D 6.7- Key Learnings Report

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EUARENAS investigates the ways in which social movements coupled with local government reform initiatives, manifesting themselves in local-level experiments, create momentum for political change that include more inclusive and participatory forms of governance.

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1 Introduction

By design, EUARENAS is a trans-disciplinary and multi-actor project that brings together professionals from diverse backgrounds. The consortium includes social scientists, NGO representatives, city officials, and local activists from various European countries. Beyond the consortium, the project and its partners have developed and engaged in broader external knowledge exchange processes. A key platform for this exchange is the EUARENAS Community of Practice (CoP), established specifically for the project and managed through Work Package 6.

This report details and synthesises the learnings derived not only from the knowledge exchange process itself (in terms of content), but also in terms of the organisation and facilitation of the CoP in practice (in terms of process). The report builds on and picks up from D6.4 'Knowledge Exchange Process Guide', which established the EUARENAS consortium's understanding of knowledge exchange, laid the groundwork for setting up the EUARENAS horizontal knowledge exchange process and platform, mostly in form of the Community of Practice, and presented an initial list of practical steps towards facilitating exchange between the members of the Community of Practice.

2 Organisation of the EUARENAS Community of Practice

2.1 Aims and Characteristics of the Community of Practice

As part of the project work, EUARENAS aimed to establish a knowledge exchange process within and beyond the consortium centred around urban innovation as well as participatory and deliberative governance processes. The overarching goal of this knowledge exchange process was to assist the consortium in synthesising as well as validating the results, knowledge, and learnings gained throughout the project in a collective and interactive manner, but also to make available and disseminate project results to a wider audience working in the field of collaborative urban governance. In order to achieve this goal, it was deemed necessary to involve a broad spectrum of stakeholders, academics, practitioners, policy-makers and citizens in project activities and facilitate their contribution to the project's learnings and outputs.

The chosen practical approach to accomplish this was to set up the EURARENAS Community of Practice, which was established at the beginning and developed over the course of the project. A CoP is a group of people that have a shared desire to learn about what they do in order to develop. Following Wenger et al. (2000, 2002), the Community of Practice within EUARENAS has been built on three unifying elements: a shared domain, a community, and a practice. The **shared domain**, or EUARENAS 'identity', focuses on the examination and promotion of participative and deliberative democracy in urban settings. The **community** comprises individuals who are interested in deliberative and participatory urban practices and who foster relationships through regular contact. Initially, this community included the consortium members, but it was expanded over time to include a broader variety of interested persons, both through organic growth and proactive initiatives by the consortium members. Thirdly, the EUARENAS CoP aimed to develop and share various **practices** related to urban participatory and deliberative practices, including stories, resources, and expertise.

2. Setting up the Community of Practice

Having produced the D6.4 'Knowledge Exchange Process Guide' by October 2021, which outlined the plans for the development of the EUARENAS, the consortium, under the leadership of the University of Eastern Finland (responsible for WP6), set about to identify potential participants (the community) from three major, partly overlapping, groups:

- The **scientific community**, including research organisations and individual researchers, forms the first group as the primary target being an academic research project.
- **Urban practitioners**, public sector or civil society activists, and promoters of citizen participation in urban settings.
- **Policy-makers** at local, regional, national, and EU levels, either working with policies directly linked to participatory and deliberative practices or contributing to their facilitation.

As a major step in this identification/recruitment process, was the organisation of a stakeholder mapping exercise, which was held online on December 15th, 2021 among the EUARENAS consortium members. The meeting aimed to introduce the aims and ideas for the CoP as stated in D6.4 Knowledge Exchange Process Guide, present the stakeholder mapping exercise, set up a course of actions for the following months and last but not least, launch the CoP mapping

exercise to identify important stakeholders/actors to be invited to the CoP. During the meeting and in the following weeks, a mapping excel table was filled in by the individual researchers within the EUARENAS consortium. The tables included the following components:

- Name of partner proposing the member of the CoP
- Name of actor/person to be included in the CoP
- Type of actor/organisation (e.g. academic, civil society, government/practice, government/policy etc.)
- Territorial scale the actors/organisation mostly operates at (EU, national, regional, local)

- Short description of the proposed member of the CoP and his/her organisation
- Specific interests regarding participatory and deliberative practices in urban settings

The table also contained the items of 'interest' and 'power' of the proposed member regarding urban participatory practices and policy-making. The facilitated the development of a power/interest matrix, identifying groups of stakeholders to regularly engage (high power, high interest), actively consult (high power, low interest), maintain interest (low power, high interest) and keep informed (low power, low interest). It, however, has to be stated that for the purpose of the CoP activities that followed, this power/interest matrix turned out to be relatively irrelevant.

