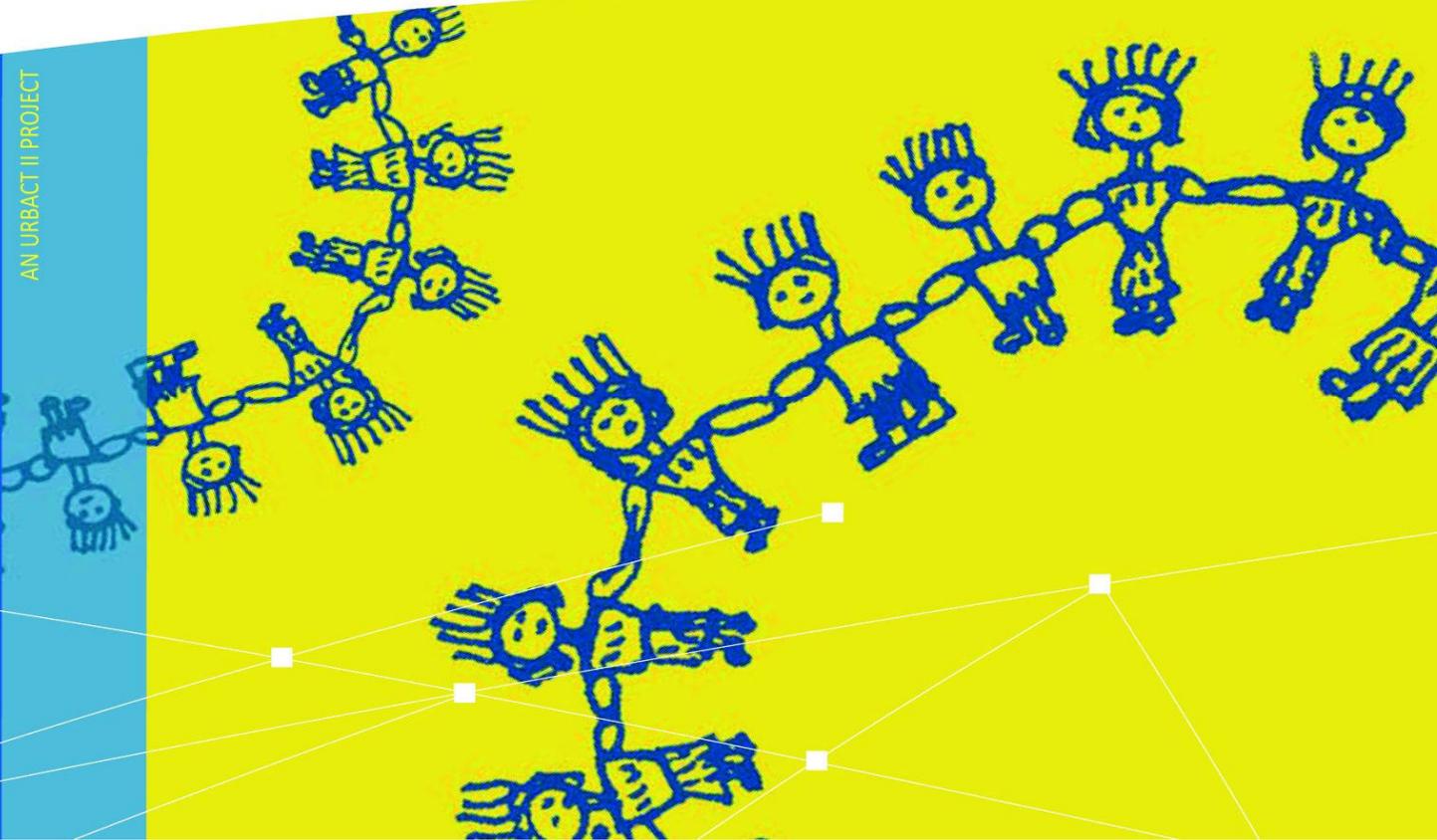


# TOGETHER FINAL REPORT

By Dr. Jon Bloomfield, Lead Expert

October 2012

AN URBACT II PROJECT





## Table of Contents

p. 3 - Summary

p. 4 - Background

p. 5 - Rethinking our Concept of Progress

p. 7 - Consulting with Citizens

p.14 - The Ladder of Citizen Engagement

p.17 - Pilot Actions and the 7 Point Scale

p.21 - Co-responsible Local Action Plans

p.28 - Conclusions

p. 30 - Annex 1. Framework for Local Action Plans

# SUMMARY

The **EU's URBACT TOGETHER project** has focussed on new ways by which public authorities can engage with ordinary people and citizens. At its root lies a simple principle: it is better to involve and engage with people in the development of their town or city rather than just inform them once decisions have been made. This is a concept of active citizenship, or as it is termed in the project, co-responsibility.

How has the project tried to put this principle into practice?

**Firstly**, it set up local support groups (LSGs) reflecting a range of interests in the city.

**Secondly**, it then organised a number of different focus groups in each municipality. These were presented with completely open questions, asking the members of the group 'what is well-being' 'what is ill-being'. The individuals gave their answers on post-it notes and these replies were then coded and entered into a computer system. In total 147 focus groups were held across the 8 cities and more than 14,000 responses were recorded. This gave TOGETHER a very rich pool of observations. Above all, they highlighted the variety of public concerns which citizens have across Europe. As well as the expected 'bread and butter' issues connected to the economy, employment, health and education an enormous variety of other topics were raised, such as a lack of respect, no links between the generations, etc. The responses were analysed by the local support groups, policy gaps were assessed and from these a number of potential policy actions were proposed.

**Thirdly**, the Support Groups then organised in each city two or more pilot actions tackling issues that had arisen from the focus groups. These actions covered a range of activity but the crucial common factor across the pilot actions was that they all involved new active relationships between the municipality, civic associations and citizens.

**The fourth** and final stage of the project has seen the LSGs prepare Local Action Plans. These have been designed to do two things: firstly, to give an accurate account of what each municipality has done during the TOGETHER project; and secondly to indicate how they propose to embed this new approach of co-responsibility into the actions of their municipality in the coming years. This thinking can be summarised as looking not for a smaller local government but for a different local government, one which is more participative, more engaged and more collaborative. As one of the colleagues from Kavala expressed it, "we are giving people the fishing rod and not just the fish."

**Fifthly**, the project has developed on a cross-European basis, drawing on URBACT's expertise and sharing experiences across 8 cities in different European countries. It has also produced three clear outputs.

- It has **tested a consultative computer tool for citizen engagement** which, if simplified, could be used widely by public authorities across Europe.
- It has developed a **7 point scale** by which citizens, non-governmental organisations and councils can **measure the extent of citizen engagement** in a project, programme or strategic plan in their city.
- The project lead partner Mulhouse has produced a **tool-kit on co-responsibility** which in a shortened version will be suitable for public authorities across Europe.

# 1. Background

Across the political spectrum, there is a broad acknowledgement of the impact of globalisation, the computer revolution, the changing nature of economic activity and the increasing interdependence of the planet. Whether in economics or on the environment, in social or cultural matters, interdependence is the key buzzword of the age. Inevitably, this globalising world is bringing about changes in the way in which politics is organised and people are governed.

This is very clear in Europe's cities. Mayors and politicians from all parties are looking at new ways of doing things. They have discussed with their administrators and officers and together have begun to decentralise, to give more power to citizens in neighbourhoods, to devolve services away from the Town Hall and Municipality out into the districts and quarters of their towns and cities. They have been seeking to reinvigorate democratic processes; to combine the traditional representative models and roles with new participative elements. Sometimes this means direct involvement with the citizens; sometimes working closely with other public agencies, civic institutions, voluntary and community groups in evolving partnerships. Across Europe towns and cities have been working on new models of governance.

These developments are not accidental. They are responses to that fast-changing world in which we live. The historic welfare state is under pressure. Traditional services delivered in a top-down fashion with little or no engagement with citizens are under threat. There is a growing need for new types of services and innovative forms of service delivery. So these developments in devolution and citizen participation are attempts by municipalities and cities to respond to the new circumstances in which they find themselves. Effectively, they represent a qualitative shift in the ways in which they think about and actually undertake the governance of their municipalities. No longer do they do things just "top-down" in a hierarchical fashion. They recognise they have to work together more with their citizens in ways which are more interactive and more participative.

Under the EU's URBACT programme **the TOGETHER project**<sup>1</sup> has developed the approach of governing with co-responsibility. This report covers the major aspects of the project's work over the past 24 months. It seeks to do three things.

- Firstly, it is designed to explain the background, thinking and basic methodology behind this new approach to governance, well-being and co-responsibility.
- Secondly, it assesses the main features of the consultative computer tool with which the partners have worked in focus groups with citizens; the pilot actions undertaken by each city arising from the results of those focus groups; and the Local Action Plans which each partner has written.
- Thirdly, it outlines the policy implications arising from the application of this co-responsibility approach and suggests how the URBACT programme could encourage its take-up by other European municipalities.

The report has been written in a style and manner that makes it accessible to politicians, officers and interested citizens who are not familiar with the TOGETHER project in detail.

