

GIVING VOICE (AND POWER) TO CITIZENS IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

by the City of AGEN | June 2022





Summary

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- Why did Agen decided to work on participatory democracy ?
- What was the situation in Agen when starting the project in 2019 ?

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- A unique case of 'public service delegation contract
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INTEGRATION LEVEL

Local
context



AGEN

SHORT PRESENTATION OF THE CITY



SOME DATA...

- Country = France
- Region = Nouvelle Aquitaine
- Province = Lot et Garonne
- Area= 11,49 km2
- Population = 33 569 hab



SOME FACTS...



Agen is situated on the edge of the Garonne river, between Toulouse and Bordeaux Metropolis.

The name of Agen is associated with the prune : "Pruneau d'Agen" produced in Lot et Garonne.

Agen is famous for its rugby team SUA Rugby playing in first league (top 14).

Agen is part of the Occitan culture and Occitan language.

Agen has a rich surrounding terroir that gives the gastronomy, erected in true lifestyle, all its identity and inspires cooks and great chefs.



Why did Agen decide to work on participatory democracy ?

The initiative comes from Jean DIONIS DU SEJOUR, mayor of the city, who innovated by setting up Neighborhood Councils in his city without being obliged to do so.

Through this approach, the Agen municipality wanted to involve the inhabitants in the decision-making process. Composed of 23 polling stations, the city of Agen has created 23 neighborhood council associations in charge of their territory. 9 volunteers in each territory were democratically elected by their neighbors for a period of 6 years. The first councils were created in 2008 and renewed in 2014 by deliberation of the municipal council. The role of the Neighborhood Councils is to define, in conjunction with the inhabitants, the development actions of the district, to bring up the requests for daily proximity and to organize animation actions in the district. To do this, each district council has been allocated, for the first 6 years of mandate, its own budget amounting to €375,000 per district. In the 23 districts of the city, 23 district contracts were signed by the mayor and the elected members of the district councils. It is both to share its experience and improve its system that the city of Agen decided to apply for the Urbact program on the theme of participatory democracy.

The very unique format of Agen's Neighborhood Councils demonstrates a strong desire to give citizens more power and space in the city's decision-making. The mandate that was given to citizens was bold and shows a real ambition to move towards more participatory processes.

The Neighborhood Councils of Agen have proven to be effective, but it still can be improved.

What was the situation in Agen when starting the project in 2019 ?

➤ Neighborhood Councils

CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

In 2008, in order to provide answers in terms of participatory democracy and to improve on all questions of local works, the City of Agen decided to create Neighborhood Councils, even though there is no legal framework for it. compelled to do so.

The idea was to bring out representatives in each district, having for the inhabitants the legitimacy to act.

Size of Neighborhoods

For the sake of proximity, the City of Agen has been divided into several comparable "district-villages".

To do this, it was decided to create small neighborhoods based on the 23 existing polling stations.

The reason for this method is that the polling stations divide the city into equal parts of the population: between 1000 and 1500 people, thus making it possible to obtain neighborhoods on a human scale.

Thus, in 2009, the city was divided into 23 District Councils organized into associations (Law 1901). The Neighborhood Councils therefore administer themselves independently.

ABOUT AGEN

- Prefecture of the Lot et Garonne
- Area= 11,49 km²
- Population = 33 569 hab
- Population density = 2 921 hab/km²
- Demographic profile : Average age: 40 years old, 46,4% male, 53,6% female, 12,4% of immigrants
- Employment levels : 8% unemployment rate
- Functional Urban Area : Small urban area
- Political situation : Mayor : Jean Dionis du Séjour (centre-right – liberal) for 14 years (3 mandates : 2008-2014-2020)

« Finally, those who know their neighborhoods best are the people who live there. »

*Jean DIONIS DU SEJOUR
Mayor of Agen*

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION WITH CITIZENS ABOUT URBAN PLANNING CHOICES

District Council elections by universal suffrage

After various exchanges on the mode of organization, the democratic solution was retained, which is why the District Councils of Agen are elected by universal suffrage.

The inhabitants of each district put together lists made up of 9 inhabitants of their district, then elections are organized in each district and the citizens vote in their respective polling station for a list of 9 volunteer citizens.

Thus, 207 citizens (9 in each of the 23 districts) are elected by universal suffrage throughout the city to “represent” the fellow citizens of their district.

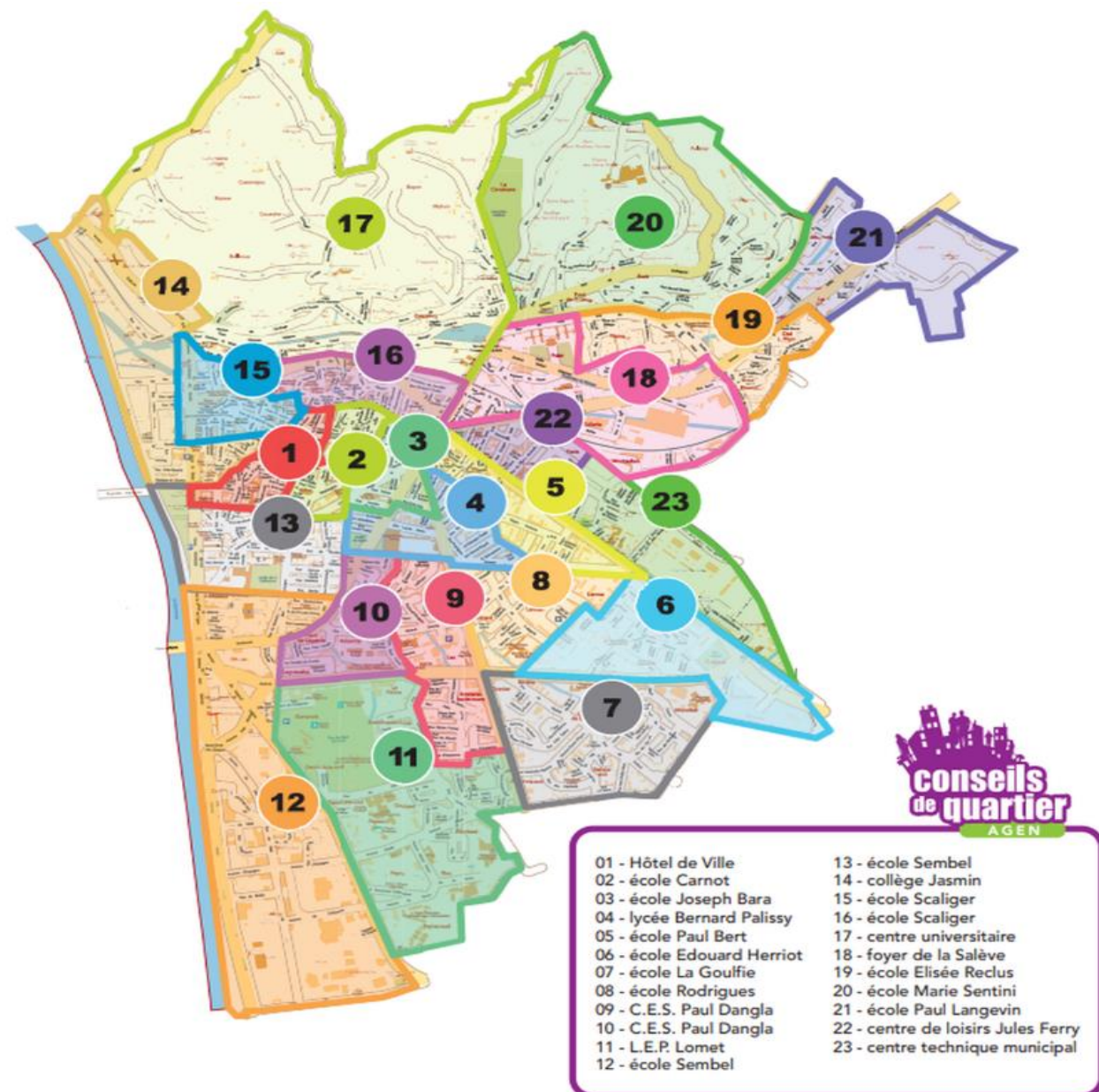
On average, the participation rate was about 25% during the first mandate and 17% for the second mandate. The last elections showed a participation rate of 23%, it should be noted that they were organized, for the first time,

with the possibility for residents to vote online, by post or at the polling station. Each mandate of the District Councilors is 6 years (identical to the mandate of the Mayor).

[Website link](http://www.agen.fr)



www.agen.fr



Neighborhood Contracts and a dedicated Municipal budget

As soon as they were set up, the Agen municipality decided to give the District Councils a specific area for their mandate: to define, in conjunction with the inhabitants, the development actions for the district. This task, usually carried out by the road services of the city administration, was entrusted to the citizens as well as the budget provided for this purpose.

This is how each Neighborhood Council was assigned: the management of a budget of €375,000 for the 6-year mandate, i.e. more than €8 million in total, and how to spend it on develop their neighborhood, i.e. which streets to renovate, which sidewalk to transform, etc.

In order to formalize this financial autonomy, each Neighborhood Council has signed a Neighborhood Contract with the City. This Neighborhood Contract takes the form of a 6-year agreement with the city whose commitment made by the Agen Municipality is that the City of

Agen will not intervene at any time in the choices made by the Neighborhood Councils.

Each year an annual physical meeting is organized during which an evaluation is made with the elected officials of the Municipality. The Neighborhood Councils decide on the works to be carried out, the streets they wish to renovate (and how they wish), then they give their decisions to the city administration which checks the feasibility of their requests and launches the construction works .

This form of “public service delegation” to the citizens was an internal revolution (within the city administration) because the “powers” of the road service were

suddenly entrusted to the citizens. The District Councils therefore have both the power to decide on the maintenance program as well as the allocated budget.

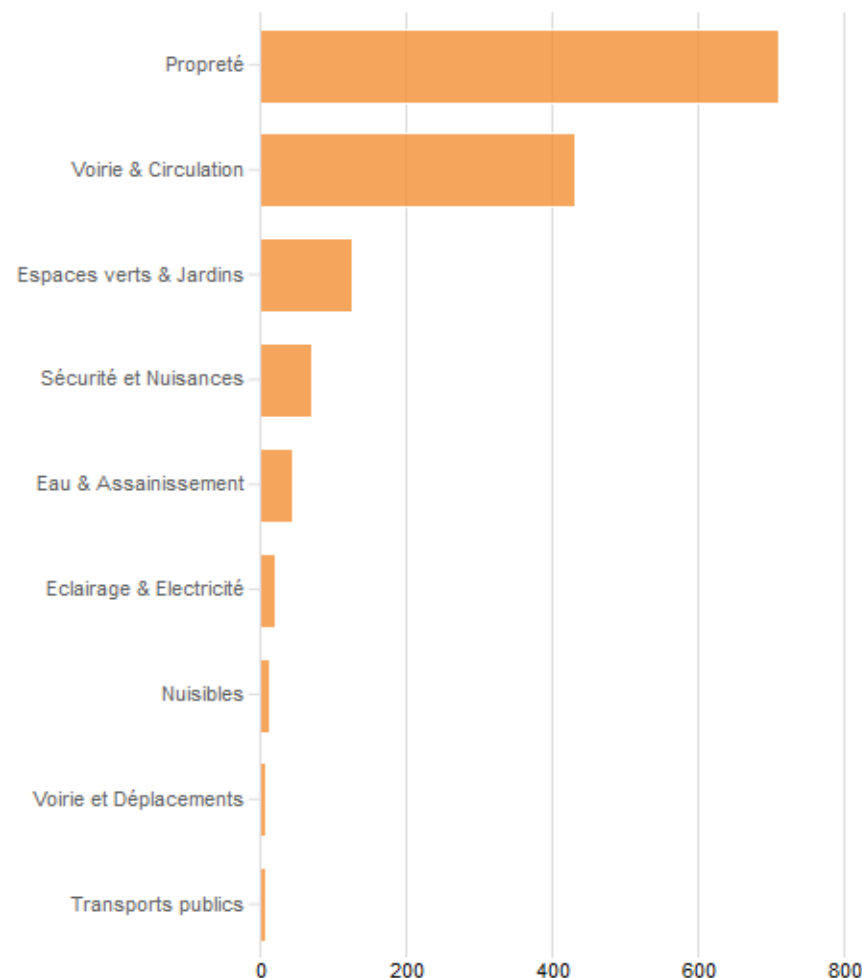
The Municipality of Agen supports the Neighborhood Councils in their procedures through elected Neighborhood referents. Initially 1 elected official of the Municipality was dedicated to each of the districts, but for reasons of improving the dialogue between elected officials and District Councilors, but also for a better consideration of the needs, it is now 4 elected officials of the City who are in charge of this follow-up as elected Neighborhood Referents on all 23 Neighborhood Councils.



➤ Tell my City : Application for the citizens of Agen

- Tell my city is a free citizen application deployed to the entire population of Agen since May 2018.
- Thanks to this device, citizen can alert the service in charge of the neighborhoods about problems they could be faced with.
- The service in charge of the neighborhoods deals with every reported case and inform the competent service related to the problem reported.
- The first year (2019), about 2000 reports were processed, with an average of 45 reports per week.
- Today, over 3000 reports are processed per year, with an average of 60 reports per week.