During the meeting, it was proposed by the project partners that the CoP would also be integrated with the Policy and Scientific Advisory Boards, serving as a general learning platform for academics, civil society actors, policy-makers, and practitioners. Consensus was that the CoP would require regular interactions and meetings, both face-to-face and online within the limits of the EUARENAS resources.

The CoP activities started with an online kick-off meeting, to which all identified potential CoP members were invited, in February 2022. It was attended by over 30 members from both the project and the 'external' CoP. The aim of the meeting was to introduce the Community to each other, to the EUARENAS project in general and the aims of the EUARENAS CoP in particular. The meeting also included an interactive workshop that discussed questions such as what the CoP members want to get out of the CoP as an individual and/or organization, what they could contribute to the CoP in terms of expertise, knowledge, skills, and what themes/topics/areas they would you like to see explored through the CoP. A vision of the EUARENAS CoP as a multi- and trans-disciplinary platform for networking that functions as interface for practice, activism and research and a conduit for linking deliberative and participatory practices with wider social development and innovations emerged. The researchers in the CoP also emphasized its potential function as a source of collaborative contacts for exchanging and working on data and methodologies, case studies, evaluation techniques, joint publications and research proposals. The meeting was overshadowed and affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which had started only a couple of days prior to the meeting. The overall sentiment of the meeting was that discussions on democracy were more relevant and critical than ever.
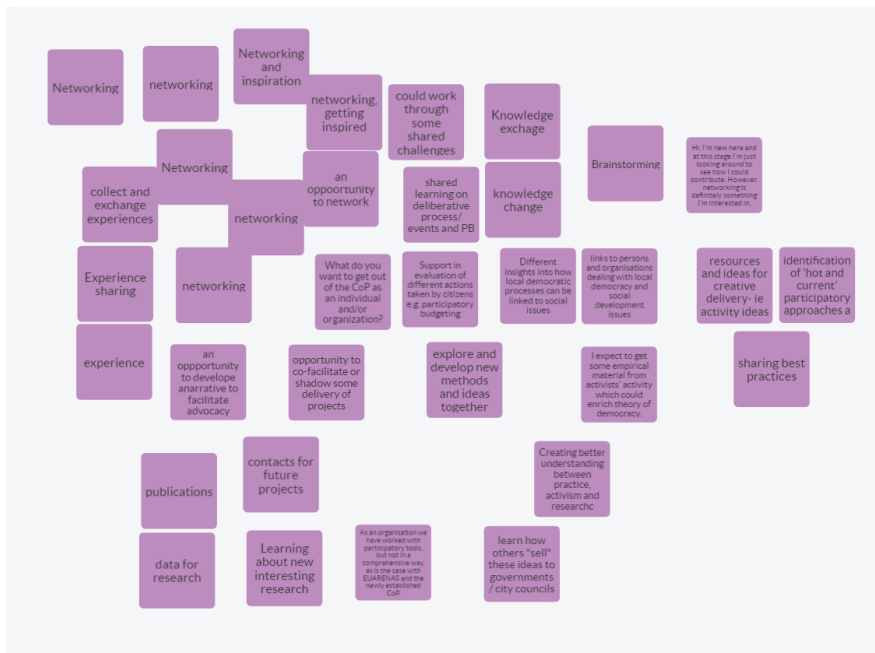
Figure 1 Flinga Board on the 'expectations' among the CoP members prepared during the kick-off meeting

As of summer 2024, the EUARENAS CoP comprises approximately **40 members** from across Europe. It, however, has to be borne in mind that over the course of three years this group has organically partitioned into a 'core group', whose members participated consistently and actively in EUARENAS CoP activities both online and offline, and an expanded group, whose members mostly followed CoP activities online or through emails exchanges. The CoP is composed of people with diverse of professional backgrounds, including academia, city government, civil society, and NGOs, working at multiple levels, ranging from local to regional, national, and transnational. Their areas of profession are also diverse, including fields such as policy-making, community involvement, participatory budgeting, social justice, inclusion, and citizens' juries.