---

<sup>1</sup> TOGETHER is a network composed of eight European city partners: Botkyrka, Sweden; Braine l'Alleud, Belgium; Covilhã, Portugal; Dębica, Poland; Kavala, Greece; Mulhouse, France; Pergine, Italy; Salaspils, Latvia. Mulhouse is the lead partner. Partners met regularly. Full details of meetings and papers are available on the project web-site: <http://urbact.eu/en/projects/quality-sustainable-living/together/homepage/>

TOGETHER's main hypothesis is that social inclusion and well-being for all will be difficult to achieve without strong co-operation amongst public authorities, citizens and private and non-governmental actors. Indeed, in a context of economic crisis, the solutions that are needed cannot only be based on economic resources but should also take into account citizens themselves as a source of ideas for innovative solutions based on local needs.

Inspired by the broad social thinking of the Council of Europe with its Charter for Shared Social Responsibility, TOGETHER has explored the co-responsibility approach where councils, civic associations and citizens in their different shapes and guises – parents, service users, patients, tenants, residents, passengers, etc.- co-operate and work together.

In towns and cities across Europe, there are moves towards a new type of engagement with citizens and non-governmental organizations (NGOs.) Some are more developed than others. As yet there is no common pattern. In TOGETHER the partners have been testing out the appetite for innovation in all their cities. This project is one small element of the emerging well-being agenda which proposes that policy-makers and politicians broaden their outlook beyond economic growth. The TOGETHER project utilises a co-responsibility approach, which seeks to put citizens, civic associations and municipalities in a new productive relationship. Drawing on the work of the Council of Europe, TOGETHER is a contribution to the development of this new thinking.

## **2. Rethinking Our Concept of Progress**

### **2.1. The Limits of GDP**

The world is changing fast. Europe's cities are more diverse and people are living longer. Europe has moved on from the Fordist era when industrial manufacturing with heavy industry, large factories and mainly male labour predominated. This era in the first three-quarters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century primarily focussed on the single male bread-winner and achieving basic levels of prosperity. These could be captured by a single economic measure, namely the growth in output of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Over the last two generations the richest countries in the world have shifted to a much more diversified economy which has moved beyond Fordism. Today, economic activity is much more varied; there has been a rapid growth of service and tertiary sectors; a very sharp rise in female employment; dramatic changes in female fertility arising from modern contraception. Thus there have been and continue to be major changes in the whole fabric of life. These then oblige society to find new ways of measuring prosperity and well-being. In addition, the issues of the limits to natural resources, environmental pollution and the impact of climate change have risen up the policy agenda. All this suggests the need for a revision of the traditional exclusive focus on GDP.

### **2.2. The Move towards Well-being**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is taking the lead in designing appropriate questions which its members could use to measure well-being, just as its predecessor pioneered the measurement of GDP nearly sixty years ago. The EU has its own programme 'GDP and Beyond.' In France, former President Sarkozy commissioned an expert roundtable, the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, which recommended that indicators of well-being should be developed by statistical offices. In the UK, the government's Statistical Office is developing a new indicator system of 'National Well-being' to guide public policy-making.

There is a very wide range of academic and intellectual writing being undertaken in this area.<sup>2</sup> A highly prominent example is the work of Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. Their book 'The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone' states that

*"the contrast between the material success and social failure of many rich countries ....suggests that, if we are to gain further improvements in the real quality of life, we need to shift attention from material standards and economic growth to ways of improving the psychological and social wellbeing of whole societies."*<sup>3</sup>

Their extensive collection of data and comparative tables illustrates that poverty is a relationship between people and that material inequality is reflected in health and social problems. For the world's most developed countries they argue that

*"Having come to the end of what higher material living standards can offer us, we are the first generation to have to find other ways of improving the real quality of life. The evidence shows that reducing inequality is the best way of improving the quality of the social environment and so the real quality of life, for all of us...this includes the better-off."*<sup>4</sup>

### 2.3. The Council of Europe

Much of this thinking is summarised in The Council of Europe's Methodological Guide 'Involving Citizens and Communities in Securing Societal Progress for the Well-being of All'. This document focuses on,

*"going beyond an approach involving mere consultation of citizens." It sees "the involvement of and reflection with communities and citizens as key ways of offering a vision of the future... which reflects on the multidimensional nature of well-being for all and highlights the key significance of intangible and environmental resources."*<sup>5</sup>

The Guide highlights a wide range of experiments in many parts of the world which seek to develop new ways of engaging with citizens. The Council distinguishes between four types of experimental processes: consultative, the most traditional and limited form of engagement; deliberative which is more interactive; participatory where the participating citizens are also involved in the implementation; and elaborative, where drawing up

*"a common reference framework (knowledge, indicators and action plan) is consciously shared by citizens."*<sup>6</sup>

The Guide highlights the diversity of initiatives that have taken place over the last twenty years with examples from Canada, United States, Australia, Japan, Columbia, Cape Verde and cities and regions across Europe. Whatever their distinctive features:

---

<sup>2</sup> See for example. Layard, Richard (2011) Happiness: lessons from a new science. Penguin, London, UK; Dolan, Paul and Layard, Richard and Metcalfe, Robert (2011) Measuring subjective well-being for public policy. Office for National Statistics, London, UK; Magnaghi, Alberto, The Urban Village: A Charter for Democracy and Local Self-sustainable Development, Zed Books, London and New York, 2005

<sup>3</sup> Richard Wilkinson, Kate Pickett. The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone. (Penguin Books 2010) page 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.29.

<sup>5</sup> The Council of Europe, 'Involving Citizens and Communities in Securing Societal Progress for the Well-being of All' page 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.15

*“all these approaches go beyond a mindset whereby the public authorities are **solely** (my emphasis) responsible for taking decisions on matters of public interest.”<sup>7</sup>*

The Council of Europe has been developing this methodology for nearly a decade. In its full entirety it is trying to see if it can be used to develop a new set of well-being indicators which move beyond GDP. The TOGETHER project has only tested the early phase of the method where it has developed a tool to consult with citizens on an open-ended basis.

### **3. Consulting with Citizens**

#### **3.1. The Methodology Explained**

The Council of Europe approach is a philosophy that is based on the observations and ideas of citizens themselves. The initial information is gathered together from sets of focus groups which ask citizens open-ended questions on what they see as well-being and ill-being. The three open-ended questions are “What do you understand by well-being?”, “What do you understand by ill-being?” and “What do you do and can you do as a citizen to ensure your own well-being and the well-being of all?” These questions are posed in turn. The group is given time to reflect. Each citizen writes their answers on post-it notes. They are asked to put just one response on each post-it note but there are no limits on the number of notes they can write. The facilitator groups these together and at the end of the meeting collects them. Each post-it note is then coded within the indicator data base.

#### **3.2. Developing the Family of Indicators**

The Council of Europe has developed the data base over the last few years. It has tested and shaped a family of indicators which reflect the enormous range of possible responses to the questions on well-being and ill-being. Indicators have been grouped into eight categories with sub-sets within them.

The first two categories concern **material circumstances**, category A ‘access to essential resources’ and category B ‘the living environment’. Category A relates to the basics of daily life from food and shelter, clothes, education and work through to money and information and contains eleven categories. Examples of the type of responses to the questions that fall into this category include: ‘a clean home’; ‘education you are happy with’; ‘having a job close to home’; ‘good health services’; and in response to the ill-being question ‘not able to find a job’; ‘bills’; ‘lack of money’; ‘no computer’. Category B relates to the living environment and its seven sub-categories include pollution, basic infrastructure and meeting spaces. Examples of replies in this category include, ‘fresh air’; ‘parks and open spaces’; ‘recreation centres for the young’; ‘good infrastructure’ and on the ill-being question examples of replies included; ‘noisy’; ‘messy and untidy environment’; ‘long route to work’ and ‘need more places for people to meet’

The next three categories revolve around the **relationships which shape the citizen**. Category C is entitled relations with and between organisations and contains six elements including the functioning of justice, the operation of fundamental rights, the working of local and national government and public administration. The type of comments falling into this category include ‘free to express my views’; ‘religious freedom’; ‘corruption’; ‘too much bureaucracy’. Category D focuses

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

on personal relations. It has just five sub-elements covering personal and sexual relations, family life; friends; relations within the neighbourhood; and relations at work. Here examples of observations include 'to be with my parents'; 'nice colleagues'; 'super pals'; 'to have good friends'; 'to worry about my daughter'; 'family arguments'; 'lack of love'; 'alcoholism in the family'. Category E is entitled social equilibrium and has eleven sub-categories which focus on social relationships such as politeness and respect between people, fairness, sharing and solidarity, inclusion and exclusion along with peace and violence. Examples of responses here include 'able to help others'; 'supporting the weakest'; 'live securely'; 'everyone is recognised'; and on the ill-being side of the ledger 'lack of respect'; 'feel excluded'; 'no security'; 'live with violence'; 'mobbing'; 'to be discriminated against'; 'racism'.