[Website link](#)



Distribution of reports by category



Lead Expert Analyse

Elements from the Baseline Study

European Lead Expert analyze

CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

The city of Agen has a relative stable political situation since 2008 because the current Mayor has been re-elected for a 6 years long second mandate in 2014. The last election were won directly in the first round with 52% of votes. Locally, the Mayor appears to have a relatively good support from citizens however, citizens' relation to democracy and governance has to be analyzed, especially in France, through a wider perspective meaning at national level also. Like in most EU countries, trust in municipal governments is higher than in national government but in France, this gap is big. French people trust local governments way more than their national government (France is amongst the EU countries with the lowest trust level in their national government) which might be the reason why France is well-known for its regular strikes and demonstrations movements. Lately, France has been profoundly shocked by the Yellow vests movement since October 2018 (which initially started with the rise of fuel prices). The Yellow vests movement targeted the national government but took place at local level, in every city, every village. Not only this popular movement showed the growing discontentment of citizens against the French government but also the way politics were made in general. Therefore, the implementation of Citizens' initiative referendums for example were amongst the demands of the Yellow Vest movement asking for more democracy. This episode of French democracy has literally influenced the politics at all levels who were 'forced' to realize that they needed to urgently and better connect with their citizens. This has to be taken into account to understand the citizens' relation to governance and democracy in France. Locally, however, it is important to mention that the Mayor of Agen has already, in 2009, implemented citizens neighborhood councils as a way to give more power to citizens in the city maintenance.

Elements from the Baseline Study

European Lead Expert analyze

A UNIQUE CASE OF 'PUBLIC SERVICE DELEGATION CONTRACT'

In 2009, in Agen, the Mayor decided to create Citizens Neighborhood Councils (no legal framework forced him to do so). In order to divide the city into roughly comparable 'neighborhoods'. To do so, he decided to create the neighborhoods based on the 23 existing polling places (voting bureau). This method was used because the polling places divide the city into equal population portions (between 1000-1500 people). This is how, in 2009, the city was divided into 23 Citizens Neighborhood Councils. Elections were ran in every single neighborhood and citizens had to vote for a list of 9 volunteer citizens. 207 citizens (9 in the 23 neighborhoods) were elected all over the city to 'represent' their fellow citizens. The average voter turnout was around 25% during the first mandate and 17% for the second mandate (each mandate is 6 years long for both the Mayor and the citizens of the neighborhood councils). The Mayor decided to give to the Citizens Neighborhood Councils one key specific mandate: to decide upon the city street maintenance agenda. This task, usually performed by the Road Department (or Road Maintenance) of the city administration, was given to the citizens together with the maintenance budget. Each Citizens Neighborhood Council has to decide upon a given budget of 375 000€ for the 6 years long mandate (so over 8 Millions Euros in total) and what to do with it, meaning which street to renovate, which sidewalk to transform, etc. Each council has an official convention with the city and every year there is an annual face to face meeting in which there is an assessment done with elected representatives. The councils decide which street they wish to renovate (and how they want it) then give their decisions to the city administration who then check the validity of the demand and launch the construction works. This form of 'public delegation contract' to citizens has been an internal revolution (within the city administration) as part of the 'powers' of the road maintenance department were suddenly taken away and given to the citizens meaning both the power to decide upon the maintenance agenda as well as the construction budget.

Elements from the Baseline Study

European Lead Expert analyze

10 years later, the experience has proven to have at least 3 key positive effects :

1. No neighborhood is forgotten

Before the creation of the Citizens Neighborhood Councils, the Road Maintenance Department was decided upon what works to do, which street to renovate, etc. 'This year, we will renovate the north district of the city'. This 'arbitrary' way of deciding upon what and where to renovate the streets often meant that some neighborhoods would not be renovated for years and years because the technical services did not judge it necessary to renovate them. With this new way of doing, every single neighborhood benefits from some renovations since each neighborhood as a council to decide what to do and the budget that goes with it to run the construction works. There is no more 'forgotten' neighborhoods.

2. Citizens' reactivity versus city's technical services' reactivity

A city is made of hundreds of streets, from large avenues to small alleys. Of course, the technical services can hardly keep an eye on every street and before they realize that something need to be repaired in that small alley behind the shopping street it may take some time. On the other side, when it is up to citizens to decide (or at least to the Neighborhood Councils), identifying and monitoring problems is way faster because the citizens actually live there, in those streets. They are, therefore, way more reactive as they can report every single problem very quickly (and fix it since they have the power to decide to do so).

Unmounted paved stones, a bended street sign, a broken bench... can therefore be quickly fixed (at least faster now than it used to).

3. Building upon citizens' ideas and expertise

Agén has several stories to share in which the citizens' inputs have been able to unblock some situations that the city's administration was not able to fix. As an example, they told the story, of a school entrance which was quite dangerous at the beginning of the school in the morning and its ending at the end of the day with all the kids, parents and cars all concentrating on the sidewalk and the street. The technical services of the city as well as elected officials worked for weeks on the subject without coming up with a solution until the concerned Citizen Neighbourhood Council was consulted and got an idea that no one even considered in the city administration and which ended up being a proposal which solved the problem (the solution consisted in moving the school entrance location towards a surrounding street and defining a pedestrian-prior area). Building upon citizen's ideas and expertise proved several times to be quite meaningful for the city administration.

Elements from the Baseline Study

European Lead Expert analyze

However, drawbacks, or at least, things to fix and improve are plethoric. Indeed, we have observed that the members of the Citizens Neighborhood Councils never received any proper training not only about road maintenance but also about participatory processes. Therefore, some councils are very pro-active in collecting the needs, requests and ideas of their fellow neighbors (by having a permanent office opened once a week to welcome whoever has a concern to share with the neighborhood council) while others do not gather citizens' opinions beyond informally encountering them in the street. Some councils even admit taking decisions all by themselves, since they have the 'power' to do so. Indeed, the city administration does not request them to conduct any formal process of consultation or concertation of the other citizens. This means that, in a way, the members of the councils are like 23 'mini-mayors' who can take decisions by themselves or consult their fellow neighbors if they wish to, but in any case, it's up to them to decide what and how they want to do it (one president of council has openly told us that he was happy when he could take decisions alone by himself... which of course is a quite questionable remark when we aim at greater democracy...). Finally, the process of election is also definitely not satisfactory in terms of democracy as most neighborhoods had around 20% of voters only, which means that the legitimacy of the citizens councils is quite fragile and replicating the same limitations that regular elections already have (which is at the source of the weakness of representative democracy – meaning low voter turnout therefore weak legitimacy of elected representatives). It is also important to mention that, since this is entirely volunteer work for the citizens, there is a very weak representation of the population as nearly all of the members of the councils are around 70 years old.

To conclude, this case of 'public service delegation to citizens' is inspiring on many aspects but need further improvements and refining. Amongst the possible challenges to be solved, we have:

- the current process of election
- the low diversity of the councils' members (esp. age)
- the absence of any form of training on the topic of road/urban maintenance
- the absence of any formal participatory process requested by the city administration

Elements from the Baseline Study

European Lead Expert analyze

A DIGITAL CONTRIBUTIVE PLATFORM FOR REPORTING INCIDENTS IN PUBLIC SPACES : TELL MY CITY

In 2018, the city of Agen has released an app called 'Tell my city'. This app is a public system allowing any citizen to report to the city services all forms of incidents, problems observed within the city such as potholes, broken streetlamps, illegal dumping of trash, etc. This platform allows citizens to post pictures of the problem, write a few lines to describe the problem and geo-localize the report. All reports are then automatically sent to the city administration where one person is in charge of going through all the reports and forwarding them to the right city departments (road maintenance department, waste department, etc.) for them to give a response: either the problem can be dealt with right away then a technical team is sent to remove the trash, to repair the sidewalk, etc., or the problem is identified but it will take some time before it can be solved (reasons are then given to the citizens who have done the report).

Within 10 months, the city has received 1430 reports, showing the growing success of this tool. In order to inform citizens about this contributive platform, the city administration has developed a dissemination strategy composed of 3 aspects: first, all over the city, billboards show a campaign against 'incivilities' and below each ad there is an invitation to join and report problems through the Tell my city app, second, the local press and the website of the city promotes the app, third, every citizen who contacts the city administration or shows up at the city hall to report a problem is invited to join the Tell my city app. Civil servants even show citizens how the app works and help installing it on people's smartphones, in order to enable and train them to use it (increasing this way the number of citizens using it). After one year and a half of the existence of the app, 70% of reports from citizens are now done through the Tell my City app. This good result is also to be put in relation to the fact that the city actually answers to the reports and really solve the problems (they have put in place a real back office system of report management as well as internal processes allowing good communication in between the different city departments).

In itself, the Tell my City app is an interesting case of use of a digital tool to support citizens' contributions however it is not a 'participatory democracy' tool per say but rather what we could qualify as a 'contributive tool'. Indeed, citizens contribute to reporting and maintaining the city infrastructures but they are not involved in decisions or policies which could change the state of the situation (like the waste management, etc.). Even if the city identifies recurrent issues (which could reveal management or monitoring dysfunctions), there are dealt with internally only but citizens are not involved in the long-term process of solving the cause of the problems.

Elements from the Baseline Study

European Lead Expert analyze

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The situation of Agen demonstrates a clear political ambition of involving citizens in the governance of the city. Until now, it has mostly been around questions of city making (urban infrastructure) but has proven to be done at a very impressive level which is no-where-else to be found. The very unique format of the Agen Neighborhood Councils demonstrates a strong will to give citizens more power and space in city decisions making, even though it is one very specific topic: street maintenance. The mandate that has been given to the citizens is bold and show a real ambition of going towards more participatory processes.

The Citizens Neighborhood councils of Agen have proven to be quite effective – even though largely improvable – and appear as an inspiring case for the other cities of the network and beyond. Outside this inspiring case, the city of Agen has still a lot of room to experiment further with participatory processes which would go beyond the only scope of participatory city-maintenance.

This could mean, for example, to involve other citizens in larger or more strategic urban planning projects, as well as experimenting more participatory processes in policy-making and the design of public-services. In that regard, Agen can probably build upon an other interesting process done at the Maison Montesquieu (Agen's city-center Social Center) in which activities are entirely proposed, carried out and facilitated by the inhabitants themselves. 'We are already at a certain level of co-creation, or even co-decision, where the inhabitants go from the status of consumers of activities to that of actors and producers of activities' comments the former director of the Social Centre. In 2019, the Social Centre was visited 5000 times, counts 340 members and 73 volunteer citizens who run both recurring workshops and one-shot activities. 'The next step is to rethink the governance body of the social center in order to include citizens in this decision-taking body' comments Nicolas Castet, Active Citizens' network coordinator and former social center's director.

Stakeholders

Who are the stakeholders?

Developing participatory urban planning

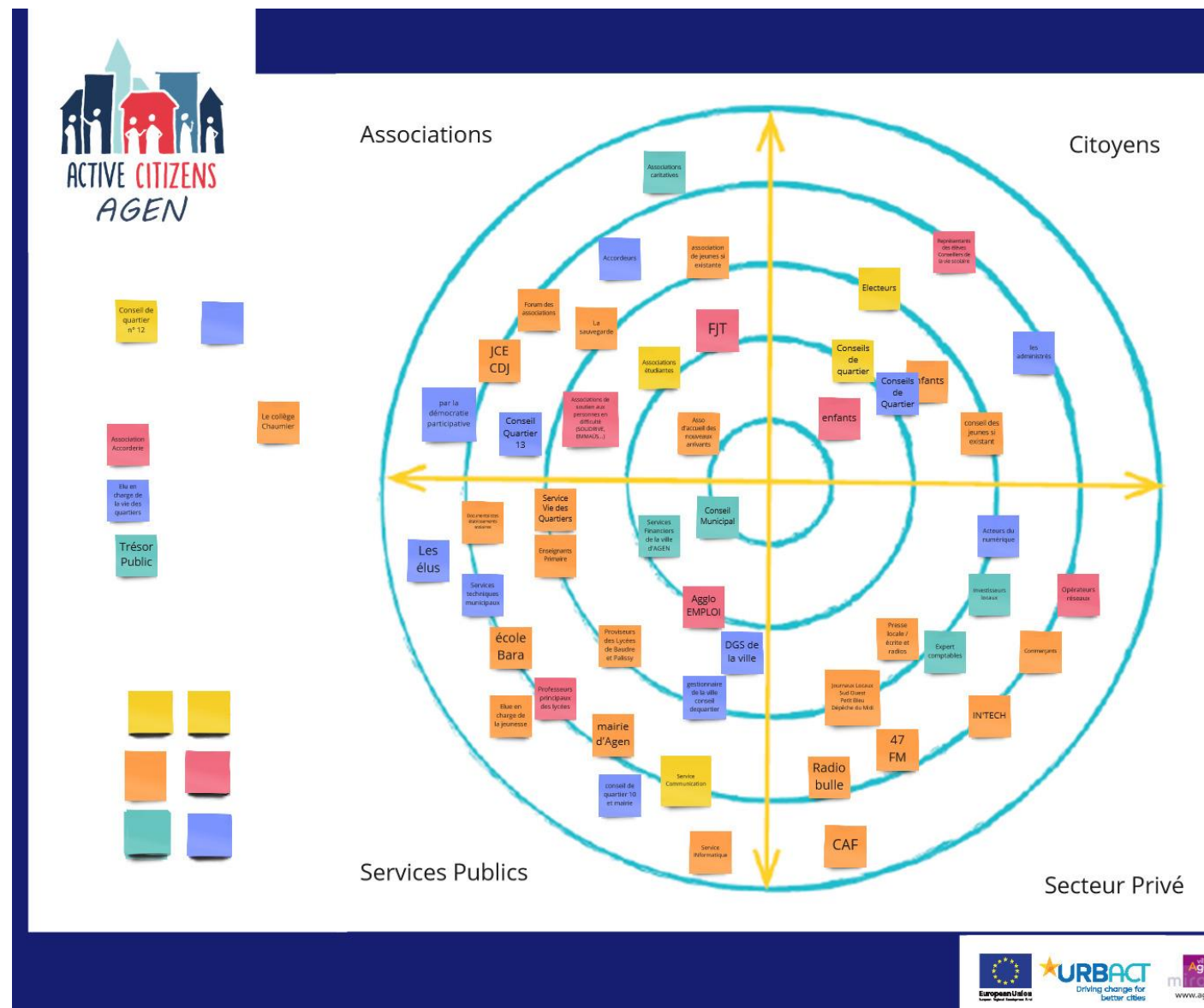
In order to develop our integrated action plan within the City, we need to embark as many stakeholders as possible from the city.