2.3 Community Management Team for the Community of Practice

The Community management facilitated the Community of Practice process by organising its activities and interactions. The Community Management Team included members from UEF as well as a representative each from SWPS, LUISS, and PVM. The Community Management team supported the CoP process in the following ways:

- **Organising interaction opportunities**
  - Coordinating tasks within the core group.
  - Maintaining regular communication with both existing and new community members.
  - Organising and sending out invitations to events.
  - Formulating requests for input and participation, also known as 'calls to action.'
- **Acting as a Convener and Catalyst**
  - Sparking enthusiasm and interest within the community.
  - Bringing CoP members together for conversations and discussions.
- **Functioning as a Synthesiser and Knowledge Manager/Broker:**

- o Gathering and synthesising the knowledge and learnings generated within the CoP.
- o Producing synthesising documents.
- o making material available to interested external audiences.

2.4 Organisation of the CoP events

2.4.1 Before the meeting

The agendas for each Community of Practice (CoP) event within the EUARENAS project were developed in advance by the Community Management Team, trying to make sure that discussions and external inputs were relevant and beneficial for both the EUARENAS project and the members of the CoP. Before each meeting, the CoP coordinator (UEF) contacted project all partners involved in current research or working on deliverables to see whether they would benefit from CoP inputs. In practice, the consortium partners were encouraged to propose specific topics during the EUARENAS monthly coordination meetings or in dedicated preparatory meetings if necessary.

CoP involvement over the course of the project was structured into two main formats: three Knowledge Exchange Workshops dedicated specifically to the Community of Practice and online/offline involvement of CoP members in other meetings and activities of the EUARENAS. For practical reasons, the Knowledge Exchange Workshops were in most cases strategically organised in conjunction with existing international project events. This allowed CoP members to participate in EUARENAS meetings and activities beyond the dedicated CoP events, optimising their time and minimising travel costs. For effective preparation and participation, an agenda and 'required readings' were distributed to the CoP members in advance. These materials typically included deliverables to be discussed or working documents that would be commented on during the CoP meeting.

2.4.2 During the meeting

Each CoP meeting was run by the consortium with clearly defined roles to ensure a focused and effective meeting:

- **Meeting Facilitator and Time Keeper**: responsible for guiding the overall flow of the event, making sure that the agenda was followed and that the meeting progressed efficiently.
- **Session Facilitators**: Typically project partners leading specific research tasks or producing specific deliverables; steered discussions or workshop exercises in line with meeting's goals.
- **Discussion Table Facilitators**: Selected from the project partners. Their role was to ensure that discussions remain relevant and on-topic.
- **Technical Facilitators**: A combination of project members and technicians from the venues where the meetings were held. Tasked with the smooth technical execution of the meeting, addressing any operational issues that arose.

In face-to-face meetings, necessary supplies for workshop exercises, like flipcharts, post-its, and markers, were supplied by the project partners. For online meetings, the online platforms'

Breakout Rooms features were utilised to facilitate smaller group discussions and interactive sessions, allowing for more focused and in-depth exchanges among participants.

Due to the multifaceted and discussion-rich environment of the CoP events, multiple note-takers were assigned to capture the essence of these discussions. The session coordinator, in particular, was responsible for recording reflective notes on the inputs and feedback received during their sessions. For matters specifically concerning the operations of the CoP, the CoP coordinator documented these points. Additionally, since the discussions and exercises often involved the use of flipcharts, these visual aids served as a resource for future reference and reporting, providing a tangible record of the conversations and ideas exchanged.