The last three categories focus on **the way the citizen shapes and affects his/her surroundings**. Category F focuses on personal equilibrium and its seven sub-sets cover health, emotional balance, personal autonomy, use of time, personal development and the spiritual. Examples of comments include 'to be at ease with oneself'; 'achieving goals'; 'not to take drugs'; and on the ill-being side 'I can't do anything properly'; 'obesity'; 'too stressed'; 'never got enough time'; Category G focuses on well-being or ill-being feelings and its five sub-sets cover self-esteem, satisfaction, stress and peace of mind, happiness and sadness. Examples in this category include 'to be happy and have good self-confidence'; 'joy'; 'job satisfaction'; 'poor self-confidence and esteem'; 'bitterness'; 'fear'; 'sadness'. Category H is defined as attitudes and initiatives. Its seven elements include self-improvement, personal/entrepreneurial initiatives, behaviour and commitment within civic life. Examples of observations here are 'to have a goal in life'; 'time to do things I like'; 'show a good example'; 'take care of my body'; 'spend time doing nothing'; 'behave well'; 'take responsibility'; 'encourage work in community'; 'try to start up a small organisation'; 'learn to take responsibility'; and on the ill-being side 'without hope for a better future'; 'to be without hope'; 'not being able to participate in society'.

Given the huge range of human responses that will invariably come from open-ended questions it is inevitable that there will be some overlap in the categorisation of responses. It also means that the achievement of consistency between the facilitators in the different cities as they strive to categorise thousands of individual responses is extremely difficult.

It is this method which the TOGETHER project has tested in eight cities.

### **3.3. Organising the focus groups**

This bottom-up approach cannot happen spontaneously. In TOGETHER the key organisational role has been played by the Urbact Local Support Groups (ULSGs) in each city. The ULSG brings together a combination of representatives drawn from the councils, civic associations and citizens. Each ULSG has proceeded to organise focus groups, often using ULSG members to access particular sections of the community. While the number of groups and total number of participants has differed in each city there has been a common desire to ensure that a wide range of citizens are engaged in the project.

There has been a particular concern to ensure that the voice and views of young people are heard. Thus, seven of the eight cities set up focus groups with young people and these account for thirty one of the one hundred and forty seven groups in the overall sample and for more than 27% of all responses. Six of the cities organised women-only groups and among this total of twenty-four there were groups composed of single mothers, working women, mothers with small children and Moroccan women, all segments of society who would often be overlooked or missed out in traditional surveys.

Usually the public authority took responsibility for the overall organisation, sometimes with the help of a local university. After the first meeting, the responses were coded onto the computer system and a follow-up meeting of each focus group was convened to check that participants were happy with the coding of the replies. Then a fourth question relating to future generations was asked.

When all the focus group meetings had been held and initial results completed a third meeting was organised bringing together all the groups in that municipality, with the participants mixed up. This provided an opportunity to discuss the initial results and to seek a wider consensus on the main issues arising. Given the inevitable gap in time between the first and third meetings there was a noticeably lower participation rate at this meeting. However, each of the cities found that there were issues arising that highlighted shortcomings in current policy or service provision. These issues were also discussed by the Urbact Local Support Groups and together they have formed the basis of a set of pilot actions that each municipality then undertook or were noted as requiring future policy attention and referred to the relevant departments within the Municipality.

These processes indicate the partnership philosophy behind the project. It recognises that the local state cannot provide and deliver alone, but rather must work together in different ways with the various elements found on its territory and within its neighbourhoods and districts. And further this must be a partnership where each player shares in the decision-making, hence, the use of the term co-responsibility.

### 3.4. Overall Findings

While the basic idea behind the whole process is simple, nevertheless the organisation required to undertake this work was quite detailed. This is shown in the quantity of returns from each city. Those who had the most experience, or the support of a local university, or had been involved from the start of the project either established the most focus groups or had the most extensive returns. Thus, there is a wide variation in the number of recorded responses ranging from just 256 in Kavala to 3,328 in Salaspils.

**In total 147 separate focus groups were organised by the project and 14,014 responses were made and entered onto the common ESPOIR data base.<sup>8</sup>** Table 1 gives the results for each municipality.

The 14,000 returns have been grouped into the eight categories of indicators established by the Council of Europe staff. Table 2 gives the detailed figures.

---

<sup>8</sup> The ESPOIR database has been established by the Council of Europe, which has responsibility for running the system.

**Table 1. Results of the Focus Groups**

<b>Name of City</b>	<b>Number of groups</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>File date</b>
<b>Botkyrka</b>	9	1144	28/09/2011
<b>Braine l'Alleud</b>	14	2450	28/06/2011
<b>Covilha</b>	51	3228	07/10/2011
<b>Debica</b>	9	729	Nov-11
<b>Kavala</b>	10	256	15/09/2011
<b>Mulhouse</b>	22	1783	07/06/2011
<b>Pergine</b>	12	1088	21/09/2011
<b>Salaspils</b>	20	3336	14/10/2011
<b>Totals</b>	147	14014	

**Table 2. Number of responses by Category**

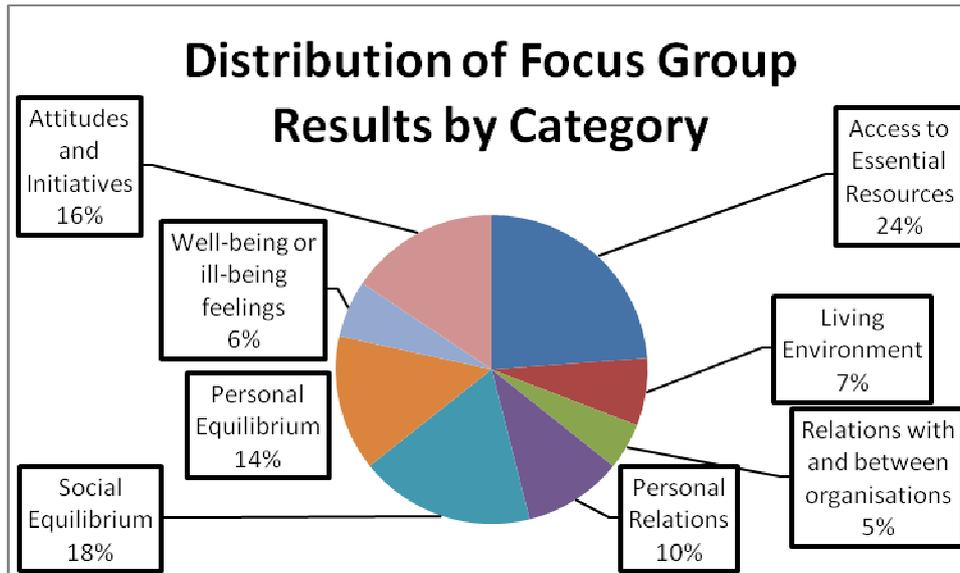
<b>A. Access to Essential Resources</b>	3339
<b>B. Living Environment</b>	988
<b>C. Relations with and between organisations</b>	685
<b>D. Personal Relations</b>	1445
<b>E. Social Equilibrium</b>	2551
<b>F. Personal Equilibrium</b>	1989
<b>G. Well-being or ill-being feelings</b>	834
<b>H. Attitudes and Initiatives</b>	2183
<b>Total</b>	14,014

As the pie-chart below indicates, the results show the wide diversity of responses from citizens when they are asked open-ended questions. It clearly shows that citizens have a much wider range of interests and concerns than just the 'bread and butter' issues of income, work, health and education. This very much reinforces the findings from the earlier work and pilots undertaken by the Council of Europe.<sup>9</sup>

It is particularly interesting to note that the three broad categories within the Family of Indicators each receive around one-third of the responses. Material circumstances (A+B) get 31%; relations which shape the citizen (C+D+E) get 33% and the way the citizen shapes and affects his/her surroundings (F+G+H) get 36%. The results highlight the multi-dimensional nature of people's concerns.

---

<sup>9</sup> The full report is available on the URBACT TOGETHER project web-site.  
[http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/Projects/Together/outputs\\_media/Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Focus\\_Group\\_Results\\_from\\_all\\_TOGETHER\\_cities\\_2\\_x.pdf](http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/Projects/Together/outputs_media/Analysis_of_the_Focus_Group_Results_from_all_TOGETHER_cities_2_x.pdf)



### 3.5. Policy implications for the Cities

This focus group approach is open-ended. It does not assume to know ‘the problem’ beforehand and to ask people about it. As a result it generates a much wider set of responses from citizens than a traditional consultative approach. And furthermore, it has the potential to address the matters that citizens see as central to their well-being. It gives each city a stack of new data with extensive charts and information. Statisticians can cross-tabulate to their hearts content! But what have the cities actually learnt from all this work?

It is absolutely crucial here to recognise that the results do not speak for themselves. The data covers some existing familiar ground; raises new subject topics; or brings to greater prominence matters that had previously been low down on the policy agenda. Thus, one part of the methodology – the focus groups - highlights the breadth of citizens’ concerns. The second part of the method requires the engagement with citizens in responding to these concerns. This requires policy analysis, debate and choices. Above all, it demands the application of co-responsibility thinking to the issues raised. In both the third joint focus group meetings and in the meetings of the ULSGs, people have had the policy task of distilling the results and developing potential pilot actions or policy suggestions.