Starting with Elected officials, civil servants from the administration, but also other administrations like the agglomeration, the department or the Region of Nouvelle Aquitaine and also the state represented by the prefecture, schools and high schools.

In a democracy process we need to involve citizens of every age. Going from young children, through adolescents, young adults, adults and elderly people.

The city of Agen is composed with Neighborhood Councils associations, but also a variety of 600 associations within the city.

The private sector has also to be associated with local companies within the territory of the city and the Agglomeration through the Chamber of commerce.



Setting up an Urbact Local Group

Each partner city involved in an URBACT network needs to set up what is called an URBACT Local Group (ULG). Basically, it's **a group of local stakeholders who co-produce the city strategy and action plan together with the city administration**. Its composition is heterogeneous and includes, usually: civil servants, elected officials, NGOs & associations, private sector (entrepreneurs, shop owners, etc.), academia (researchers, professors, etc.) and of course, citizens. Each ULG is composed in a unique way. **It's up to each city to define who should be part of it based on the challenge they're trying to tackle. The ULG has to remain opened, as the project last for a long period, we know that some participants will leave, but others can join the group even during the progress of the project.** In [Active Citizens Agen](#), our city gathered the following people:

ACTIVE CITIZENS' AGEN ULG

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|--|
| 1. GIRARDI | Bertrand | (Elected official) |
| 2. ZAMBONI | Thomas | (Elected official) |
| 3. ROBIN | Vincent | (University lecturer in charge of Erasmus projects) |
| 4. DEROY | Julie | (Mixed syndicate Manager) |
| 5. LAMOUROUX | Olivier | (Agglomeration General Manager) |
| 6. LABONNE | Alexia | (Agglomeration Head of Health department) |
| 7. CHASTAGNOL | Manon | (Member of RotarAct Club and Youth Economic Chamber) |
| 8. AUDIGIER | Ivan | (Entrepreneur and writer) |
| 9. TIXIER | Jean-Paul | (President of an Association against pollution) |
| 10. GOBBINI | Daurine | (President of Youth Economic Chamber) |
| 11. SOUMIER | Pascal | (Member of a Neighborhood Council and Accorderie Association) |
| 12. BENNE | Jérôme | (Sports educator and members of Neighborhood Council) |
| 13. AYAVOU | Marie -Anne | (Teacher and member of Neighborhood Council) |
| 14. NILSSON | Elisabeth | (Retired Business Analyst and member of English Club Agen47) |
| 15. GUILLONNEAU | Arthur | (Civil Servant working at the Mayor's Cabinet at the City of Agen) |
| 16. ZAMPARO | Aude | (Social Center Manager) |
| 17. DELAPLANCHE | Patrick | (President of a Neighborhood Council) |
| 18. KASSEM | Alain | (Member of Youth Economic Chamber) |
| 19. BEAUJOUR | Sarah | (Member of a Neighborhood Council) |

LOCALLY INVOLVING PEOPLE TO THE URBACT LOCAL GROUP

In order to involve citizens from Agen in the project, a specific communication campaign was made. Every citizen interested were asked to write a civic cover letter and present a civic CV with their voluntary experience and volunteer involvement.



Every local group members were given a Citizen Booklet including :

- Urbact presentation (What is Urbact and the the 23 networks of Urbact III)
- Active Citizens Network Presentation (the project, the partners, the program)
- Citizens participation (Ladder of participation, Co-creation & co-decision)
- Urbact Local Group (What the group does, How it works, Phase 2 journey, Results of Baseline study)
- The 9 Sub-challenges of Active Citizens

AUX ACTES CITOYENS !

ACTIVE CITIZENS AGEN

#AUX ACTES CITOYENS !

Vous voulez participer à la vie de votre cité ?
 Vous souhaitez vous engager dans une démarche innovante ?
 Vous êtes intéressé par l'action publique ?

Rejoignez notre groupe de participation citoyenne !

Comment candidater ?

Une simple lettre de motivation de 10 lignes maximum et un CV citoyen retraçant votre expérience de bénévole sont à nous faire parvenir à l'adresse suivante : urbact@agen.fr

CO-CREATION
 Co-créer des politiques et des projets avec les citoyens dès la phase initiale de conception. Les solutions sont co-élaborées dès le départ.

CO-DECISION
 Faire des choix et prendre des décisions définitives ensemble, pouvoirs publics et citoyens, en mode partenarial.

Nous attendons votre participation au groupe Active Citizens Agen !

Renseignements :
 Nicolas CASTET
 Chargé de Mission URBACT
 Tél : 06 34 89 22 52
 E-mail : urbact@agen.fr

Logos at the bottom: European Union, URBACT, ville d'Agen, DINS LAKENI, HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ, SAINT QUENTIN, and others.

Challenges for Agen

The Active Citizens' challenges

During the first six months of the network, the lead expert and lead partner of the project went on field visits in all partners cities in order to build a state of the art as well as draw each city profile. The results were put together in a document called the Baseline study. **In Active Citizens, the baseline study identified 9 challenges regarding participatory democracy:**

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Developing a culture of participation | 4. Building trust | 7. Listening to citizens and asking their opinions |
| 2. Enlarging and diversifying active citizens | 5. Developing participatory urban planning | 8. Supporting lively neighbourhood |
| 3. Co-creating solutions city & citizens together | 6. Bridging the gap between elected representatives and citizens | 9. Co-deciding upon public budget allocation |

Each city partner decided upon these 9 challenges which ones they wanted to tackle for their city.

The challenges chosen for Agen

[Video link](#)

01

Developing a culture of participation

Lack of volunteers in the life of the city

02

Enlarging and diversifying active citizens

Mainly elderly people who participate

03

Bridging the gap between elected representatives and citizens

Distrust of elected officials

04

Co-deciding upon public budget allocation

Criticism of the use of public money



Problem Trees

Analyzing the problems

8 décembre 2020

1

Développer une culture de participation

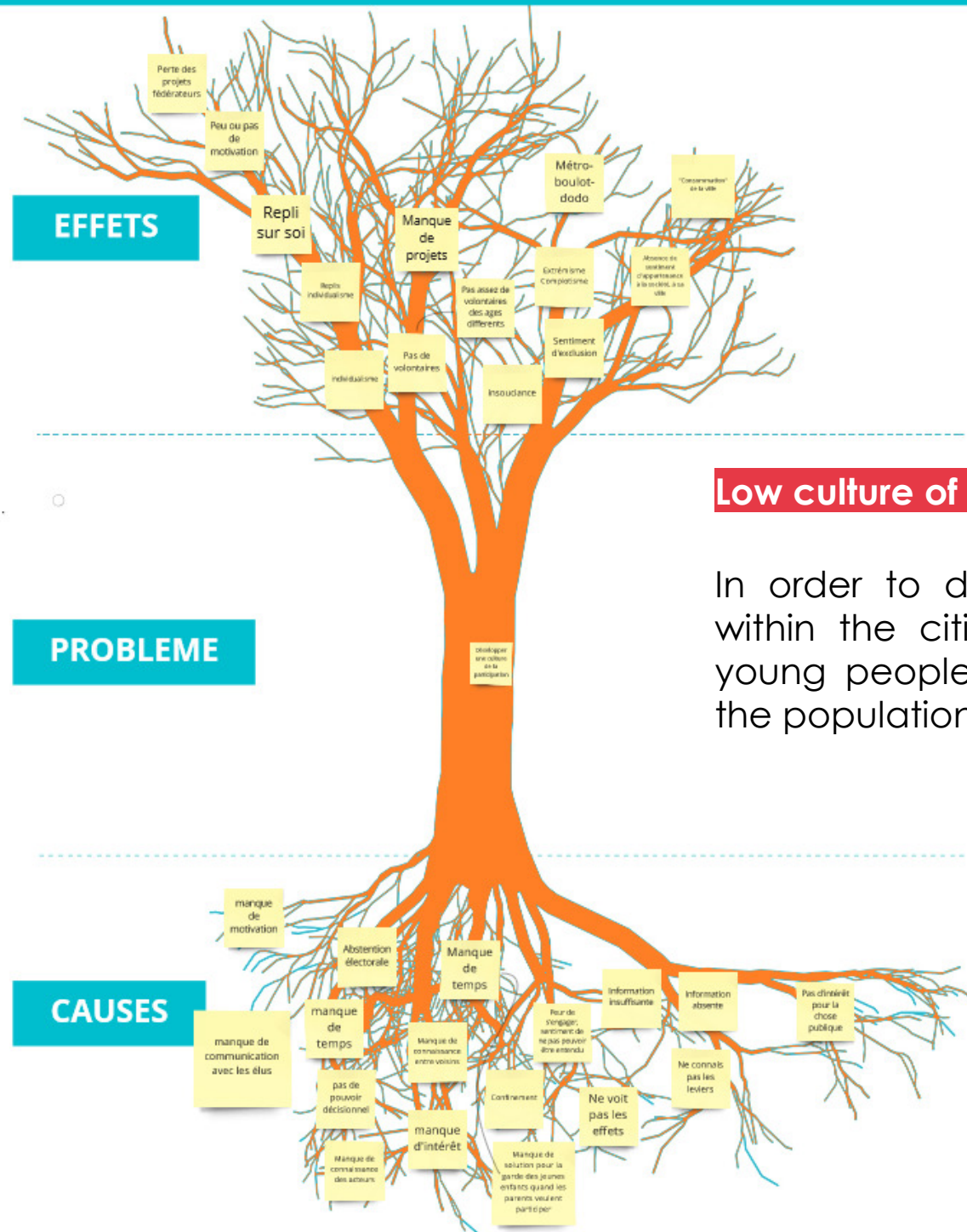


L'arbre à problèmes et objectifs n°1

Utilisez les post-its ci-dessous pour identifier les effets



Utilisez les post-its ci-dessous pour identifier les causes



Low culture of participation

In order to develop a culture of participation within the citizens, it is necessary to start with young people and associate all age groups of the population.