2.4.3 After the meeting

Following each Knowledge Exchange Workshop, reports on the events were compiled. These reports draw together the results and insights from the event, including roundtable discussion results, feedback on EUARENAS deliverables, and content presented by CoP members. The structure of the Knowledge Exchange Reports is detailed as follows:

Knowledge Exchange Report 1 (published independently and also under Working Paper Series 2)	• Democracy Now, Democracy in The Future
	• Making Participatory and Deliberative Work
	   ○ Systemic Issues
	   ○ Power and Hierarchy
	   ○ Mainstreaming participatory and deliberative practices
	   ○ Tools, Techniques and Methods

WP-based memos produced for on the basis of Knowledge Exchange Workshop 2	• the 2nd Knowledge Exchange Workshop focussed on WP-specific themes (see Table in section 3.1) to which the CoP provided comments and input • WP-specific notes and memos were produced.

Knowledge Exchange Report 2 (published under Working Papers Series)	• Current Agendas in Research and Practice
	   ○ Measuring Participation: Why it Matters for Cities
	   ○ Co-creating the City of Lodz: A multifaceted citizen engagement approach
	   ○ What does it mean to be "broadly representative" in deliberative mini-publics?
	• Sense-checking research progresses through the Community of Practice
	   ○ Towards the Handbook of Successful Deliberation
	   ○ Towards Evaluating and Monitoring the EUARENAS Pilot Actions

In addition to these reports, any recorded presentations from the workshops were uploaded to the EUARENAS YouTube channel for broader accessibility. Furthermore, to increase awareness and dissemination of these insights, blog posts summarising each event were published, accompanying the announcement of the respective reports. Results and insights from the Knowledge Exchange events also fed into a number Deliverables produced in other Works Packages than WP6 (see Section 4).

3 Activities conducted and learnings from the Community of Practice

3.1 Key activities and events undertaken by the CoP

With the aim to serve as a horizontal knowledge exchange platform in EUARENAS, the activities undertaken by CoP fall into the following main categories:

- Sense-checking the work in various EUARENAS Work Packages and ongoing deliverables by providing feedback and contributing examples from their professional experiences
- Discussion on specific topics by providing examples, tools, and methods encountered in their work Presenting CoP members' work or research on participatory and deliberative democracy.

Event	Key activities
Online Meeting 1 | Kick-off Meeting February 28th 2022 | Online	• Presentation of the EUARENAS project • Presentation of the aims of the CoP • Participants introduce themselves, their experiences, and their expectation and motivation for taking part in the CoP

Knowledge Exchange Workshop 1
May 12th 2022 | Reggio Emilia, Italy
	• European democracy now, European democracy in the future: Participants share thoughts on the current state of democracy, the democratic future we would like to see, and how we could get there | WP5: Foresight
	• World Café: Inclusiveness and accessibility in participatory and deliberative processes. Key Topics:
	   ○ How do structural/social inequalities impact on how our democracies work and who is included in participatory and deliberative processes?
	   ○ What tools, techniques and methods can support inclusiveness and accessibility in participatory and deliberative processes, specifically when involving people who are usually marginalised from these processes?
	   ○ How can we engage "decision-makers" effectively in participatory and deliberative practices and how do we move participation and deliberation in democracy from 'siloed practice/pilots' to more mainstream, embedded activities?
	   ○ Is it possible to achieve horizontal and equal deliberation - why and how?

Social media posts at national and pan-European levels Sep – Nov 2022 | Online	• Selected CoP members were invited to analyse 50 activists' social media posts curated by EUARENAS researchers for signals of future democracy • Selected CoP members were asked to join a Pan-European group of experts tasked to policy-stress testing future democracy scenarios