TOGETHER collected all the information from the focus groups and these findings helped to shape both the pilot actions and also the overall thinking of each municipality. It was not just a matter of the focus groups and the ULSG. In some cases it was possible to spread this co-responsibility thinking more widely across the municipality. Thus, in Mulhouse, the lead Partner, officers have raised and discussed the approach with colleagues in departments across the city. As a result, six of the pilot actions arose from people’s willingness to test the methodology within a framework or in a particular field where it can respond to issues and difficulties identified from the focus group data. Thus the project ‘Drouot-Barbanègre’ was an initiative coming from the city policy manager who wanted to test out the approach in a troubled neighbourhood. Similarly, in Botkyrka, the TOGETHER project reinforced existing trends towards co-responsibility with the promotion of two pilot actions one of which engaged citizens in a community safety initiative and the other involved local NGOs in new public procurement procedures.

What is clear is that these focus group findings give new and valuable insights into the concerns of citizens. They bring home to policy-makers and politicians the multi-dimensional elements of public interest and the full range of issues which municipalities need to address. When these are linked to a co-responsibility process where citizens and civic associations are then engaged in addressing these concerns, then new avenues and perspectives for action are opened up. The pilot actions undertaken by each municipality were a test of a number of these.

### 3.6. Limitations of the methodology

Thus TOGETHER has tested the practicalities of this Council of Europe thinking and in particular its consultation method and toolkit. Through this work a number of the **limitations** have become clear.

- Firstly, in this method all the observations have the same weight. Every post-it note counts the same but in life they do not.
- Secondly, there is a reticence in a public group to talk about certain things through embarrassment or shyness e.g. mental health, abuse at home, sex.
- Thirdly, given that this is an open-ended system the breadth of human replies means that the coding system is inevitably complex with certain overlaps in categorisation. For example, is the statement 'lack of money' to be categorised as A8 purchasing power or E5 economic balance?
- Fourthly, this complexity has meant that a 2-3 day training schedule was undertaken to train staff in the use of the software. This is too long. At a time of austerity and with the pressures on local council staff it is important to make the system relatively simple to use.
- Fifthly, overall, the system was too time-consuming. The number of focus group meetings; the need to keep a short time period between the meetings to retain interest; and above all, the length of time to code up the responses; all required considerable amounts of officer time. Currently, using this system is unnecessarily complex and would be too daunting a task for many councils. For its wider application some pruning and streamlining is required.

A number of municipalities began to tweak the methodology in response to some of these issues. Thus in Braine l'Alleud the municipality held just one focus group meeting with a group of sixty children aged between ten and twelve drawn from schools across the town. They held a meeting with them and asked the first three questions on well-being, etc. They categorised the responses and then held four workshops on the topics which had attracted most interest, namely health, respect and solidarity, culture and leisure and environment. The children were asked to agree on one particular action they wanted implemented from each workshop within some clear budget limits. This they did and the proposals are now being taken forward. It is important to note a number of features at work here. The officials did not stick rigidly to the proscribed methodology. Rather they adapted it to fit the circumstances. Thus, they held just one meeting. They organized follow-up workshops on the topics that had attracted the most interest of the pupils. And then they asked for specific proposals directly from the children

In Mulhouse one pilot project brought together 186 pupils drawn from two junior schools and a secondary school within one neighbourhood. Here, the first part of the methodology was used with the pupils – the question on well-being – and more than a thousand responses were received. These were then computed and from this material the most frequently-cited topics were chosen. At a second meeting pupils were asked to evaluate their situation. The pupils made lots of suggestions, many of which were demands. This reinforces the earlier point that the data results do not speak for themselves. They require policy interpretation. In this case, the officials were able to draw from the material a range of suggestions with a strong co-responsibility theme which were then pursued with both the pupils and people who live in the neighbourhood.

### 3.7. Conclusions

Over the last two decades there has been a growing concern about the need to reinforce the mechanisms of representative democracy with more participative approaches. Annual citizens' surveys; regular neighbourhood meetings; voluntary assemblies; citizens' juries; community relations councils: these and other mechanisms have been the experiments with greater citizen engagement that have been occurring in many municipalities. For example, in Botkyrka, over many years there has been a growing programme of organized citizen consultations and formal participative arrangements. Thus, the co-responsibility approach is not occurring in a vacuum. When considering its wider applications, the methodology will have to be integrated into the existing mechanisms being deployed within a municipality.

#### 3.7.1. The 'Heineken' method

The great advantage of the approach outlined in this report and which has been shown by the TOGETHER project is that it can reach all parts of a municipality and when it does so, it allows all citizens to speak for themselves. As Inga Jēkabsons from Salaspils expressed it,

*“the methodology has helped the municipality to unite its community. For the first time people from different social groups came together to discuss different topical issues.”*

Following the popular advertisement for lager, you could term this **the 'Heineken' method: this is the approach that reaches the parts of the community that other methods do not reach.** And furthermore, when it does reach them, it allows them to speak their mind without restriction.

3.7.2. This means that the coding of responses is complex. Precisely because it does not pigeon-hole people and their answers, then the diverse reality of human life means that you get a very wide range of responses which are not easy to code and compute. This takes time and effort. However, when utilised with good policy discussion, the material from the focus groups provides a rich seam of material which can deepen the understanding of the range of issues which are of concern to all sections of the local community.

3.7.3. For councils and public bodies across Europe who are keen to listen more closely and engage more effectively with their citizens, here is a method that they could valuably use. They will need to fit the method to their circumstances. But there is no doubt that this approach can help public bodies who are committed to extending citizens' participation. For this to occur widely a number of the shortcomings identified in this report will have to be addressed. In particular, a much shorter, more user friendly guide to the system will have to be produced.

3.7.4. URBACT is keen to capitalise on the lessons learned from its projects. TOGETHER has shown that here there is scope to do so. **The project has tested a consultative computer tool for citizen engagement which, if simplified, could be used widely by public authorities across Europe.** The URBACT Secretariat could discuss with the Council of Europe how this methodology could be more widely popularised.

## **4. The Ladder of Citizen Engagement**

In the TOGETHER project the partners have all been all working towards the goal of co-responsibility. They are all aware that the nature of public services has to change and that citizens and non-governmental organisations must be much more involved. But each municipality starts from a different place and has a different history and experiences. In addition, the ambition of each municipality varies, with some looking to test out this approach on a relatively small number of issues, while others are looking to be able to generalise this approach across a whole sector or geographical area.

### **4.1. Measuring the Scale of Citizen Engagement**

The establishment of both the Local Support Groups and the focus groups means that each municipality has tried to move down the path to co-responsibility and go beyond the tokenism of minimal engagement. Yet, there are clearly various levels or degrees of citizen and community participation. The project has developed a **7 point scale** which helps each municipality to identify the type and extent of engagement and participation in its pilot projects, the character of its Local Support Group and the wider ambition of its municipality.

## The 7 Point Scale of Citizen Engagement

### 1. Minimal engagement

The Municipality consults citizens or voluntary organisations on a few topics or in an occasional survey, but appears to take little notice of the results. This is pejoratively known as tokenism.

### 2. Formal partnership

A formal relationship with a number of organisations outside of the municipality is established. These partners sit around the table but the local authority or the government agency chairs the meeting and takes all the key decisions

### 3. An engaged partnership

This has the feel of a much more equal arrangement with the partners/voluntary organisations having some real influence on agenda and decision-making. However, ultimately the Municipality retains the decisive influence

### 4. Co-governance

Here there is the **strategic planning of a service** or a project or a programme. Actors from different organisation and sectors determine shared policy priorities and may translate these into strategic plans.

### 5. Co-management

This refers to a situation where different organisations work alongside each other to co-ordinate the **delivery of a service or project**. Actors from different sectors and organisations use their respective resources to contribute directly in practical ways to the delivery of a specific project or service.

### 6. Co-production

This refers to an arrangement where **citizens produce, at least in part, the services they use themselves.**

### 7. Co-responsibility

This is where the elements outlined in points 4-6 are combined across a whole sector, for example within the education system in a city, or its economic regeneration. The ultimate goal would be to achieve this across an entire territory, in other words across all the services within a neighbourhood or district.

## 4.2. Examples of co-governance and co-management

The TOGETHER project has not emerged from a policy vacuum. Rather, it has developed within a context where public authorities across Europe and beyond are actively experimenting with these new types of practices. Prior to TOGETHER a number of these authorities have experimented in these new methods in aspects of their work.

An example of co-governance is the ‘Sportello Famiglia’ a “Forum of family associations” managed as a not-for-profit association in Trento/Pergine which has been involved in the drafting and operation of a new family law in the Province . The Association has an agreement and funding from the Province to manage a group of services for children and families. With three staff, the Forum provides a range of advice services for families through its help desk, which in 2010 dealt with 2,329 enquiries. But the Forum also acts as the public voice for more than forty local voluntary associations such as those working on drug issues, disabilities, diabetes, leisure and play activities, etc including those working in the Pergine area. In this way the Association has been able to develop a common vision and policy on family-related issues. Alessandra Viola and Valentina Merlini are the two staff who have been most involved with the development of the association since its establishment in 2006. The Forum has contributed to the drafting of the new family law. As Alessandra explains it,

“We were involved in drafting the law. We shall be involved in the operation of the new law. Article 21 gives us a specific role. The province will consult with the Forum on the configuration and planning of new services.”