2

Utilisez les post-its pour identifier les causes et les effets (causes sur les racines et effets sur les branches)

Analyzing the problems

8 décembre 2020

1

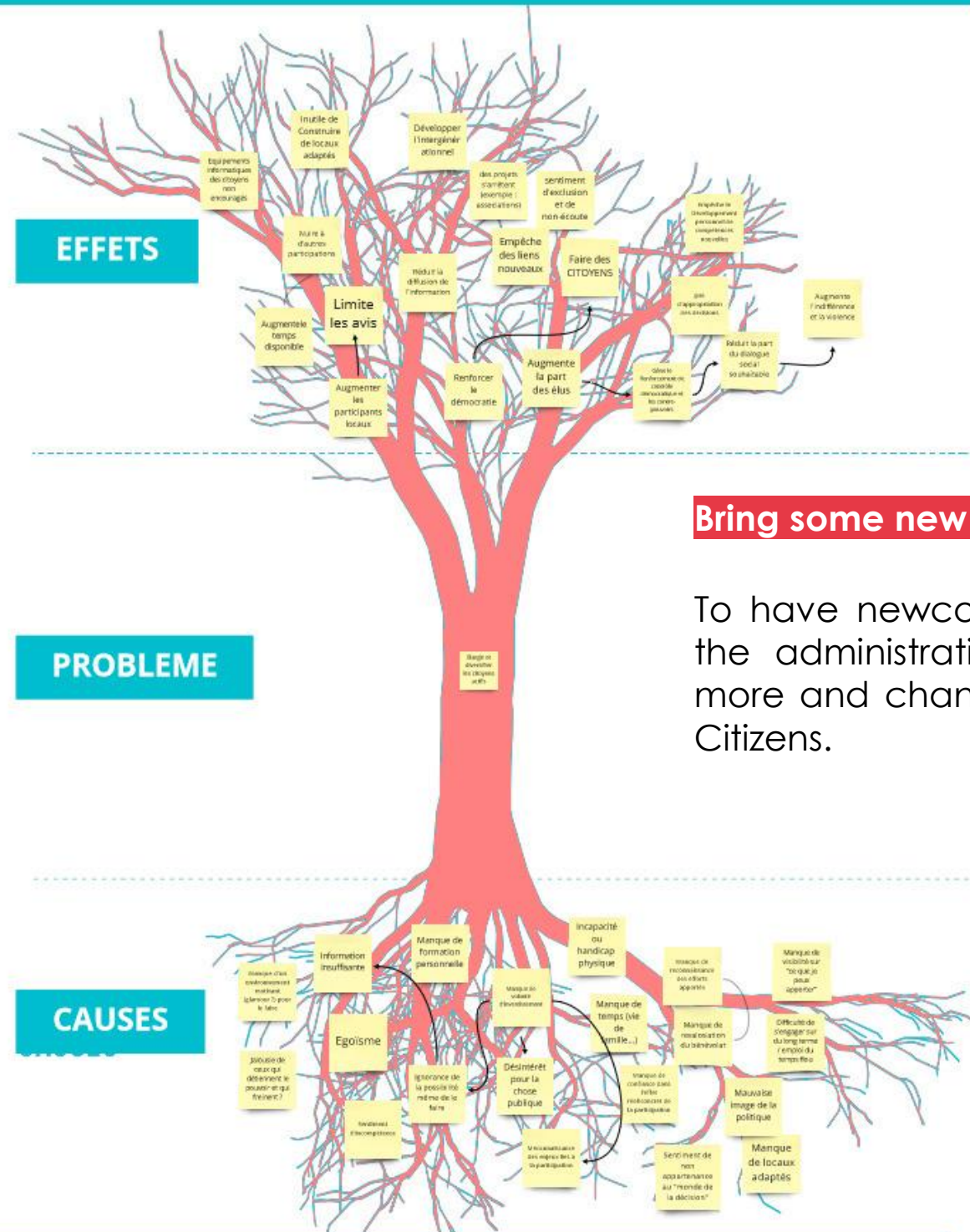
Élargir et diversifier les citoyens actifs

L'arbre à problèmes et objectifs n°2

Utilisez les post-its ci-dessous pour identifier les effets



Utilisez les post-its ci-dessous pour identifier les causes



Bring some new active citizens in the City

To have newcomers in participatory process, the administration needs to support citizens more and change its way of working close to Citizens.



2

Utilisez les post-its pour identifier les causes et les effets (causes sur les racines et effets sur les branches)

Analyzing the problems

8 décembre 2020

1

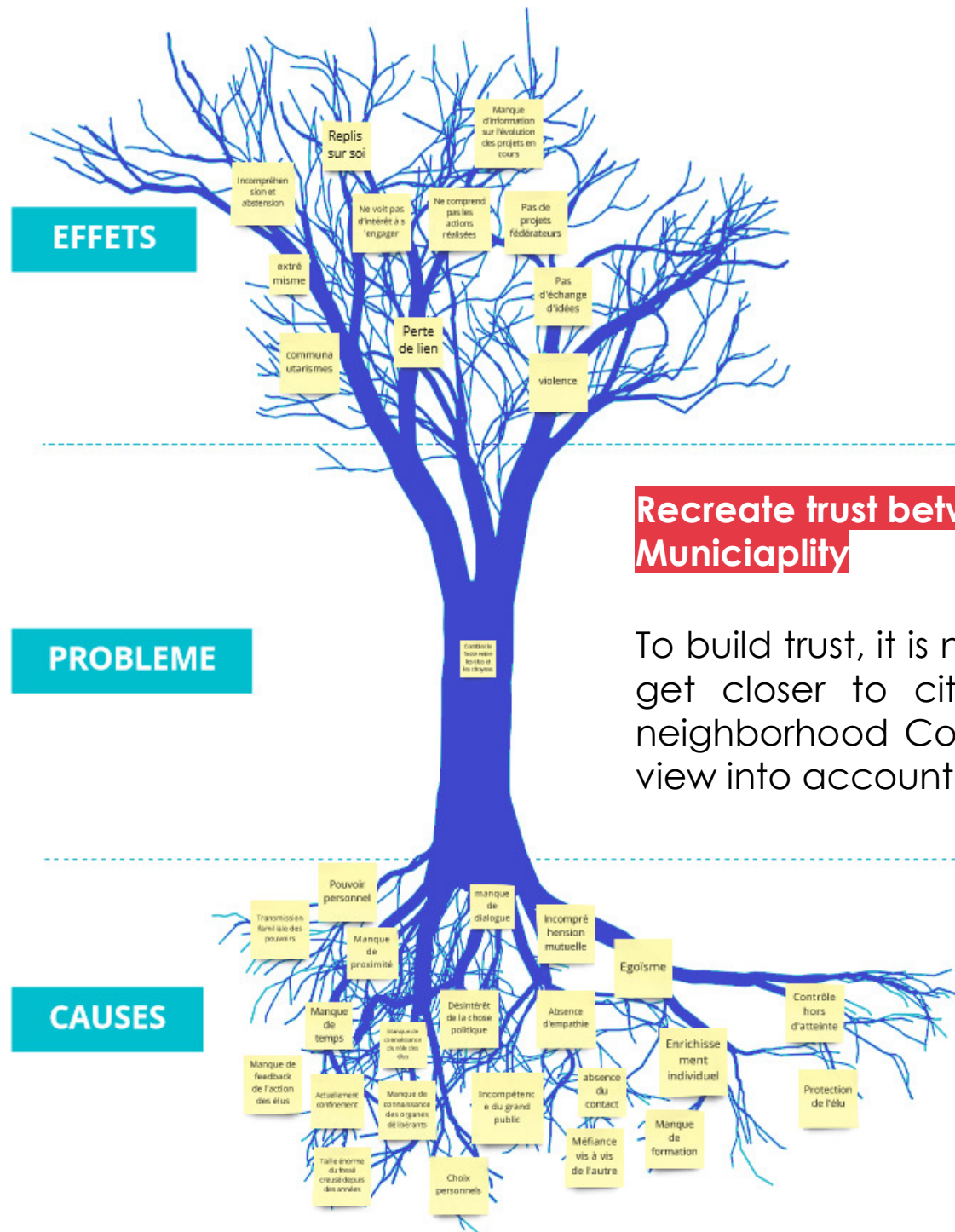
Comblent le fossé entre les élus et les citoyens

L'arbre à problèmes et objectifs n°3

Utilisez les post-its ci-dessous pour identifier les effets



Utilisez les post-its ci-dessous pour identifier les causes



Recreate trust between Citizens and the Municipality

To build trust, it is necessary for elected officials to get closer to citizens especially through the neighborhood Councils and take their point of view into account.



2

Utilisez les post-its pour identifier les causes et les effets (causes sur les racines et effets sur les branches)

Analyzing the problems

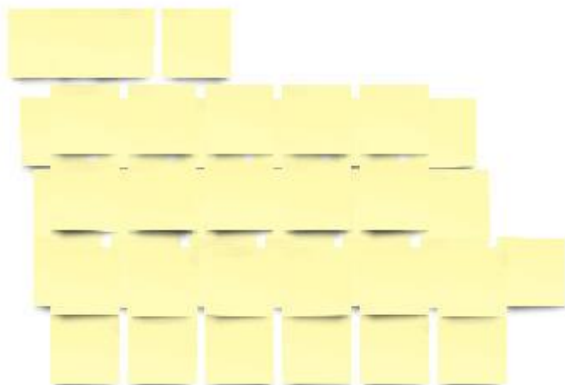
8 décembre 2020

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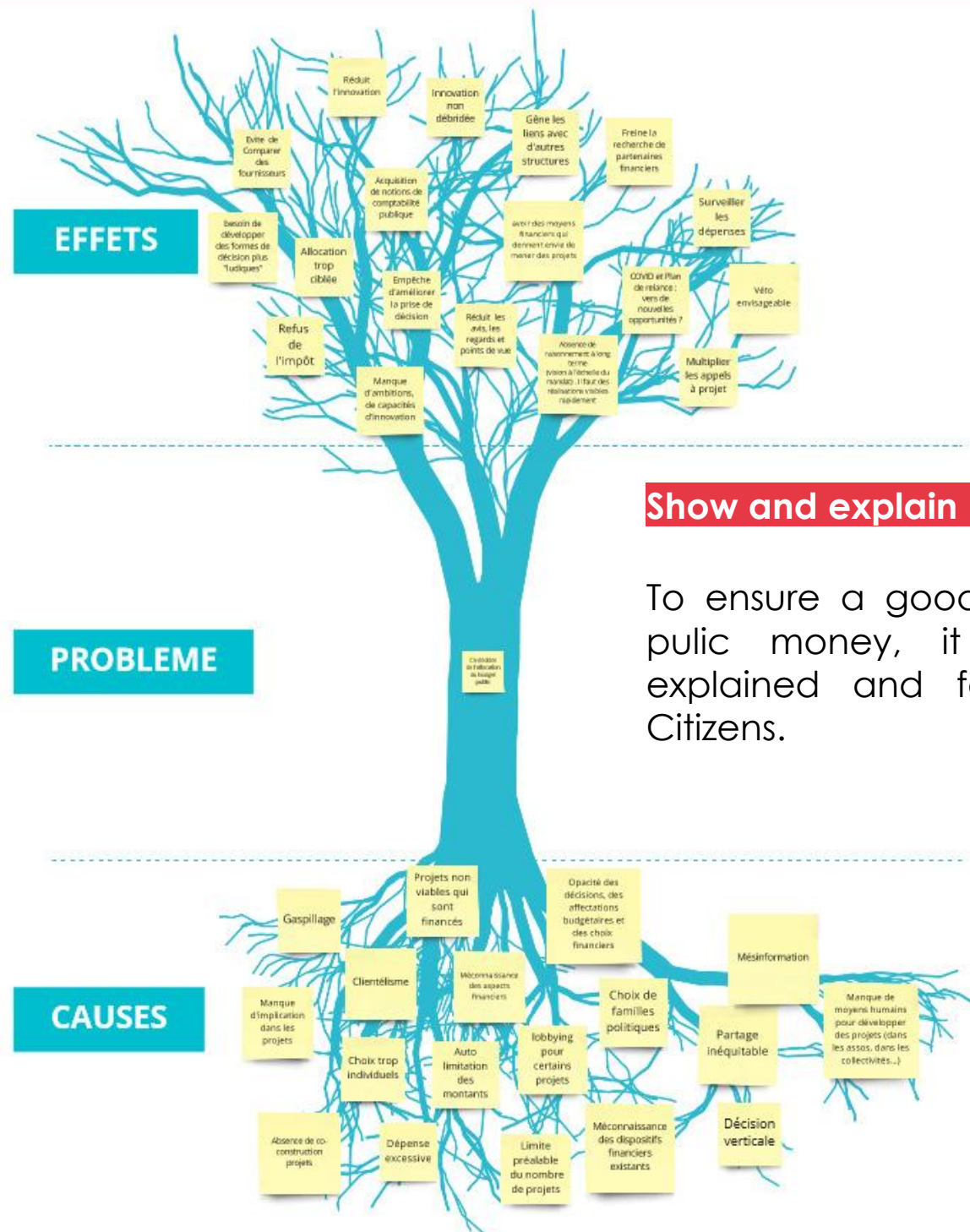
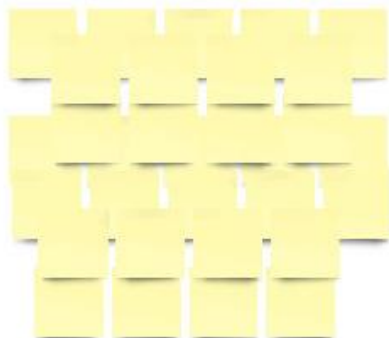
Co-décider de l'allocation du budget public

L'arbre à problèmes et objectifs n°4

Utilisez les post-its ci-dessous pour identifier les effets



Utilisez les post-its ci-dessous pour identifier les causes



Show and explain how public money is used

To ensure a good understanding of the use of public money, it has to be pedagogically explained and followed with facts close to Citizens.

2

Utilisez les post-its pour identifier les causes et les effets (causes sur les racines et effets sur les branches)

What do we want for Agen?

Our visions...

Agen has already a strong history with participation thanks to its **Neighborhood Councils** who are, since 2008, well known by Citizens and accepted by administration.