Knowledge Exchange Workshop 2 October 26th 2022 | Online	- Presentation and call for inputs for the Handbook of Deliberative Facilitation | WP1: State of the Debate - CoP inputs for EUARENAS' Social Media and Future Thinking exercise | WP5: Foresight - Developing criteria for analysing democratic innovations in different cultural, social and governance contexts | WP3: Case Studies - Sharing policy recommendations to enhance access and inclusion in democracy | WP7: Policy and Change-making Tools
Knowledge Exchange Workshop 3 May 16th 2023 | Berlin, Germany	- Quick fire-round presentations from three CoP members on their latest works in participatory democracy - How to measure the quality and impacts of participation in a way that is useful to cities? - Mikko **Rask, University of Helsinki** - The City of Lodz' experience in the context of involving residents in the process of co-creating the city - **Katarzyna Dyzio, City of Lodz** - Sorting out Sortition: What does "broadly representative" mean for deliberative minipublics? - **Brett Hennig, Sortition Foundation** - Feedback/review sessions on two EUARENAS outputs - Handbook of Successful Deliberation - D4.2. Evaluation and monitoring report on the pilot actions
EUARENAS Policy Seminar and Project Conference on The Radical Side of Participation Sep 22nd 2023 | Wroclaw, Poland	- participation of and commentary by CoP members as part of the policy seminar - CoP members contributed to panels on 'Participation on the margins of modern societies' and 'participatory budgeting - from radical idea to everyday tool'
EUARENAS Final Event October 2nd 2024| Berlin, Germany	- participation of a several CoP members - one external CoP member gave a presentation on his current research

3.2 Key Learnings from the Practical Implementation of the EUARENAS Knowledge Exchange and CoP process

Several hands-on lessons and learnings can be derived from the EUARENAS experience of organising a CoP for three and a half years.

Budget sufficient resources for the organisation of the CoP process. The experience in EUARENAS has shown that setting up and maintaining an active Community of Practice requires a significant amount of resources. The identification and development of suitable and relevant agenda for CoP activities and events, the maintenance of communication with the CoP, the practical organisation of the events, and the subsequent task of reporting all require a significant amount of time and effort. As the EUARENAS CoP activities were subsumed under the

Dissemination Work Package, the Community of Practice share within that Work Package was in hindsight under-resourced. Another shortcoming was the lack of a dedicated travel budget for CoP members to come to the meetings. As a consequence, this funding was provided by the individual consortium partners, which maybe resulted in a slight bias in which CoP members were brought along to the meetings, i.e. those that already had existing working relationships with the consortium partners. The face-to-face meetings, providing an opportunity to mingle, make new contacts and discuss potential collaboration beyond the realm of the EUARENAS, are extremely useful for forging an integrated and active CoP and should be resourced accordingly.

Building on existing networks of the consortium members provided active and capable CoP members. Despite EUARENAS's efforts to establish a balanced and open recruitment process for the Community of Practice (CoP), such as organizing a stakeholder mapping exercise, it became apparent that CoP members from the home countries of the consortium partners were somewhat overrepresented, though this was not seen as a weakness during the activities. It also became evident early on that CoP members with pre-existing relationships with consortium partners were generally very dedicated and active. Pre-existing lines of communication, which also function outside the project's scope, fostered a stronger attachment to the project and its CoP. However, it is important to note that some of the most active CoP members had no prior relationship with any consortium partners.

From Quantity to Quality: Building a Strong Community of Practice The numerical difference between the initial list of CoP members at the beginning of the process and the number of active, dedicated members towards the end of the project was quite significant. This was again not experienced as a problem, as the quality of work did not suffer. A learning derived from this is that a decrease of active members over time is not something to be overly concerned about as long as an active and dedicated core group remains in place. It is, however, advisable to start with a relatively large number of CoP members in order to initially reach a sufficient number of members who are truly interested in the topic and CoP work as such. To maintain engagement and appeal, a CoP can also benefit from a formal structure for monitoring, evaluating, and adapting its activities.

Accepting and supporting decentralised, multipolar activities. Over the course of three and a half years, the CoP evolved significantly. It could be argued that in general terms it has developed from a somewhat centralised, top-down process into a more decentralised and multipolar platform for interaction and collaboration. At the time of writing, several thematic and geographical 'nodes' can be identified within the wider EUARENAS CoP. Thematic nodes, groups composed of consortium and CoP members sharing an interest in and working on specific topic or themes, such as participatory budgeting or citizen assemblies have formed. Some 'national' CoP subgroups also appear to have emerged. For instance, Poland, which is home to several EUARENAS consortium partners and a number of CoP members, has seen the emergence of an informal EUARENAS national CoP, resulting in a number of spin-off activities, such as new Horizon Europe proposals and new initiatives related to participatory and deliberative practices in Polish cities.