Furthermore, Article 33 says that the province will evaluate the policy consequences of this well-being policy and the forum will be engaged in this process too.

An example of co-management comes from the Subtopia project in Botkryka. In Botkryka, more than a decade ago, the council recognised the need to stimulate and encourage new economic activity and that within this arena the cultural and creative industries offered a particular opportunity. So, it set up a company to develop the creative industries and gave it some disused industrial premises. Subtopia opened in 2002 with four organisations. Today, forty-five organisations and companies are based on the site; 3-400 people work there; and in addition, each year 38,000 people attend conferences and seminars.

Jonas Boutani Werner, Subtopia’s film and media co-ordinator, is enthusiastic about the progress that has been and continues to be made.

“Our job is to attract creative industries to work here and we have been really successful, above all with circus and performing arts but also with film and media.” Companies are attracted by cheap rents – 500 krona per square metre a month – and free wi-fi, plus the ambiance. As Werner recognises, this is a slightly unusual project in that “we’re growing it from the top down.”

Effectively, the council makes available the premises; manages the overall operation; but gives the opportunity for companies and cultural associations to base themselves in Subtopia and to develop in their own way with no restrictions placed on them. Thus, the council acts as the springboard for economic development, particularly for the small and micro business sector.

## **5. Pilot Actions and the Seven Point Scale**

This scale is a useful way in which to measure the progress which is being made by a municipality in respect of citizen engagement and participation. A number of the partners were already experimenting with elements of this but the 7 point scale brings different aspects of citizen engagement together and suggests a ladder of attainment. Arising from the results of the focus groups each Local Support Group discussed and proposed a number of pilot actions that required a new type of partnership between the municipality and its citizens. For most municipalities the pilot actions were organised from autumn 2011 onwards. How did the pilot actions undertaken by the TOGETHER partners' rate against this 7 point scale?

### **5.1. Botkyrka**

1. **Together for a more secure Alby.** The main activity of this pilot has been organising and mobilising citizens to participate in night patrols in the Alby neighbourhood. This is an attempt at **co-management** where different organisations both public agencies and community associations worked alongside each other to co-ordinate the delivery of a service or project.
2. **Finding practical ways to implement the social economy at the community level.** Here is an attempt at **co-governance**, where an effort is being made to achieve the strategic planning of a programme. Actors from different organisations and sectors are seeking to define shared policy priorities and are trying to translate this into appropriate criteria for a new council procurement process.
3. **Intercultural Alby**, an **engaged partnership** with elements of **co-management** which promotes interaction and exchange between the up to fifty different ethnic groups in Alby.

### **5.2. Braine l'Alleud**

1. **Healthy Tuesday** Initiative which takes place at 'the Resto' a multi-purpose centre which serves cheap meals and acts as a youth and community club for the area. The Resto is funded by the Department for Social Action in Braine l'Alleud and national Article 60 funding gives the Department the opportunity to fund community initiatives such as the Resto. The healthy Tuesday initiative is an open membership club which meets every Tuesday and through discussion, play and drama examines the interconnected issues of food, agriculture, urbanisation, shared gardening, co-operatives etc. This fits into the category of an **engaged partnership**.
2. **Children's Parliament**\_This initiative involves every middle school in the municipality. The students are chosen by their fellow pupils. As described above in Paragraph 3.6. the children's parliament used a simplified methodology which enabled them to concentrate on four topics, namely health, respect and solidarity, culture and leisure and environment. The children were asked to agree on one particular action they wanted implemented from each workshop within some clear budget limits. This they did and the proposals are now being taken forward. While the projects are on a small scale, since the proposals came directly from the children this fits the category of **co-production**.

### 5.3. Covilhã

1. **The Colored Bag.** 32 primary schools in the municipality have been collecting school supplies for distribution to the neediest children. This is an example of an **engaged partnership** where the schools, teachers, parents and pupils have some real influence on the project but the Municipality retains the decisive influence.
2. **Financial education helping the indebtedness of Portuguese families.** This appears an orthodox formal partnership at first sight but the proposal for training people from within the community makes it more of **an engaged partnership**. It will be interesting to see as the project develops the extent to which the training of people within the community makes this a project **with an element of co-production**.

### 5.4. Dębica

1. **Social Integration club.** This project is designed to help the long-term unemployed get back into training or work. Its initial character is that of an **engaged partnership** where a range of partners under the leadership of the Municipality establish a new legal body the Centre of Social Integration to undertake the activity. As the project develops this **may evolve into a co-management** initiative.
2. **Generation Gap.** This is a cross-generational initiative. It is a small-scale project where young people and senior citizens meet on a weekly basis and teach each other different skills. As such it falls into the **co-production** category since the participants decide and are responsible for the programme of activities.

### 5.5. Kavala

1. Creation of a **Social Pharmacy centre.** This is an attempt to draw on the wider engagement of professionals in offering a new type of health service accessible to the broader public, especially focussed on the poorest sections of the population. This fits into the category of a **co-management project**.
2. **Health information campaign.** A close collaboration has taken place between the municipal services and several health, civic and professional associations in the preparation of the key material for this campaign. This again fits into the category of a **co-management project** where different organisations work alongside each other to co-ordinate the delivery of a service.

### 5.6. Mulhouse

As Lead Partner Mulhouse has had the longest experience and most resources devoted to applying the philosophy of co-responsibility and citizen engagement of all the TOGETHER partners. Mulhouse has been actively engaged in work on co-responsibility for the last five years. The city has developed this thinking in close collaboration with the Council of Europe. It has engaged in a large number of pilot projects which test out this thinking on a variety of topics e.g. housing, schools, health and in different areas of the city. The objective is to be able to draw lessons from these pilot projects and apply the principles more generally. Ultimately, the ambition is to be able to apply these principles across the Mulhouse agglomeration and thereby create 'a territory of co-responsibility.'

## Multi-partite contracts

The Social Services department within Mulhouse has 1350 clients on its books, to whom the Department gives benefits, plus social advice and support. The Department has developed a pilot project using the co-responsibility method with its users. The intention is to tackle the issue of social inclusion from a perspective of partnership and reciprocity rather than the more traditional authority/client relationship. The Department chose a representative sample of twenty five families and then held meetings with them along with a theatre animator and a psychologist. The group used a combination of the well-being/ill-being questions with post-it notes and more individualised work with the two support staff. Given the precarious situation of many of the users there was a lot of anger in the discussions, which was expressed in the post-it notes. The group worked together for a three month period at the end of which around half signed up to a 10 month programme of activity and a commitment expressed in a 4 way multi-party social contract. The activity programme is based on the well-being/ill-being concerns expressed by the users and the workshops are designed to address these. The programme takes place on the same time at the same place each week and runs for seven months. The first programme began in September 2008 and almost all the participants attended regularly throughout. A second programme with twelve users was run from autumn 2010 and a third programme also with twelve users is now underway. Lydia Meyer, one of the organisers states clearly the thinking behind the project. "Our goal is to get the users to be autonomous, to be able to live on their own."

The entire way in which this project is framed and organised represents an ambitious attempt at **co-production**, where the service users take responsibility for and help to shape and organise the service that they themselves use.

## Involving Parents in Education

The *Maison des Parents* works within the *Mulhouse Alsace Agglomeration* to support and help parents and their children. It has undertaken a number of co-responsibility initiatives within both specific neighbourhoods and the wider agglomeration. In discussions with staff at the Drouot social centre, colleagues told of their experiences over the last three years. They have developed an information booklet which outlines all the relevant services in the area and are now drawing up an educational charter. They have found it possible to mobilize parents for specific one-off actions but that it is harder to engage them on a more permanent basis. As organizer Maud Bringel explained,

*"it is hard to get parents to come regularly to our Maison des Parents."*

The primary nature of this initiative involving parents has been that of **an engaged partnership**.

## Housing

The pilot action on housing is based on an existing project initiative occurring in a number of European countries, which operates under the acronym of IGLOO. This project seeks to find accommodation for families but on the basis that the prospective tenants have to be involved in some way in their own re-housing, for example, by helping in the renovation work or being involved in the decision-making and organisation. Thus, this is clearly a project which falls into **the category of co-production** with the users involved in the organization and activity of the project.

The initiative started in January 2009 and to date 90 families have been involved in discussions and twelve have been engaged in the project. As with the multi-party social contract project which is also dealing with vulnerable citizens, this project is very labor intensive. Furthermore, the project officers admit that progress has been slow and difficult. As housing manager Valerie Adrian expressed it,

*“People come to us for somewhere to live; not to discuss well-being and have lots of training. And so far we have operated with too long a process. We need to shorten it.”*

It is evident from this project that initiatives of this kind require strong professional engagement. Furthermore, it is important to try to integrate key aspects of the co-responsibility approach into the activity before presenting it to users. When it appears complicated, long-winded or vague, strong resistance is apparent from many users.