But things have to **be improved**, starting with ensuring that decisions taken by Neighborhood Councils are done in **collaboration with the Citizens** of the Neighborhood.

Decisions have to be shared from the start and every project has to try to take into account **Citizens's expertise of use** as a normal step in decision making.

Room has be left for **every layer of Citizenship**, from the youngest to the oldest inhabitants.

The **municipal action has to be understood and followed by citizens**, to allow them to give their opinion on what is decided according to projects or even use of public money.

New volunteers have to get engaged for the sake of the city and for the common good.

Their **envolvement has to be recognized, valued and appreciated**. They have to be supported by the municipality.

More **young people** have to get ingaged in participatory processes. As they will be citizens of tomorrow.

The Munciplality will take the participatory process into account and ensure that it is followed.

Video links :

[Vision 1](#)
[Vision 3](#)

[Vision 2](#)
[Vision 4](#)



A learning
journey

About Action Planning Networks

URBACT supports European cities to develop sustainable integrated responses to the pressing challenges they face today. It offers them a unique opportunity to learn from other peers in Europe in order to improve the way cities are managed.

URBACT networks foster the exchange of experience and good practice across cities, building urban stakeholders' capacity to develop efficient solutions. One could say that URBACT is a European incubator for sustainable integrated urban development enabling cities to benefit from the tried and tested URBACT Method.

The main objective of Action Planning Networks is to bring together between 7 and 10 cities across Europe to exchange their experience in a particular thematic urban development challenge (in our case Participatory democracy) and to share their ideas about possible solutions, during a period of over 2 years. The Phase 1 (from late June 2019 to February 2020) focused on the development of baseline studies, city profiles and the production of

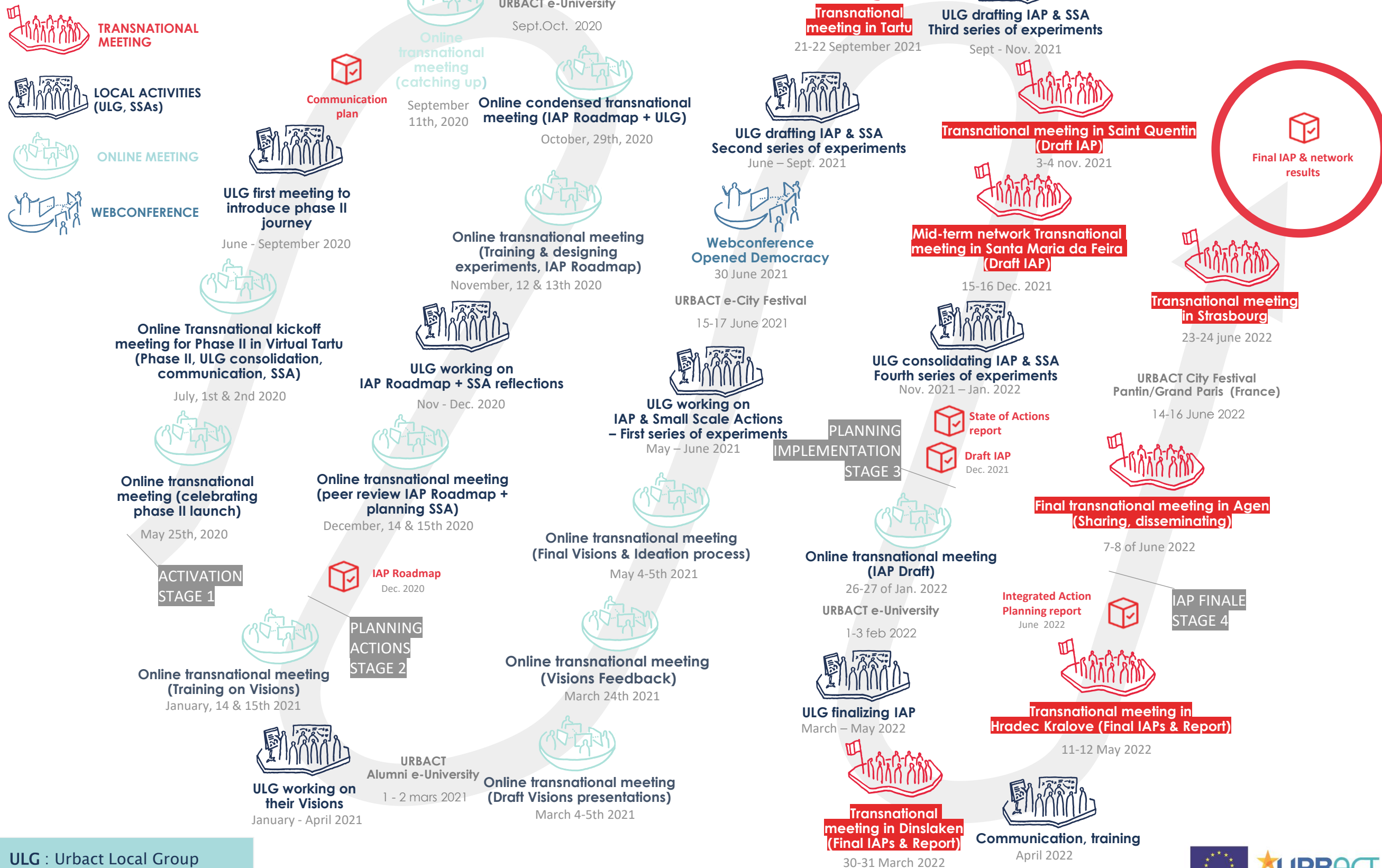
the Application Form for Phase 2. Once approved for Phase 2, the network then focuses on achieving 2 key results, co-creating their Integrated Action Plan together with their Urbact local group (ULG) at the same time as experimenting Small Scale Actions (SSA).

The whole Action Planning Network journey was therefore both an occasion for transnational exchange and learning in between different european cities at the same time as an occasion to explore, experiment and co-create an adhoc city strategy together with local stakeholders and citizens.

During that long and adventurous journey, Active Citizens' partner cities traveled around Europe 8 times, hosted the other cities in their own, experimented new ways of engaging citizens (Small Scale Actions) and built, locally, desirable visions of the future as well as co-created a concrete, ambitious, yet credible, action plan to implement greater participatory democracy locally.



Phase II Journey



ULG : Urbact Local Group
 SSA : Small Scale Action
 IAP : Integrated Action Plan



The Active Citizens Network

Active Citizens is a network composed of 8 medium and small cities of Europe : **Agen** (France), **Bistrita** (Romania), **Cento** (Italy), **Dinslaken** (Germany), **Hradec Kralove** (Czech republic), **Saint-Quentin** (France), **Santa Maria da Feira** (Portugal) and **Tartu Vaald** (Estonia).

It aims to work on **involvement and participation of citizens** in local governance. That is to say rethink the place of the citizens by finding a balance between representative democracy and participatory democracy.

Everyone acknowledges today that democracies around the world are increasingly challenged. The number of issues they have to face – and have difficulties to respond to (social justice, economic stability, climate change, etc.) – put our democracies at risk. On top of that, a growing number of people feel that they are not listened to or taken into consideration by policymakers. Citizens claim a right to have a say in public decisions, choices, and policies that are made.

This is where Active Citizens Network interferes in the **co-creation and co-decision** parts of the process. Our network wants to reflect on new ways of involving citizens in local life, how to ensure a durable engagement and empowerment of citizens.

Composed with **small and medium-sized cities** with the same expectations and similar challenges, the network also takes into account the new digital tools. And reflect on how to integrate citizens away or not comfortable with digital tools.

[Video Presentation link](#)



A Network scattered all over Europe

The Active Citizens Network is composed with small and medium sized cities with similar expectations from north to south and from east to west of Europe.

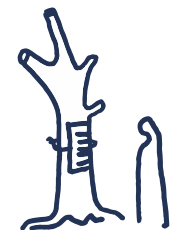
- **Agen** France
- **Bistrița** Romania
- **Cento** Italy
- **Dinslaken** Germany
- **Hradec Králové** Czech Republic
- **Saint-Quentin** France
- **Santa Maria da Feira** Portugal
- **Tartu Vald** Estonia



Working on specific levels of participation



GIVE MORE ROLE TO INHABITANTS IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE, BY CO-CREATING AND CO-DECIDING ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF LOCAL POLICIES



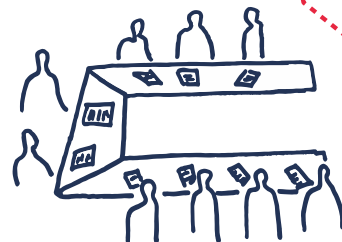
INFORMATION

Being informed, knowing what is going on, decisions that are made, discussed or planned to be made



CONSULTATION

Presenting ideas or plans to citizens to collect their opinions, reactions, concerns



CONCERTATION

Inviting representatives of citizens' interests or citizens to collect their views, negotiate and potentially adapt the original plans



CO-CREATION

Co-creating policies/plans together with citizens at the initial phase of design. Solutions are co-elaborated from the beginning



CO-DECISION

Making choices and taking 'final' decisions, is done by public authorities and citizens together, in partnership mode



DELEGATED POWER

Public authorities delegate to citizens the power of creation and/or decision. Citizens are granted authority

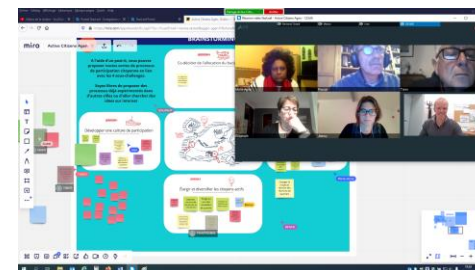


CITIZEN CONTROL

Citizens are in full control of power and decision. They are responsible and organized to manage that power

THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Being a Lead Partner in an Action Planning Network during Covid-19



Before being Lead Partner of an Urbact Network, the City of Agen was already used to international exchanges thanks to its solidarity action in Africa and its 4 twinnings all over the world.

As Lead Partner, Agen was engaged in supporting and following all the partners either in administrative matters but also in technical support with Synergie CTE or any other questions.

At the launch of the project, it was crucial to show to the Project Partners the spirit that the City of Agen wanted to give to its network. A real impulse has been given between times of work and times for the Network to create friendship links. These specific moments of sharing and knowing each others were as important as the sessions of work, because it allowed the Network to be strong, specifically when the Pandemic situation occurred.

After the first 6 months of diagnostic, carried out with the European Expert Christophe GOUACHE, the second phase of the project was validated by Urbact for 2 years of experimentations. It was during this period that the network went through the health crisis. This unprecedented situation forced Urbact and all of its networks to adapt.

Despite successive exceptional containment measures, the Active Citizens network continued its investigative work. Supported by Urbact, in particular through training in online collaborative tools (Zoom,

Miro, Typeform, etc.). Active Citizens was able to set up remote working times, both for transnational meetings and for meetings of local groups. This is how the network was able to meet regularly to ensure the continuation of its project.

No partner left the network, despite the difficult times when each city underwent national Covid-19 control plans at different intervals, doubt persisted, the second phase course was updated regularly, and some partners were victims of the virus only gave automatic responses because of positive cases within their department.

In order to maintain the unity of the group, the Expert and the Coordinator took care throughout the successive confinements to follow each partner, to ensure that no one was left behind and that all the cities were moving forward together in their respective work. The impetus given during the launch in Agen and the confirmation given in Cento enabled the network to withstand this exceptional situation.

Following Covid-19, the project deadline was postponed by 3 months by Urbact, to August 9, 2022. The network has remained solid, and the face-to-face reunion at the last Transnational Meeting in Tartu in September 2021 bears witness to this.

In the end, 9 transnational meetings, 10 online meetings and 13 local meetings were set up.

CITY OF AGEN (FR)

INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN ROADMAP



CHALLENGES (PROBLEM ANALYSIS)

WHAT? ULG of Agen selected the following challenges:

- Developing a culture of participation
- Enlarging and diversifying active citizens
- Bridging the gap between elected representatives and citizens
- Co-deciding upon public budget allocation

WHEN? September 2020

HOW? Context & problem analysis (problem tree) + stakeholder mapping

WHY? Making sure there is a collective understanding of the challenges and that those challenges are real (crucial/relevant) at city level.

Cross analysis between cities

ETATS GÉNÉRAUX OF NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCILS



IAP ROADMAP

WHAT? Co-draft your IAP roadmap with your ULG. "Do we agree that this will be the path we will follow in order to co-create our IAP?"

WHEN? November to December 2020

HOW? IAP roadmap template + Comparison with other cities

WHY? Making sure the path (roadmap) to follow in order to create the final IAP is clear for everyone.

Comparison of IAP roadmap with the other cities

ELECTIONS OF NEIGHBOURHOODS' COUNSELLORS



GENERATING IDEAS

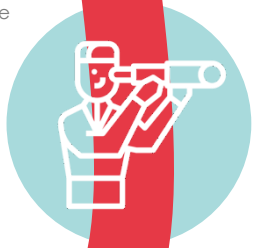
WHAT? What could we do to achieve our objectives, to make our vision a reality? What can we learn from our peers? What inspiring practices could we transfer to our local context? What could we invent?