Keep the momentum Maintaining momentum can be challenging in a Community of Practice, as initial enthusiasm often wanes over time; this is quite natural. To counter this, it is important to plan activities in detail and well ahead (regular meetings, opportunities to meet face-to-face, online drop-in meetings, etc.) to keep members engaged and motivated. By thoughtfully planning and diversifying activities, a CoP can maintain its vitality and continue to provide value to its members

Engage Policy Makers Proactively. A major weakness in the EUARENAS CoP activities was our inability to reach and engage policy makers as well as city representatives. These stakeholder groups are notoriously busy, and the nature of the CoP activities does not seem to fit their work. Travel funding for face-to-face events among these groups is also becoming increasingly sparse. We would nevertheless recommend to place much as much effort as possible, especially at the beginning of a CoP process, to engage representatives from the policy-making sphere in the CoP and tie them to the process. The most active group of members were those from the academic sphere.

4 Input of Knowledge Exchange Process into Deliverables and other EUARENAS documents

The CoP activities conducted over the course of the EUARENAS project have resulted in a number of insights and key learnings concerning participatory and deliberative practices in general and EUARENAS-specific topics in particular. These insights and learnings have benefitted the production of several project outputs over the course of three and a half years, including project deliverables, academic publications, practical toolboxes and guides and policy briefs. The EUARENAS deliverables with the contributions from the CoP are:

- D6.6 Working Paper Series 2 (through Knowledge Exchange Report 1)
- D7.3 Policy Brief 1
- D6.8 Working Paper Series 3 (through Knowledge Exchange Report 2)
- D4.2. Evaluation and monitoring report on the pilot actions
- D5.4 Future Scenarios Report
- Handbook for Successful Deliberation (not an EUARENAS Deliverable (forthcoming))

The following three subsection summarise some of the learnings from this process. Please refer to the documents listed above for more detailed insights.

4.1 Foresight – The Future of Democracy

The **current and potential future state** of democracy was a key theme during the first Knowledge Exchange meeting. The discussions uncovered a number of challenges attached to current perceptions of democracy. Citizens often feel distant from the political process, either indifferent or powerless to influence change. There's a perceived erosion of 'European identity', with increasing administrative complexity and bureaucracy leading to blockages and a sense of disconnection. Furthermore, there's a growing concern that truth and trust are undervalued. A critical question emerges: is democracy effectively supporting social equality, or is it unintentionally perpetuating existing inequalities?

In envisioning a more **ideal future** for democracy, a shift towards a 'deep democracy' is suggested. This involves citizens having greater agency and involvement in democratic processes beyond just voting, including deliberation and decision-making roles. The idea of a 'value-driven' democracy was also proposed, alongside empowering local governments with the competencies to innovate in citizen engagement and involvement in local democratic processes.

To **transition** from the current state to the desired future, it was discussed that scaling up and mainstreaming innovative democratic practices such as participatory budgeting, citizen assemblies and crowdsourced law could help in making these new practices the new norm. Adopting 'test and learn' approaches for experimentation and active learning was also suggested. Moreover, there's an emphasis on recognising and celebrating small-scale changes and successes, fostering a sense of progress and momentum even when the pace of change appears slow.

4.2 Making Participatory and Deliberative Practices Work

A significant amount of discussions within the CoP activities was dedicated to the question of how to **mainstream participatory and deliberative practices in urban governance.** An interesting input from group work in one of the CoP meetings was provided through the development of an 'urban participation cycle', drawing from the City of Gdansk's experience. This cycle begins with a potential tension or pressure from the community on political structures, advocating for change. Given political will, participatory practices can bridge these spheres, leading to rule-setting, experimentation, and storytelling, ideally culminating in joint learning that informs city strategies. Successful institutionalisation and mainstreaming require the integration of these practices into local administrative law, backed by clear communication of outcomes to enhance legitimacy among stakeholders. This cyclical process demands significant resources, including human, financial, and appropriate tools. It operates within a broader context influenced by multi-level governance, with entities like the OECD and EU setting norms and facilitating knowledge exchange, and national legislation shaping participation parameters.