## 5.7. Pergine

1. **Small jobs for young people.** This has the character of an **engaged partnership** where the municipal department responsible for the implementation of the Youth Action Plan has brought together a wide range of partners to consider social tasks that need to be undertaken within the area. The project will create up to thirty short-term jobs. The project team have been concerned to ensure that the identified tasks relate to the theme of co-responsibility and thus the three types of activity which have emerged all relate to the improvement of community life and the public realm.
2. **Collective vegetable garden (allotments).** The origins of this initiative fit the category of an engaged partnership. The Municipality provides the vacant land, organises the launch event to attract potential users and encourages the involvement of a local bank which finances the tools and seeds. However, the project evolves into a **co-management** or even a **co-production initiative** since the users decide on the type of crops they want to grow, how they organise the plots and any sales.

## 5.8. Salaspils

1. **Co-ordination centre for NGOs.** From the focus group work undertaken in the first phase of TOGETHER it was clear to the Local Support Group that there existed a serious weakness in the municipality with regard to the facilities available for community groups and voluntary organisations. In response, the LSG asked the municipality to establish an effective social centre for NGOs in the municipality with resources from the council budget. This pilot action was designed to oversee the implementation of this task. As such it represents an **engaged partnership**.
2. **Local Newspaper.** This was another pilot action arising from concerns raised through the focus groups, namely that the local council newspaper is very formal and dry. The focus groups indicated a range of changes that they would like to see with more news stories, material from the NGO sector, room for small advertisements and greetings and coverage from some of the rural parts of the authority. A working group has been established to try to promote the transformation of the paper. As such this represents an **engaged partnership**
3. **Cooperation between Science and education.** In Salaspils five national scientific institutions are located. They have relatively little contact with many local people and their scientific and environmental work is largely unknown within the city. To change this and help to develop Salaspils as a science city, it has been proposed to promote co-operation and public dialogue within Salaspils, firstly through the organisation of a Science Week This again represents **an engaged partnership** between national government actors i.e. the science institutes, local government and civic associations.

4. **City festival.** This is an attempt to bring together all the various elements of the Salaspils community for a city festival at the end of May. A broad range of organisations have been already involved in its preparation and together they are collectively developing the events programme. Thus this is **an engaged partnership with elements of co-production.**
5. **International Day for disabled people.** This was an early initiative arising from the focus groups which was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2011. It drew in a range of partners in **an engaged partnership** and was very successful. Uncertainties exist at this moment as to the capacity of the council and the civic organisations to maintain and continue this initiative.

## **6. Co-responsible Local Action Plans**

Partner meetings discussed the progress of the project at every stage. They discussed and amended a draft structure of the Local Action Plan which the Lead Expert prepared. The partners agreed to write a Local Action Plan with a clear 9 point structure which is attached as Annex 1. The partner cities were paired up so that they could develop their ideas and experiences on a shared basis.

### **6.1. Lessons of the Local Action Plans**

A short summary of the main conclusions of each LAP are set out below. These set out how useful the project has been; where will the municipality will use the co-responsibility approach in the future; and what role, if any, is envisaged for the LSG.

#### **Botkyrka**

The Botkyrka municipality was already engaged in a wide variety of ways and methods with regard to citizen engagement and participation. The TOGETHER project has built on this experience and systematically put the co-responsibility approach at the top of agenda in the municipality. The spirit of co-responsibility is now present in many areas. In the future, the implementation of the neighbourhood development programmes in Alby and other districts will use this approach. As the LAP expresses it, "The experiences of working with co-responsibility ...will spread to other districts." (Page 23) There is potential for schools in the districts to become more interested in this approach while a big challenge remains on security issues, where even more co-responsibility will be needed.

The LSG will not continue in its present form, but many members of LSG are already involved in different working groups and will continue to be engaged in discussing different issues in Alby.

#### **Braine l'Alleud**

As with Botkyrka, the Braine l'Alleud municipality already involved a range of voluntary organisations in the development of its Social Cohesion Plan. The TOGETHER project took this a stage further. It allowed the municipality staff involved in social policy to meet and work with citizens around a notion of participation and engagement. This opened up the discussions much more broadly, going well beyond just people's immediate problems.

It was challenging to translate this approach into concrete actions. Often the municipality proceeded step by step, as people gradually took more responsibility within projects. In the process, it became clear that co-responsibility means that the approach and attitude of staff has to change too, not always doing everything and being in control. As project manager Andre de Smet expressed it,

*“this approach modifies in important ways our conception of social work.”*

These lessons and approaches will be applied within the municipality’s Social Cohesion Plan for 2014-2020 which is being developed in conjunction with forty social partners and local institutions. The LSG will continue to operate and have the responsibility to ensure that the co-responsibility method is taken forward in the Social Cohesion Plan. It is envisaged that sub-groups will be set up in particular areas to help apply co-responsibility in practical and effective ways. For the moment the use of co-responsibility will be limited to the social sphere but officers are exploring its potential use in other Council commissions.

### **Covilhã**

The engagement with the TOGETHER project has been a valuable experience for Covilhã. Prior to the project, the Municipality had already begun to develop to a small extent some new thinking on the delivery of public services, the support to non-governmental associations and the engagement with citizens. TOGETHER has given the municipality an opportunity to test these approaches more widely and across all thirty-one towns and villages within the municipality. Both the focus groups and the pilot actions have led to a wider understanding of this co-responsibility approach with much closer co-operation between public authorities, community organisations and citizens. As local convenor Cristina Maximino explains it,

*“The project has enabled the municipality to develop procedures for the implementation of indicators of well-being and to enhance citizens’ participation in the process. The conditions for developing co-responsibility with the main actors and stakeholders of the region have brought a new point of view on how to reach new forms of analysis and how to involve people.”*

The municipality is looking to embed some of this experience in the Social Action Plan that will be adopted in 2014. It is particularly looking to apply the co-responsibility method in the areas of education, elderly people and housing using a range of survey and consultation mechanisms to develop more responsive services as well as consulting in the parishes via social committees. Thus, Covilha believes that this project has helped to promote the involvement of local actors in a range of networks which will influence the forthcoming Social Action Plan. It is envisaged that the local Support Group Network will continue to work on social issues and promote the integration and co-ordination of interventions across the whole municipality. At the same time it will share the lessons of this approach with a number of other Portuguese municipalities which have shown interest in the methodology.

### **Dębica**

In the Dębica municipality in south-eastern Poland, prior to the TOGETHER project, a large scale scheme involving citizens had run for two years which through workshops and seminars influenced the development of the town strategy and saw the emergence of public-private partnerships. TOGETHER has consolidated these trends. The project has proved to be a positive experience for the municipality, with the Mayor, senior politicians and officers all involved at some stage in its work. A number of new ideas were suggested in the Local Support Group arising from the focus groups held in the city and two have been tested in pilot actions.

At the moment it seems likely that both these initiatives will continue after the end of the project. A wider engagement of this method within the municipality is still under consideration.

## Kavala

Previously in Kavala the large number and variety of civic organisations usually operated on their own. TOGETHER helped them to build a common network with a focus on finding solutions to aspects of the financial crisis.

Before the major economic crises, the “co-responsibility concept” was not easily appreciated since people were used to demanding that the public sector and the welfare state care for their conditions. As a result citizens were rarely involved in the development of services; also they were not consulted on policy and service developments. TOGETHER has shown the value of a co-responsibility approach: a new way to deal with problems that entails a new behaviour between individuals and society, a new policy that changes the relationship between the administration, civil society and citizens.

The Municipality of Kavala hopes to use the co-responsibility approach in the future as much as possible. So far the pilot actions of **Social Pharmacy and Social Medical Office** have been products of co-responsibility and the same is the case for the next step in this initiative, the **Social Grocery**. The Municipality also intends to motivate co-responsibility in the operation of a **Consulting Centre for Women victims of Violence**, by involving NGOs that are active in the field of women rights, women emancipation and family care. Last but not least the Municipality wants to participate in an initiative that the Mental health Department of the local hospital of Kavala has prepared for submission to potential investors: the establishment of a **Social Enterprise for the mentally ill persons** with the participation of training staff and professionals.

It is envisaged that the LSG will continue and operate as the co-ordinating body for these initiatives, plus others that will come in time.

## Mulhouse

As Lead Partner Mulhouse has had by far the most extensive experience of testing and applying this co-responsibility approach. The TOGETHER project has given the city an opportunity both to extend existing trials and to pilot the method into new areas – both geographical and thematic. It has thus been able to test the method for longer and in more arenas than the other partners. Section 4.3 above indicates three of the in-depth pilot actions that the municipality has undertaken.

The project has helped the city to explore further the strength and limitations of the methodology. One particularly noteworthy element has been the impact on staff and others engaged in the pilots. As is evident in a number of other cities, the development of co-responsible working requires changes in the professional practice of city officials.

For the moment, the plan is to take this method forward in one of the sixteen districts in the city and also to utilise it at some of the Social Department’s community centres. In future it is hoped that this method will be extended to the 16 neighbourhood councils covering all of Mulhouse. The Local Support Group will continue but its role will change, being less involved in pilot actions but assuming more of a co-ordinating role across the city.