WHEN? March-April 2021

HOW? Idea generation and SSA reflections.

WHY? Developing as many ideas as possible in order to respond to the objectives.

What are the ideas in the other cities?



VISIONING & OBJECTIVES

WHAT? What do you wish to achieve? What would the future situation look like once the challenges are solved? What are our objectives?

WHEN? January-February 2021

HOW? Vision building + objectives' description

WHY? Making sure we have a clear idea of what we would like to achieve, in the end, through our IAP + defining clear and tangible objectives.



EXPERIMENTING (TRY OUT) / SSA

WHAT? Could we experiment the most promising ideas in order to check whether they are relevant, feasible, worth developing? Can they really help solve our problems?

WHEN? April-September 2021

HOW? Small Scale Actions (on the ground experimentations)

WHY? Trying out ideas to check whether they are Proof of Concepts or not, evaluating their effects on our problems.

Peer to peer learning from other cities' SSAs



REFINE/ADJUST/FINETUNE

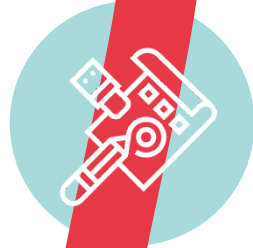
WHAT? What do we need to adjust, refine, finetune? What should we correct to increase efficiency, impact, quality? What should we improve or re-develop, re-think?

WHEN? September-November 2021

HOW? Small Scale Actions (on the ground experimentations)

WHY? Trying out ideas to check whether they are Proof of Concepts or not, evaluating their effects on our problems.

What are the learnings and adjustments in the other cities?



DRAFTING IAP

WHAT? Let's draft our Integrated Action Plan. What should we include into it? How does it integrate in the city policies (and beyond)? Is it realistic yet ambitious enough?

WHEN? December 2021-February 2022

HOW? IAP drafting

WHY? From all the things we've learn, what is feasible, reachable, meaningful in order to respond efficiently to our initial challenges. What are the actions we will need to put in place?

Reviewing and comparing with the other partner cities



SPREAD/COMMUNICATE

WHAT? Let's inform the world about our IAP. Publicise, spread, share your IAP.

WHEN? June-July 2022

HOW? Local/regional/national press + social networks, locals news, etc.

WHY? Make sure, that at city level, people know about your IAP, about your wish to officially develop and implement participatory democracy.



INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN (IAP)



FINALIZING IAP

WHAT? Is our IAP robust? Is our strategy bold yet implementable? Is it well integrated within the local politics and policies + regional and/or national ones?

WHEN? February-April 2022

HOW? Comparing local IAP with other cities' IAP, sharing the IAP locally for collective approval & support, securing political support

WHY? Are we sure our IAP is fine? Do we believe in it? Do we think it's both promising in terms of impact as well as reachable/feasible?



What did all the project brought so far for Agen ?

The Urbact project comes to an end on August 9, 2022. The last Transnational Meeting to close the project in the presence of all the partners of the Active Citizens network was scheduled in Agen early June 2022.

After more than 2 years of participation of the City of Agen in Urbact III, it is possible to note several advantages of the Urbact experience:

- The device allowed Agen to create a network with other cities of the same size with similar challenges.
- The common theme addressed of participatory democracy being the heart of operation of all Urbact networks, the Active Citizens network and therefore the City of Agen as leader was very challenged.
- Involvement in the project brought external expertise through Christophe GOUACHE, who was requested on numerous occasions by various departments of the city and the Agglomeration (DEAT, Mail, Social Centers, Legal).
- Thanks to this first experience, from now on, we know how Urbact works and we are able to manage or participate to a new Urbact network.
- Through Urbact, we benefit from an opening towards other European networks not explored until now.
- Participation in the Urbact network has highlighted the City of Agen, particularly in the context of the project with the Citizens' Councils at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, with a view to the future French Presidency.
- Thanks to this Project, the City of Agen is now solicited to take part in different new projects.



Small Scale Actions

[SSA]



What is a Small Scale Action?

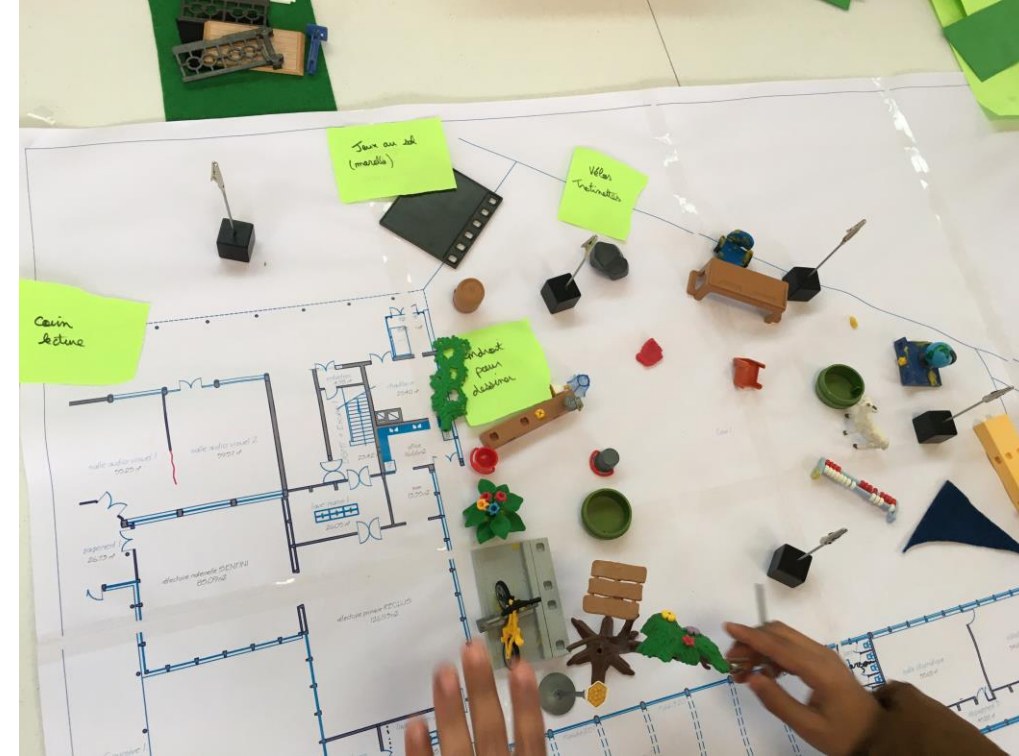
A Small Scale Action is an experimentation. It is an idea or a concept, perhaps already tried in another city, which can be tested to check the relevance, feasibility and added value of its implementation in different local contexts.

The Small Scale Actions are limited in time, scale and space and by their nature have the right to fail. Cities will be able to learn from these tests, measure the results and either adapt, upscale or reject actions to be included in the Integrated Action Plan based on this experience.



Proofs of concept

A Small Scale Action is an experiment aiming at being a Proof of Concept. **A Proof of Concept is an evidence, typically deriving from an experiment which demonstrates that an idea/concept is relevant, feasible and meaningful.** The principle is to 'try out' an idea in order to see if 'it makes sense and eventually works'. In Active Citizens, the Small Scale Actions allowed to try out some concepts in order to see the effects they produced but also potentially pre-identifying potential future actions to be integrated in the IAP.



Experiments done in Agen

Redevelopment of Square Chopin - Barnum and Cartography (Q10)

Meeting inhabitants - Voluntary Contribution Points (Q13)

Redevelopment of a schoolyard - Cartography (Elisée Reclus)

Citizen ideas of De Baudre high school students - Junior Chamber Economics

Participatory approach tool for young audiences for project leaders

Redevelopment of Place Armand FALLIERES - Videomaton

Citizen Ideas of Palissy High School Students – Videomaton

Training in citizen participation - agents & elected officials



Votre avis nous intéresse



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION N°1

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : **Action site development of a square (CQ n ° 10)**

Active Citizens challenge: **Co-decide on the allocation of the public budget**

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

Put a tent and games for kids in the square to meet citizens and exchange with them about the square and its future.

Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve?
What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

Wish to co-decide with the inhabitants of the actions that will be budgeted for on this square. This square is unoccupied today, the idea is to work with the inhabitants so that they appropriate this public space.

Date : 13th of november 2021

Cost : 1000€

[Video link](#)



Quel projet pour le square Chopin?
13 novembre 2021

Conseil de quartier n°10

ACTIVE CITIZENS

Votre avis nous intéresse

Square Chopin

Rejoignez-nous devant l'entrée du Square Chopin, le 13 Novembre de 14h00 à 17h30 pour discuter de ce projet autour d'un café.

En cas d'impossibilité de venir, vous pouvez remplir le questionnaire au dos et le déposer au 16 Rue Chopin ou nous l'envoyer par mail à concertation.squareQ10@gmail.com

ville d'Agén
www.agen.fr

European Union
URBACT
Driving change for better cities

Votre avis nous intéresse

Questions

Souhaitez-vous un changement pour le square Chopin?

Maintenir deux espaces?
(un pour les passants, un autre sécurisé pour les enfants)

Un square ouvert sans clôture pour les passants?
(avec le maintien des espaces verts)

Souhaitez-vous pouvoir participer aux travaux d'aménagement de ce nouvel espace? (plantation, jardinage)

Pensez vous utile de créer un caniste pour les chiens?

Pour le parc des enfants, pensez-vous utile de renforcer et rehausser les clôtures?

Faut-il un sens unique entrée face à la rue G. Sand?
Voir en vert sur le plan

Faut-il un sens unique sortie face à la rue G. Sand?
Voir en orange sur le plan

Champ d'expression pour vos idées

Avez-vous une idée pour nommer ce futur square?

Nom et Prénom

Adresse

Téléphone et mail



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION N°2

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : Choice of voluntary drop-off points
(CQ n° 13)

Active Citizens challenge: Develop a culture of participation

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

Have a meeting point on a different subject every month, to meet people of the neighborhood and exchange with them on the field. This experiment subject was the Choice of voluntary drop-off points, as the municipality wishes to change the garbage system and replace individual trash can by voluntary drop-off points. Citizens were solicited on a Sunday morning while going to the market, to give their opinion by proposing on a map the place where could be installed the garbage point. With coloured stickers they could show where they lived and where to place the drop-off point.

Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

Wish to bring out ideas for the neighborhood, to be able to discuss roadway issues in particular, to ensure that residents can participate in the life of the city regularly with identified time slots directly in their neighborhood. The topic will be dealing with the garbage.

Date of SSA : 20th of november 2021

Cost : 1000€

[Video link](#)



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION N°3

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : **Redevelopment of a schoolyard according to the ideas of the children**

Active Citizens challenge: **Expand and diversify active citizens**

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

Organise sessions with children (1 or 2 classes) for them to tell us how they would see their favourite schoolyard. But also another session with the parents and the teachers to gather ideas and reflexions. Elected officials and civil servants will be associated to these meetings as well.

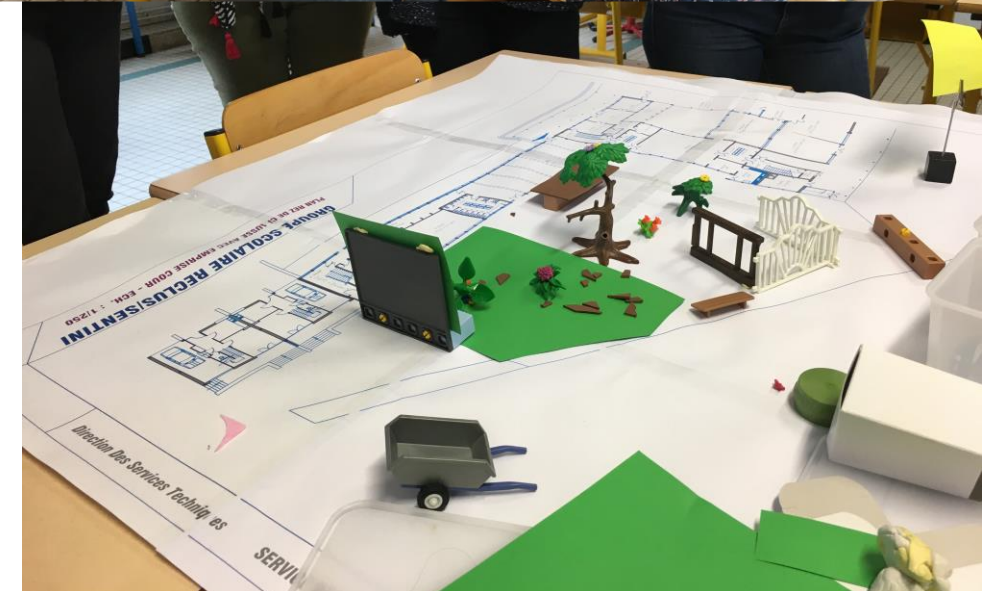
Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

Through this action, the participants will try to involve the different stakeholders of a school. They also want to involve children in the consultation process, so that they are co-actors in the decisions taken for the development of their schoolyard. The participants want to develop collaborative work to get more people to take over democracy (democracy of doing).