The CoP discussions on **power and hierarchy** examined the feasibility of achieving horizontal and equal deliberation, suggesting deliberation as a democratic alternative free from traditional power dynamics. It emphasises deliberation's potential to empower participants, granting them agency and responsibility in decision-making processes. This concept extends to the direct implementation of deliberative outcomes, enhancing the process's legitimacy and motivation without political intermediation, conditional on public authorities' willingness. Essential to this process is a safe, inclusive deliberation environment facilitated by trusted mediators, adequate time allocation, the use of varied tools across governmental levels, and participant selection emphasising representativeness.

Due to structural and social inequalities, **systemic issues** significantly influence who participates in, and how we conduct, participatory and deliberative processes in our democracies. These inequalities range from broad societal issues to individual life conditions, underlining the importance of understanding and addressing them to enhance the quality of participatory practices. Strategies to mitigate these disparities include improving recruitment techniques, diversifying participatory methods, and fostering effective leadership.

Attention in participatory strategies also focuses on overcoming white and Western biases in processes and tools, acknowledging the conditioning power of societal hierarchies on participation. The relationship between social class and participation levels is critical, as lower social classes face barriers to participation, while higher ones may lack the desire to engage. Resource limitations, such as time, financial constraints, health, education, digital and language

skills, and a basic motivation affected by marginalisation, further challenge inclusive participation.

Building on the need for understanding and addressing systemic barriers, exploring the **tools, techniques, and methods** that promote inclusiveness and accessibility in participatory and deliberative processes becomes crucial, especially for marginalised groups. Understanding the unique barriers these groups face is the first step, requiring targeted outreach and the removal of participation hindrances through practical support, such as on-site translators and the use of inclusive language. Technology plays a key role by providing platforms for anonymous and flexible participation, catering to individuals with busy schedules or those facing language and accessibility challenges.

In various European countries, tested tools and methods offer insights into enhancing participation among traditionally marginalised groups. In the UK, incentives like childcare, transportation, and translation services encourage broader participation. Switzerland's "Time Bank" programme assists the elderly, while Estonia's Helpific event mapping aids disabled individuals. Ensuring that participatory and deliberative discussions are value-based and reciprocal, employing demographic quotas for diversity, and providing facilitators with training to manage diverse groups effectively are essential steps towards a more inclusive and accessible process.

4.3 Informing policy on increasing access and inclusion in democracy

Building upon the work on mainstreaming presented in the previous section, the Community of Practice (CoP) members were asked to give further, specific recommendations on four areas to mainstream participatory and deliberative practices.

To address **systemic issues**, the recommendations highlight the need for a better understanding of why individuals may not engage in participatory and deliberative processes. This understanding could lead to initiatives such as improved recruitment approaches, the use of more diverse and mixed participation methods, and enhanced leadership to facilitate engagement. Moreover, promotional materials and invitations should explicitly communicate accessibility and inclusion to encourage participation from those who might normally abstain due to various barriers.

Legal mechanisms should be established to validate the legitimacy of local deliberative processes, enhancing their implementation and effectiveness at the local level. Cities should aim for the long-term engagement of previously excluded groups, ensuring that economic and social structures do not perpetuate exclusion. When allocating resources for improving democratic participation, a portion should be directed towards developing tools to mitigate access barriers, directly addressing the white and Western biases in current participatory and deliberative tools and methods. This strategy aims to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for participation globally.

Regarding **power and hierarchy**, the recommendations suggest that decentralisation of power could foster a more open and participatory environment, enabling various stakeholders to participate in institutional transformations. This approach, akin to the collaboration between science and public institutions seen in City Science Offices, suggests that breaking away from

traditional power structures and promoting "deliberation by law" could lead to more equitable discourse, even if the initial processes are not inherently inclusive.

True inclusion requires active encouragement from leadership levels to not only invite individuals into deliberative forums but also to help them recognise the importance of their contributions, thereby building trust and ensuring that the process of inclusion does not foster dependency or a state of "learned helplessness." To engage stakeholders who might resist sharing power, such as major developers, cities should promote outcome contracting in research and innovation as a means to demonstrate the benefits of participatory practices to the private sector, encouraging a shift in behaviour towards more collaborative and deliberative engagement.