Mulhouse has now compiled a dossier which outlines the thinking on co-responsibility and then gives practical examples of putting this into practice. This draws on the lessons of the ten pilot actions which it has undertaken. These experiences have been drawn together at length. This guidebook, ‘the Journey’ will be published and made available. It is a journey which will give accessible advice on the methodology to all those interested in the co-responsibility approach. There is potential here to distil these experiences and to produce an attractive, short brochure - a co-responsibility tool-kit – which could be disseminated to interested public authorities and agencies across Europe.

## **Pergine**

The main result of the two years of the Together Project in the Municipality of Pergine has been to establish at institutional level, the basis to work with the approach of co-responsibility. This term was unknown to politicians and citizens, previously. Actions of co-responsibility were present in the Municipality also before, but the definition of the concept has been important and is one of the added values of this kind of project. The other key word that has been introduced is well-being. The process of consultation with citizens in form of focus groups has been very useful to discuss its meaning. The questionnaire resulting from the focus groups is now in the process of distribution to a wider public. The two pilot actions implemented, the co-responsible vegetable garden and the little jobs for young people, are the first tangible results of this process and the first two material representations of the new concept in operation.

Within the Municipality, the Department for Social Policy carried out the project over the two years. The Social and Youth Policy Departments are already employing this approach and intend to use it in the future. More attention will be given to projects involving the participation of the citizens. Further discussion with Departments and with the Municipality Board are being held in order to decide whether the municipality will use the co-responsibility approach more widely in the future. With the changing financial climate and the flow of financial resources from the Province of Trento decreasing, the public administration is likely to move in the direction of the promotion and organization of projects of co-responsibility, which need the substantial participation of citizens in terms of human resources and responsibility.

In the meeting of the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2012 the Local Support Group expressed the will to continue the path undertaken with the Together Project and previously with the adoption of the Social Plan. The LSG will continue autonomously the activity of networking and programming at local level. However the group expressed the need for a follow up of the Together project in order to have access to human and financial support in the implementation of the Plan of Co-responsibility. The Plan is still under construction and discussion. The group committed itself to meet at least three times before the end of the year to evaluate the implementation of the Social Plan and to include some of the non-realized but still needed actions in the Plan for 2013.

## **Salaspils**

The main advantage of this project for Salaspils was the methodology which has helped the municipality to unite its community. For the first time people from different social groups came together to discuss different topical issues within the municipality. The project prepared the basis for a more successful, two way communication between society and municipality, making way for a more social, co-responsible government.

In future the Municipality of Salaspils intends to use this approach for making policy for a range of different social groups, for example for large families; persons with disabilities; youth. It is a way to identify their needs and the actions that will address and satisfy them. The Municipality will also use this approach to get the community's opinion on some major projects like building a new school and for organizing different events for the whole community, such as sports tournaments and a City festival.

The LSG will continue to come together once or twice a month to discuss topical questions in the municipality, in order to get the society's opinion, original ideas and increase awareness about what is going on in the municipality. Also special meetings will be organized when major issues are being proposed, such as establishing a Science centre or building a new school.

## 6.2. Highlights

Throughout the work of the TOGETHER project interesting and new developments have arisen. Here is just a flavour.

6.2.1. In **Kavala**, North eastern Greece, the project is taking place within a dramatic context, where far-reaching changes in the traditional welfare model are underway. The Social Pharmacy project opened in March 2012. Arising from a need identified in the focus groups the project brings together the council, medical professionals, notably doctors and pharmacists and more than 150 volunteers. The council has provided the premises, a vacant shop in a shopping market. The pills and tablets come from the unused medicines that many people have in their homes. The professionals check the medicines; organise their storage; and give medical and pharmaceutical advice to citizens. The volunteers help to collect the medicines, manage the shop and provide administrative support. Io Chatzivaryti, adviser to the Mayor, enthuses about the developments which the project has stimulated.

*“It has had a real impact. TOGETHER has stimulated a partners’ network involving a range of actors. We are moving to another kind of welfare provision. Some of this has been prompted by the crisis. Instead of a linear form of welfare which just goes from the state to the beneficiary we are now developing something that goes both ways.”*

The project has begun to attract interest from other Greek cities. And as the Mayor Kostas Simitsis made clear in his discussion with the partners in June,

*“This method opens the way for a structured dialogue with society.”*

6.2.2. The URBACT TOGETHER project has been important to the new political team in **Salaspils** because it has provided a platform from which to develop new relationships with citizens and civic associations in the town. The Local Support Group brought together representatives from the municipality and a wide range of associations in the town. Initially, all major civic associations in the town were invited to participate. Then specialists from the University of Latvia analysed the situation in the city. They pointed out some key areas of omission and in response further groupings were invited. The outcome is a Local Support Group with representation from young and old, the three different churches in the town, two associations for people with disabilities, a number of major institutes and a major family association.

The LSG has met regularly since the first phase of TOGETHER and many of the LSG representatives have set up their own focus groups drawn from their own constituency. The TOGETHER partners met the Salaspils LSG during our meeting in late June. It was clear from this discussion that the project has been a mechanism by which for the first time in a systematic way, the municipality and its politicians have been able to enter into dialogue with a wider group of citizens outside of election times.

This may appear surprising to readers in other parts of the EU but this is the post-Soviet reality here. And interestingly it has already had results not just in the findings of the twenty-five focus groups which have been organised as part of TOGETHER but also in the discussions within the LSG and the establishment of a new centre and meeting place for community groups in the city.

As Development department manager and Project Co-ordinator Ansis Grantins explains

*“we need to respond to people’s initiatives even the small ones. We have found this co-responsibility approach useful not only on the big issues of regeneration but also on the issues of everyday life.”*

6.2.3. The colleagues in **Botkyrka** used the project to tackle one of the toughest issues in its neighbourhood, security. This has become an increasingly important issue for the Alby district and many different local associations were keen to get involved and consider how they could improve security in their community. Thus, as a pilot action, in close co-operation with both local council staff and the police, an initiative for night patrols emerged. Beginning in September 2011 the numbers involved quickly rose from around ten to up to forty and the initial success meant that there has been interest shown by other neighbourhoods within the municipality. There have been difficulties in the project with tensions between a number of associations and issues of how to maintain the engagement and enthusiasm of participants but Dennis Latifi, the neighbourhood development manager explains that

*“people have been behind this initiative because they know that in our communities with such heterogeneous communities, security cannot be provided by the police alone.”*

While local librarian Laura Purdy on the first anniversary of night patrols declared,

*“I cannot express strongly enough the importance that night patrollers have had and continue to have for us and our visitors here at Alby library. You act in true civic spirit.”*

6.2.4. Alongside the TOGETHER project, **Braine l’Alleud** arranged an EU funded youth project in which six of the cities participated. Youth groups from each city worked on a topic within their own municipality and then they went to Braine l’Alleud for a week to work together in six workshops on a series of topics, at the end of which a number of products have been produced. For example, the group based in Botkyrka have made a video. Again, this was a ‘learning by doing’ pilot bringing together young people and encouraging them to work together in a co-responsible way. It confirmed the potential that exists for extending this method into a wide range of areas.

6.2.5. These snapshots just serve to give readers a feel for some of the practical initiatives which have been undertaken by the project and which have served to show the different ways by which this method has helped to promote citizen engagement and participation.

### **6.3. Obstacles**

Co-responsibility is an ambitious goal which requires profound organisational and cultural transformation. Even a small-scale, funded project such as TOGETHER has inevitably confronted a number of obstacles. This section identifies four.

6.3.1. While in theory the method applies to all aspects of life, in reality the project concentrated on **social rather than economic** issues. Even Braine l’Alleud - which had substantial staff and resources devoted to the focus group work – was unable to organise a group of entrepreneurs, shop-keepers and businessmen. In the Walloon region, which organised a parallel series of focus groups, the fifteen cities managed just to arrange one group of business people and even then had to compress the work into only one session. An engagement with economic actors would require a much more stream-lined and abbreviated process.

6.3.2. While the relevant political and Departmental leaderships within a municipality signed up for the co-responsibility approach a number of the pilot actions illustrated that some staff, including on

occasion senior professional officers, remained to be convinced. The implementation of this method requires more time and a change of professional outlook among the staff. They have to break from the old methods and adopt a more co-operative style of working. In some cases, this provokes resistance and defensive attitudes. This is certainly an issue that would have to be addressed should the method be deployed more widely.

6.3.3. A further issue is that of **political conviction and leadership**. A paradox of this move to co-responsibility is that to effect a change of this kind, it is crucial to have strong political leadership from the top. Interestingly, this seems easier when cities are starting from a low base. Then mayors and senior councillors can see the early advantages and actively promote them, as has been the case in TOGETHER in both Salaspils and Kavala. When the situation is more advanced and promoting co-responsibility means ceding significant chunks of authority or major changes in professional practice, then winning both senior level political and officer support becomes more complicated. This is a political reality in any move to more participative and devolved governance.

An additional complication is the reality of political change and party competition. A number of participating authorities are facing elections in the near future. If there is a change of party political leadership, in some cases such as Salaspils it is unclear whether the new political administration would continue with a co-responsibility approach. This suggests that where possible a cross-party understanding about the value and merits of this approach should be secured. Different parties will give different emphases to the co-responsibility perspective but it is important to seek cross-party consensus on the method where this is achievable.