Date of the SSA : 10th of March, 1st and 7th of April and 9th of May 2022

Cost : 300€

[Video link](#)



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION N°4

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : Citizen ideas of De Baudre high school students - Junior Chamber Economics

Active Citizens challenge: Develop a culture of participation

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

A teacher from Lycée Jean-Baptiste De Baudre, also a member of the JCE, involved her final year students in the experiment. Groups were formed in the classroom to come up with ideas for city-wide civic action.

These proposals were presented in the form of videos within the establishment, with a view to having all high school students vote on the action that seems most relevant to them. A jury made up of experts is also asked to give its opinion.

The results were revealed during a reception at the Town Hall, the winning proposals were rewarded with prizes, then they will be submitted to the City to determine if one of the selected actions can be implemented.

Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

Facilitate the involvement of young people for their city. Have innovative ideas from young people. Students are willing to participate.

Date of the SSA : March 2022

Cost : 1000€

[Video link](#)



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION N°5

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : Participatory approach tool for young audiences for project leaders

Active Citizens challenge: Expand and diversify active citizens

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

In order to answer the growing demand from the city's various departments to implement solutions to engage young audiences, the youth service has joined forces with the Urbact local group Active citizens Agen in order to develop a tool to support project leaders. A guideline was prepared giving the main recommendations.

Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

Use of the Guideline and set up participatory process for young people within the project of the City.

Date of SSA : February 2022

Cost : No specific budget

[Tool link](#)



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION N°6

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : Redevelopment of Place Armand FALLIERES - Videomaton

Active Citizens challenge: : Co-decide on the allocation of the public budget

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

In order to redevelop a famous place in Agen strongly frequented by high school students, the ULG installed a Videomaton on the place under a barnum. Questions asked by groups of 2 to 3 young people whose answers are filmed. Over 3 days from 4 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. in order to reach as many young people as possible. The local group Active Citizens Agen had at least 3 members each day for this experiment. The questions asked to young people were related to the improvement of the place to collect their opinion and their use of it. In view of the attendance, the team of mediators, who know the young people well, provided assistance.

Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

A lot of good ideas from young people linked with their expertise of use.

Date of SSA : April 2022

Cost : 500€

[Video link](#)



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION N°7

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : **Citizen Ideas of Palissy High School Students – Videomaton**

Active Citizens challenge: **Bridging the gap between elected officials and citizens**

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

In order to have young citizens' opinion about the municipal policy and the way they see the city, a Videomaton was installed for 2 hour at lunchtime in the schoolyard of the Palissy High School of Agen. Questions were prepared and asked by a student to groups of 2 to 3 young people whose answers are filmed. In order to reach as many young people as possible, a table with drinks and candies was set up in front of the Videomaton. The local group Active Citizens Agen had 3 members for this experiment. A communication poster was created by students and sent to all the pupils one week before.

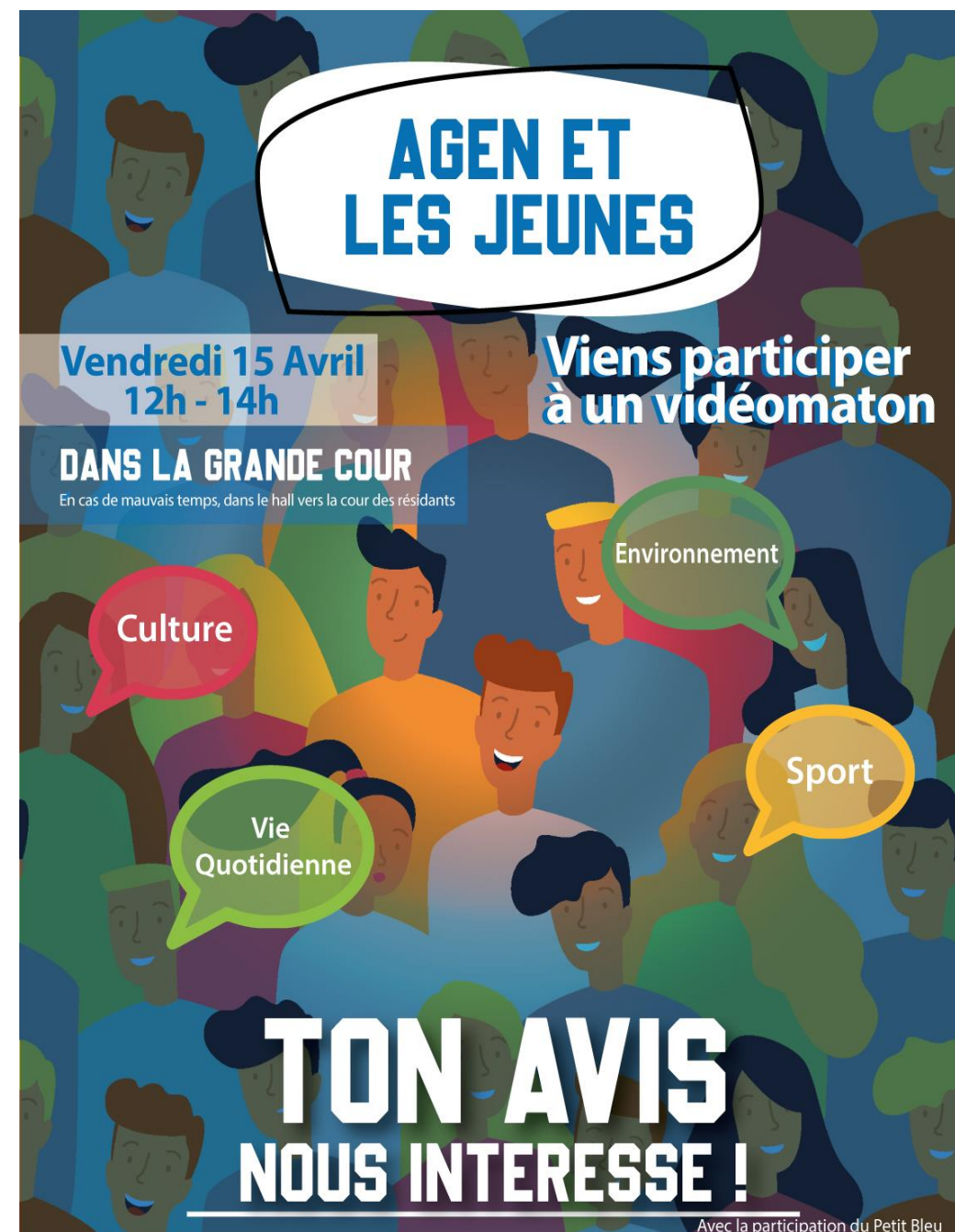
Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

This experiment should allow young people to express themselves by getting them where they are : in their school instead of inviting them in some place for interview. The topics were decided by other students to be sure to get young people's interest. The idea is to show that even young generation are ready to participate.

Date of SSA : Early december

Cost : 500€

[Video link](#)



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION N°8

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : Training of elected officials and civil servants on participatory democracy

Active Citizens challenge: Develop a culture of participation

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

In order to ensure a participatory approach habit, 6 elected officials and 6 civil servants will be invited to follow a training session with an expert on participatory democracy approach.

Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

This training session will be organized to support them on how to ensure citizen's participation on project supported by the city. The goal is to make sure they are aware of the necessity of consulting the citizens, and to give them some tips/tools, and examples of situations already experimented. The goal is for them to realize that consulting citizens is necessary. Hoping they will put something into practice with the project they are in charge of. This SSA is there to prove that with some training, the city can change its habits and organise citizens participation.

Date of SSA : 22nd of June 2022

Cost : 5000€



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION NOT ACHIEVED : POSTPONED AFTER THE PROJECT

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : Have a coffee with elected officials

Active Citizens challenge: Bridging the gap between elected officials and citizens

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

Type your description here (5-8 lines)

Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

Create a climate of peaceful dialogue between elected officials and citizens, an elected official having a coffee with 5 or 6 citizens to exchange about a project within the city. A municipal project in Agen that is scheduled within the political mandate.

Date of the SSA : End of november 2021

Estimated cost : 100€



CITY NAME : AGEN

SMALL SCALE ACTION NOT ACHIEVED : WILL BE BUILT ON ANOTHER FORMAT (ACTION SHEETS FORMAT)

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR SSA : Propose a tool to our City Departments and elected officials to support them organising participatory democracy

Active Citizens challenge: Develop a culture of participation

Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)

Set up a tool for administration and elected to support them with how to organise Citizen participation and which tool can be used.

Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your SSA?

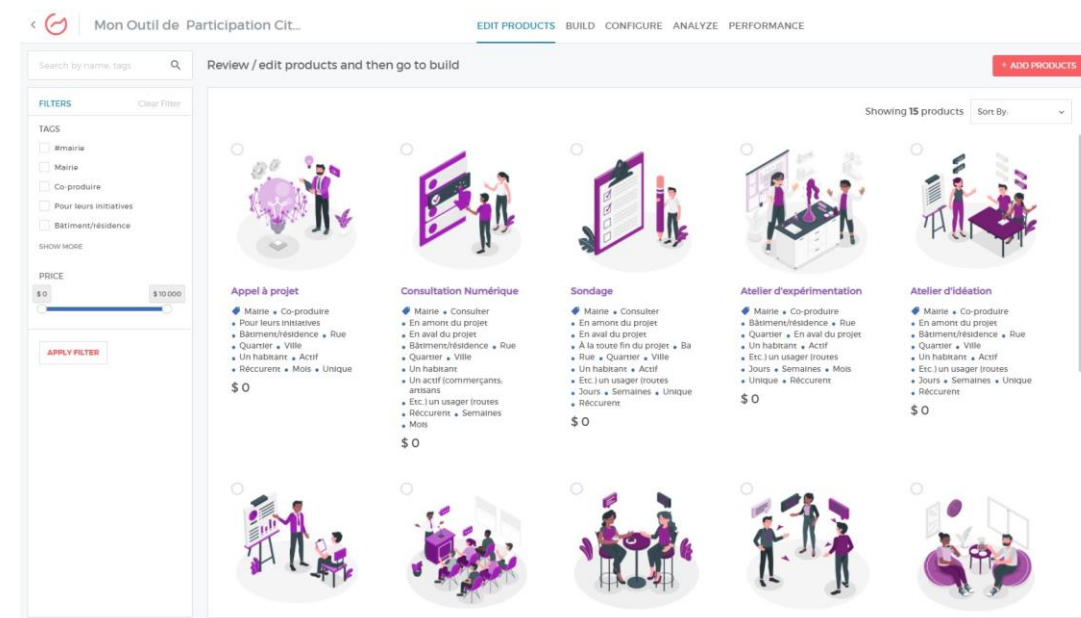
Ensure more participatory process within the administration/elected habits.

To propose an easy tool.

The SSA can prove that if tools are provided to administration the departments will practice citizen participation more often.

Date of the SSA : End of november 2021

Estimated cost : 200€



Action plan

Action Plan defined step by step

The municipality has been elected for a specific program. The Urbact Local Group of Agen (ULGA) had to be careful not to propose a parallel program, totally different from the municipal program. The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) had to be in coherence with this program with more ambitions according to participatory democracy, including elements that could be done on the field with citizens.

In order to imagine actions for the Action Plan a series of workshops were organised with the ULGA.

1st step was to define the 4 challenges out of the 9 challenges of the Baseline Study the local group would tackle regarding the situation in Agen.

2nd step was to define the stakeholders and analyze the problems for each challenge highlighting their causes and effects with the Problem trees.

3rd step was to make a projection on causes and sub-causes with creative constraints and make Visions : a projection into the future to imagine Agen in 2031 regarding participatory democracy.

4th step was an ideation process to generate ideas for Agen : 104 ideas were proposed by the ULG. In order to define the ideas that would be kept, a [market of ideas](#) was installed on the city Market for Citizens to “buy” the ideas that were the most relevant to them.

5th step was to imagine and implement small-scale actions in Agen. These experiments allowed the ULGA to test methods and innovate on the field.

These experiments carried out in all the 8 partner cities were subject of analysis and conclusions shared with the Network Partners and with the Expert to help us draft our Integrated Action Plans.

Each of these actions responded to at least one of the 4 challenges initially defined by the local group.

Last step was to define Actions for the IAP, from the Market of ideas and the Small Scale Actions implemented. The ones selected were proposed to the Municipal Majority for validation in order to be sure to be in coherence with the municipal program. To make it clearer, each action presented was linked with the propositions of the municipal program, before being validated by the Municipal Council on the 27th of June 2022.

The actions proposed in the Integrated Action Plans are the commitment that the city will agree to follow in terms of participatory democracy. Each partner city of the Active Citizens Network will present its own Integrated Action Plan to their Municipal Council.

The Integrated Action Plan of Agen will be presented to the Municipal Council on the 24th of September 2022.



Action table 1/2

ACTION	CHALLENGE(S)	EXPECTED RESULTS IN TERMS OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY	LEADER OF THE ACTION	PARTNER(S)	FEASIBILITY/ASSETS	TIMEFRAME	BUDGET EQUIPMENT
Citizen participation training for municipal officials and elected officials with creation of tools to help them organize participatory democracy	Develop a culture of participation Bridging the elected-citizen gap	Accustom administration to Citizen participation Have elected officials working more with administration on democracy processes	Director general of municipal services With the support of citizenship department	Different services of the municipality : Human resources : training department Support of the Mayor to involve the Councillors	Communication Human resources Lots of work to get elected officials involved, as it is seen as time-consuming overall organization Find a proper training organisation	Every 2 years sessions	7500€ per training for a 2 days training Equiped room for 20 people with videoprojector and screen Catering (coffee, Tea and fruit juice)
Get a coffee with elected officials: informal exchange between citizens and elected officials over a coffee on the city's projects	Bridging the elected-citizen gap	Answer regularly to citizens questions to popularize the functioning of the community and exchange simply to explain projects of the municipality	Cabinet Citizenship department Communication Department	Elected officials Neighborhood councils Coffee/Bar tenders	Membership of elected officials Have the technical, human and financial resources Could be integrated on the home page of the town hall website	Every 3 months to be carried out, starting in september	500€ per year (100€ per time of exchange) Tables, chairs, (possibility to use coffee tenders material)
Systematic development of public spaces in co-construction with users (Places, schools...) And keep the trace of the process (This square has been made with a participatory process...)	Expand and diversify active citizens Bridging the elected-citizen gap Co-deciding upon public budget allocation	Give the opportunity to the citizens to have someone dedicated on any questions linked with citizenship Respond to needs while improving the living environment Acculturation of services	All the departements of the municipality Town planning, development, direction of city technical services	Elected officials Citizenship department Neighborhood Councils Stakeholders on the projects depending on the topic (Residents, User, Shops, Social centers Communal Center for Social Action,Council of Architecture, Town Planning and Environment)	Political will Administration's habits Systematization Service training Procedures	For every project	1500€ per Project to settle the participatory process (Videomaton, map or reflexion, mock-ups...) and communicate before and after the project
Citizen interventions : in high schools with the support of volunteers (Citizen reflection system with young people, Citizen surveys of young people...)	Develop a culture of participation Expand and diversify active citizens	Train citizens give birth and germinate the trigger of commitment Give the willing to act, propose new ideas. React on Municipality 's action and bring results to elected officials	Citizenship department	Neighborhood Councils Heads of schools Youth Chamber of economy	Find people to accessd the school Finance the project suggested by young people to make things real	Every year	2000€ to organize the interventions (video presentations for voting, rewards, reception) 3000€ to set up the winning student's ideas

Action table 2/2

ACTION	CHALLENGE(S)	EXPECTED RESULTS IN TERMS OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY	LEADER OF THE ACTION	PARTNER(S)	FEASIBILITY/ASSETS	TIMEFRAME	BUDGET EQUIPMENT
Involve young people under 18 (Ensure that young people's opinions are systematically taken into account on the construction of projects aimed at young people : For young people by young people)	Expand and diversify active citizens	Develop a culture of participation Give more voice to young people Number of young people per year, then assessment over 5 years questionnaires on other commitments	Youth department	youth information point Teenager's House Collège High school Diffuz	Animation Mobilization Budget Educational support	September 2022	3000€ per year to ensure the organisation of the meetings with young people and communication. A specific budget can also be dedicated on the budget of the projects
Organize a day of volunteering « I get involved for my city » (Visit the administration the same day)	Develop a culture of participation Bridging the elected-citizen gap	Make citizens responsible for their local environment Develop solidarity Reduce incivism	Director general of municipal services	Different services of the municipality Chamber of Commerce and Industry Business clubs Associations	Communication Human resources Lots of work for initial project, time-consuming overall organization	Once a year In september 2022	500€ for reception and organization at the town hall 2500€ for communication
Citizens reserve of volunteers with voluntary skills available & a digital catalog of possible citizen involvement in the municipality	Expand and diversify active citizens	Reinforce implication of citizens in the city Value volunteering	Citizenship department	Neighborhood council department, youth department, Youth Economic Chamber Associations (solidarity, firemen, civil protection...) City young point High schools Communication department	Citizens who want to commit Organisation of administration	6 months to prepare the project Updated every year	2500€ to prepare meetings and ensure follow up of the citizen reserve. 3000€ for communication and digital catalogue
Establishment of a participatory budget dedicated to citizen projects to promote experiments and citizen projects (Citizens propose ideas and the City gives the tools)	Co-deciding upon public budget allocation Expand and diversify active citizens	Support to create and develop citizen's ideas Increase citizens participation in the city life, especially young citizens	Citizenship department	Associations Agglomeration City Prefecture Department Private investors	Can be done at small or large scale Budget can evolve in time and according to projects	2023	20 000€ budget for small projects. Possibility to get bigger budget according to the projects

Action plan calendar

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

Develop a culture
of participation

Citizen participation training for municipal officials and elected officials
with creation of tools to help them organize participatory democracy

Citizen interventions : in high schools with the support of volunteers
(Citizen reflection system with young people, Citizen surveys of young people...)

Bridging the
elected-
citizen gap

Get a coffee with elected officials:
informal exchange between citizens and elected officials over a coffee on the city's projects

Organize a half-day of volunteering « I get involved for my city »
(Visit the administration the same day)

Co-deciding
upon public
budget
allocation

Systematic development of public spaces in co-construction with users (Places, schools...)
And keep the trace of the process (This square has been made with a participatory process...)

Establishment of a participatory budget dedicated to citizen projects to promote experiments and citizen projects
(Citizens propose ideas and the City gives the tools)

Expand and
diversify active
citizens

Involve young people under 18
(Ensure that young people's opinions are systematically taken into account on the construction of projects aimed at young people : For young people by young people)

Citizens reserve of volunteers with voluntary skills available
& a digital catalog of possible citizen involvement in the municipality

Provisionnal Budget of the Actions

Citizen participation training (elected officials, civil servants and Neighborhood Councils)	7 500€
Coffee with elected officials (At least 4 per year)	500€
Systematic development of public spaces in co-construction with users (Budget experimentation)	1 500€
Citizen interventions in high schools (De Baudre, Palissy...)	2 000€
Day of volunteering	3 000€
Citizens reserve of volunteers	2 500€
Digital Catalogue	3 000€
Participatory budgeting	20 000€
TOTAL	40 000€

Potential risks

Implementing participatory democracy is no easy task



There could be obstacles to the proposals that are made in the IAP.

Elected officials have to understand that the participatory process is not there to take power from them, but it is there to support local politics and facilitate its organization. By involving the citizens in the decision process, politics are changing their way of managing the City. This will bring them with new solutions and new relationships with the Citizens.

The actions suggested have to be in relation with the Municipal project. If the propositions are not in relation with the Municipal engagements taken by Elected officials, it could be an issue, as the municipality was elected according to a specific program they pledged to follow.

The Integrated Action Plan must not be a second municipal project, but an added value to the existing municipal engagements of the Municipal mandate.

From the administrative part, it also could be seen as a complex process that would force civil servants to evolve in their way of working. It could

be seen as an intrusion in their knowledge, but also a loss of their power. And this could bring some reluctances from the administration.

This is why, they have to be accompanied and prepared to this future changes. It has to be supported by elected officials but also a hierarchical point of view, with the support of the General Manager and the heads of departments.

It has to go with the project of each department, as a new way of working more efficiently and not as some added work to do.

In order to ensure a proper follow up et evaluation of the IAP, resources must be given with training on one hand and a specific support on the other hand. The different departments of the administration need someone to support them and coordinate their evolution towards participatory processes. The risk could be that no one is identified and that the departments are left on their own.

The participatory process has also to be explained to the Citizens, in a way as simple as possible, to allow them to get involved as much as possible.

Active and representative citizenships together

It is essential that the decision process decided by the Municipal program is respected, because it is our democratic system which is conceived in this way.

Representative groups of community must be respected and integrated into the democratic landscape. This involvement has to be valued and encouraged, for instance the School Councils must be associated to the decisional process for anything regarding schools.

The participation with an immediate feeling is different from what is done in Councils. We can wonder where the participatory democracy stops and where starts representative democracy. Because Elected people have a general interest vision which goes beyond opinions or feelings taken in immediately. But this doesn't mean that different propositions from citizens have not to be taken into consideration. Because if Citizens are really willing to participate they can do it, specially through the Neighborhood Councils.

Moving forward, the City of Agen needs to respect and value citizen who are elected and represent other people. This is why we need to articulate a short term participation as in the Small Scale Actions with a long term participation. Both are complementary, of course having tools to go on the field and listen to the citizens is necessary, this is

Active citizenship (involvement of young people and young adults), but we also have to keep the implication and long term vision.

The main issue remains how to mobilize people. Young people are more interested in project than in long term actions. This is the reason why we need to acculturate young generations with voting process, even on small or symbolical things.

Respect the Municipal project because the municipality has been elected on this program but have citizens vote more often and support Citizens who really get engaged on a long term period.

There is a real complexity with citizen implication according to length.

Project groups start to get used to involve stakeholders composed with citizens, this is going in the right way and it will develop in the future. But this will take time.

The actions such as Volunteer Day or Citizen reserve will allow the Municipality to catch these good energies.



Strategy and Evaluation of the IAP



In order to ensure that the integrated Action Plan is going in the right way, it will be necessary to ensure the followed up of the actions.

In this view, a coordination of the actions needs to be set up with a dedicated person.

The different Departments of the city and the Agglomeration are also in demand of support regarding participatory process. Despite the training courses that can be provided, a specific support will need to be brought in order to help the departments to get acculturate to citizen participation, going from theoretical to practical aspects of the participatory democracy.

The Citizenship Department will have to get involve in the transformation of the administrative habits, in order to give solutions and provide its expertise and knowledge in the subject of participatory democracy.

The members of the Urbact Local Group are also in demand of keeping acting for the common good. Their support in the organization of the actions of the Integrated Action Plan will be a good strategy and a strong added value for the projects, as they can ring their own expertise of practice. This will allow to keep the dynamic of the group on being active Citizens for the City but also value the work that they have done during the 2 year and a half in the Agenais Urbact Local Group.

As the Urbact support arrives to its end for this project, it will depend on the city's will to organize such a follow up.

According to the partners, the Network should not end at the moment of implementing the actions. The cities should then give the opportunity to the Network to meet again in order to do the evaluation of our respective IAPs. Urbact will not finance such process. But all the partners cities of the Network are willing to make it happen. For the cities that agree to take part to this post-Urbact Network, it will have to be financed on their own Municipal budget.

A meeting every 6 month to do the follow up of the IAPs of the Partners seems relevant to the Network. If each partner keep participating to the Network, each Transnational Meeting could be organized in each partner City till the next municipal mandate.

The participation of the Expert would also have to be taken into consideration, as he could bring his expertise to the evaluation of our IAPs.

A common convention between all the Partners would then have to be signed to ensure the cooperation and share the expenses between all the partners of the Active Citizens network.

Integration level



"Vertical" integration

[meaning cooperation between all levels of government and local players]

Participatory process have the wind in its sail, the government is developing participatory bodies, we can see it with the citizens convention for the climate or the Citizens Councils.

In Agen, Neighborhood Councils are elected, recognized as an association and dedicated a strong budget by the municipality for the road matters. As associations, they are also recognized by the Prefecture.

The IAP when signed by the Municipality will be adopted by the City of Agen at least till the end of the mandate.

All the projects will then integrate a participatory process at some stage.



"Horizontal" integration

[meaning cooperation across different policy areas and departments of a municipality]

Within the different departments, the URBACT project was presented with the support of the Lead Expert and the General Manager of the City and Agglomeration of Agen.

All the Départements were solicited and asked to take part to experiments if needed. Most of the Departments agree to make some changes in their practices, with some appropriated support and training.

A first experiment of training was set up with a good feedback which suggests positive progress for the integrated action plan.

The citizenship is already part of the municipal mandate and supported by elected officials.



"Territorial" integration

[meaning cooperation between neighbouring municipalities]

The City of Agen is holding the Active Citizens project, but the City and the Agglomeration, of Agen, composed with other municipalities, are mixed.

The Agglomeration department are also associated to the evolution proposed in the IAP. Some chief of departments already took part to the training session proposed by the City of Agen. Next session should see even more colleagues from other Agglomeration Departments taking part.

The neighbouring municipalities are also very attentive to the evolution of the Neighborhood Councils of Agen and its practices.

Agen could support them in the set up of Neighborhood Councils on their cities if they wish.



"Resources" integration

[between 'hard' (physical) investments and 'soft' (social) investments]

As the Neighborhood Council have the budget for hard investments, they have already the opportunity to make some real improvement in the City.

With the systematic development of public spaces in co-construction with inhabitants and stakeholders, hard investments will be taken into account, according to the projects decided.

New fields like animation will be developed as well in more soft investments with specific budget of 3000€ accessible to any of the Neighborhood Councils.

In parallel, the participatory budgeting will be set up to allow citizens to propose their own projects not necessarily linked with Neighborhood Councils projects.