Deliberative processes should be designed to provide a safe and robust framework for political engagement, incorporating trusted facilitation, sufficient time for the process to develop, multi-level governance cooperation to counterbalance plutocracy, and the use of random selection for participant representation. This approach not only aims to empower citizens within the democratic process but also to ensure that deliberation becomes a tool for genuine inclusion, breaking free from traditional power dynamics and enabling a more engaged, informed, and participatory community.

Mainstreaming participatory and deliberative practices requires a cyclical process that begins with a recognised will and need to engage in such methods, followed by rule-setting, experimentation, and continuous listening and dialogue processes, including assemblies, councils, planning for real, focus groups, and storytelling practices. This cycle leads to a joint learning process that further institutionalises these practices by integrating them into local decision-making structures and administrative law. Effective communication, reporting back to the community about the results of their involvement, and clear presentation of the outcomes and benefits of these practices are essential to increase their legitimacy.

For **tools, techniques, and methods**, the recommendations focus on understanding the barriers that prevent marginalised groups from participating and avoiding methods that may exacerbate dissatisfaction. Targeted outreach, the use of technology to facilitate anonymous and flexible participation, and the provision of practical support like childcare, transportation, and translation services are highlighted as means to enhance inclusiveness and accessibility.

4.4 Looking for Signals of the Future of Democracy

Members of the EUARENAS Community also enriched the project's foresight work involving the analysis of social media signals to explore the future of democracy across Europe. Social media provides a glimpse into current debates and topics pertinent to European social sphere and communities. A number of CoP members were involved in the analysis of content in particular social media accounts, particularly those associated with civil society and social movements. This social media analysis for the identification of future signals was carried out in Italy, Germany, Finland, the UK and Poland. Social media and foresight activities were the basis for the development of future trends and scenarios, which were complemented with policy stress-testing approaches. Selected CoP members were again part of a Pan-European group of experts tasked to carry out that policy-stress of the scenarios. The results of this entire process have been reported in the **Future Scenarios Report** (see below).

4.5 Improvement of EUARENAS deliverables

The **Handbook for Successful Deliberation** (not an official EUARENAS Deliverable) being prepared by SWPS and emerging from conceptual development work, benefitted from an exploration of the CoP's understanding and application of participatory governance concepts. During the Knowledge Exchange Workshop 2, key differences between the ideal and actual deliberative processes were critically examined, revealing disparities central to the project's objectives. This engagement underscored the importance of aligning theoretical constructs with the nuanced realities of contemporary democracies, suggesting a shift towards a more contextual understanding of participation and deliberation shaped by the political and social landscapes.

Feedback on the handbook during its presentation highlighted the need for a distinct perspective that prioritises relationships over institutions and emphasizes the roles of leaders in deliberation. Discussions prompted a reconsideration of the handbook's structure, advocating for a narrative-driven approach that integrates practical examples before theoretical explorations. This approach, enriched by CoP members' contributions, aims to make the handbook more accessible and relevant. Additionally, suggestions for a logical, methodologically sound content presentation were taken into account, focusing on clarifying and reordering certain elements to better meet the diverse needs of its readership.

The piloting of innovative deliberative and participatory approaches in Reggio Emilia, Voru, and Gdansk serves as a practical exploration of multi-actor methodology in enhancing urban governance. These pilots, conducted in collaboration with academic and civil society partners, offer a real-time insight into the unfolding participatory processes within these European cities. Reggio Emilia focuses on integrating neighbourhood councils into the city's decision-making framework, Voru experiments with political hackathons for collaborative policy-making, and Gdansk utilises participatory workshops for urban planning. An **Evaluation and Monitoring Report (D4.2)** capturing the initial outcomes and methodologies of these pilots reveals the project's action-research approach and seeks to draw actionable insights from these diverse urban experiments.

The initial feedback highlighted a lack of clarity in the overall approach towards cross-case analysis, prompting the EUARENAS partners to seek further reflection and incorporate insights from other work packages, notably those focusing on theoretical foundations and case studies. This collaborative, reflective process led to a strategic shift in the report's orientation, prioritising a detailed presentation of the action research process, methodology, and preliminary results over the initial list of evaluation questions.

Some photos: