Charter in their Statutes or adhere to its values through their Shareholders' Meeting.

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