6.3.4. **Mainstreaming**. The biggest obstacle remains how to bridge the gap from a pilot action and embed the approach within the mainstream. The most developed municipalities have found difficulties here and the lead Partner with experience of working in this way since 2006 acknowledges the scale of the problem. The current context of financial crisis and austerity makes this challenge all the more daunting. None of the Local Action Plans are able to chart a convincing strategy for how they will embed co-responsibility within major areas of their service or territorial provision in the immediate future. Each LAP indicates specific initiatives; important shifts in service practice and process; moves towards greater citizen and civic engagement. Yet the challenge of how to mainstream this approach within major spheres of municipal activity remains.

#### 6.4. Assessment against the 7 point scale

The crucial test of every pilot project is, what impact does it have on the mainstream? For TOGETHER how will the activities of the LSGs, the testing of the consultative tool, the pilot activities and the overall lessons drawn from them and expressed in the LAPs change the daily life and working practices of each municipality. Compared to the start of the project, what has changed in the overall planning, activities and services of each partner city? Here the 7 point assessment scale is particularly valuable. It gives a simple way by which each municipality can gauge its progress.

There were three cities in the project, **Debica, Kavala and Salaspils** which began the project at the lower end of the scale. In Kavala and Salaspils, the municipality consulted its citizens sporadically; there was little, if any, formal engagement; and where there was it was the council that took all the key decisions. TOGETHER seems to have made a significant difference to the thinking and outlook within these municipalities with clear evidence of a strong commitment to much more equal arrangements with the partners/voluntary organisations having some real influence on agenda and decision-making. In Debica, this situation had been modified prior to the TOGETHER project by a large scheme engaging with citizens which had begun to alter the town's approach to citizen engagement and encouraged the development of public-private partnerships. TOGETHER has

consolidated this shift. **The LAPs suggest that there are mechanisms in place to suggest that this shift from Point 1 to Point 3 on the scale will be permanent.**

Two of the partners, **Covilhã and Pergine** started from a slightly stronger position with a set of formal partnerships common across the municipality (Scale 2). Their activities and their Local Action Plans have shown a strengthening of this move to citizen engagement and community participation so that engaged partnerships (Scale 3) have become much more the norm. **The fulfilment of the proposals identified within their LAPs would indicate that each municipality shall also begin to develop more co-management, co-governance and co-production features in elements of their work.**

Three of the partners, **Botkyrka, Braine l'Alleud and Mulhouse** had much stronger engaged partnerships (Scale 3) at the outset of the Project. **Their LAPs indicate how TOGETHER has given a significant impetus to their partnerships and how elements of co-management, co-production and co-governance (Scale 4-6) have become more firmly embedded within each municipality.**

Yet, even here embedding this approach across all aspects of a council's activities has not been possible. Nowhere has been able to reach Point 7 on the scale; a consistent approach to co-management, co-production and co-governance remains elusive. To date, this has been achieved in particular areas or initiatives, rather than a policy approach that is followed systemically across an entire neighbourhood or major department. This suggests that the adoption of a co-responsibility method will be a long haul within all municipalities and that no quick fixes should be expected.

## **7. Conclusions**

7.1. Taken as a whole, the TOGETHER project as a small-scale, time-limited pilot initiative has made significant and creditable progress across all its eight partner municipalities in extending citizen participation and promoting a co-responsibility approach.

There has been lots of enthusiasm and interest shown in the different municipalities. A range of imaginative pilot actions have been generated. In each city there are plans to embed this approach within parts of the municipality's work once the project has been completed.

7.2. For URBACT there are three major gains from this process. **There are three tools which the project has developed which can help the process of generalisation and dissemination.**

1. A new method for consulting with citizens. The project has successfully tested a **consultative computer tool for citizen engagement** developed by the Council of Europe. In a simplified version, this could be used widely by public authorities across Europe. The URBACT Secretariat should discuss with the Council of Europe how this methodology could be more widely popularised.
2. **A 7 point scale** by which citizens, non-governmental organisations and councils can measure the extent of citizen engagement on a project, programme or strategic plan in their city. URBACT can encourage the wider take-up of this scale which can quickly tell public authorities and citizens the extent of their progress towards citizen participation.
3. Drawing on its much longer experience in experimenting with this approach, the project lead partner Mulhouse has produced **a tool-kit on co-responsibility** which outlines in detail how

the process has been developed in different settings in the city and the outcomes of a variety of pilot actions. In a shortened version this will be a valuable tool-kit for public authorities across Europe

7.3. Citizen engagement and co-responsibility is a growing area of public interest. There is a widespread recognition of the increasing importance of active public participation in civic affairs. This research project suggests that many areas remain to be explored, for example, how to maximise learning from the pilot actions and how to scale up and extend the methods of citizen engagement. That would be a rich field for potential further investigation within the URBACT programme.

Dr. Jon Bloomfield  
Honorary Research Fellow,  
University of Birmingham  
October 2012.

## Annex 1. Framework for Local Co-responsibility Action Plans

Within the TOGETHER work programme there is a requirement that each city will produce an action strategy for co-responsibility. **This will be its local action plan.** In the light of the practical experiences that we have gained so far, the following is a **suggested template** for these local co-responsibility action plans.

The template is for discussion. It is not designed as a rigid framework but rather as a guide to each city so that the task of **writing the local co-responsibility action plan is seen as practical and simple.** The template should also help **members of each Local Support Group to be involved in both the writing and the discussion of the co-responsibility plan.**

### 1. The Background

This should contain some material about the well-being agenda; the wish to move beyond just economic indicators; and the changing nature of central and local government services in Europe.

It should include some material on new patterns of citizens' participation and the role of users of services – parents, tenants and residents, passengers, pupils etc. – in determining services.

It could include a brief summary of the well-being debate and the approach of co-responsibility pioneered by the Council of Europe.

This is the basis on which TOGETHER is proceeding.

Suggested minimum of 2 pages

### 2. Democratic practices in each city

This section should describe a range of developments in your city prior to the TOGETHER project.

What role is played by NGOs and civic associations?

Are citizens or users of services involved at all in the development of services?

Are citizens consulted on policy and service developments?

How do elected councillors relate to these processes?

Suggested minimum of 3 pages

### 3. Local Support Group

Once you became part of TOGETHER how did you establish the Local Support Group (LSG)?

Did this build on previous links with NGOs and users in the city or was it entirely new?

Has your LSG got a broad basis or are there still weaknesses of representation?

List the members and indicate the role the LSG has played in the project

Suggested minimum of 2 pages

### 4. Focus Groups

These form a central element of the project work.

How did you set these up?

How did the process go?

What did you learn from the results?

Here, each city should be able to draw on the reports it has prepared for the TOGETHER partner meetings. Suggested minimum of at least 4 pages.

### 5. Pilot actions on co-responsibility

What pilot actions were chosen and why?

How did the city develop each pilot action?

What progress has been made with each action and what have you learnt from them so far? Draw out the most important lessons. Again, these form a central element of the project and a minimum of at least 4 pages is suggested

#### **6. Spreading the co-responsibility approach.**

This section should be the core of the report. It should **set out clearly the plans for the future** based on what the municipality has learned from the project and how it proposes to generalise from what it has learned. It should indicate the following.

Do you intend to spread this approach across a sector, for example, introduce into more schools?

Or into more neighbourhoods?

Or in your city's communication strategies?

Or by introducing this model/approach for all consultations/surveys undertaken by the municipality.

If, a co-responsibility approach will not be pursued at all, or only partially, then it will be important to explain and give the reasons.

This section needs to indicate clearly what specific plans are being proposed by your municipality in relation to co-responsibility; in what sectors or neighbourhoods; and with what budgets.

Suggested minimum of 4-6 pages.

#### **7. Linking with other methods**

How will you combine a co-responsibility approach with other methods of citizen participation or engagement with NGOs that the city already uses?

Suggested minimum of 2 pages.

#### **8. The LSG**

What role will the LSG play in the future of the city when the TOGETHER project finishes?

Suggested minimum of 1 page.

#### **9. Conclusions**

These should be concise and to the point.

What have you learnt from the project, both in your own city and from the exchanges with other cities?

Will this method offer useful ways for future citizen participation in your town?

Suggested minimum of 2 pages.

It seems to me that this offers a framework for each city to write a Local Co-responsibility Action Plan that will be based on what it has done in TOGETHER.

#### **Timescale.**

I propose that each city writes a draft plan in time for circulation and discussion at our partnership meeting in Kavala in June 2012. (Project co-ordinators and LSGs can already begin to write sections of their plans during autumn 2011.) Following peer review discussions with colleagues in Kavala, the plans can be revised over the summer in time for the second draft to be considered at our Pergine meeting in September 2012. Then each city can present its plan to the concluding conference in Mulhouse in November 2012.

As Lead Expert, I would try to draw together some wider lessons and outputs for a final report. This would assess how valuable the co-responsibility approach is to the new thinking on citizen participation which is developing across Europe.

Jon Bloomfield, November 2011