



European Democratic Citizenship Awards

Category : NGO of the Year

Name of the Organisation: In Loco Association

Description of the Organisation:

"In Loco is a non-profit private association. Among its thematic areas of activity, we enhance the promotion of the Participatory Budgeting initiative.

The Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a new model of democratic governance, developed mostly at municipal level, within which citizens can decide how to spend a part of the money available for public investment. In Loco's role has been to foster the development of these processes in Portugal, persuading and supporting several municipalities throughout the country to adopt and implement this new model of governance.

In Loco's support to the municipalities consists of:

- Training for the political and technical teams in order to implement the PB;
- Designing of the PB methodology to be adopted in each municipality;
- Training of citizens to a more active and informed participation;
- Supporting the PB development;
- Monitoring and evaluation of processes and results.

In Loco has been invited to extend its intervention to other countries. "

Impact achieved by your Organisation:

"In 2014, In Loco has:

- Provided consulting to the municipalities of Lisbon, Cascais, Funchal, Ponta Delgada, Águeda, Lousã, Lagoa, Alenquer, Odemira, Portimão, Vila Verde in the implementation of PB. The population covered consists of 1.196.056 inhabitants representing more than 11% of the Portuguese population. The citizens of the above municipalities have decided, in 2014, around 7.5 million Euros in the completion of municipal investments projects.
- Created the Rede de Autarquias Participativas, comprising 44 municipalities across the country.
- Trained more than 250 citizens interested in PB.
- Created the "Portugal Participa" website, the first participatory democracy national platform, which registers an average of 500 visits/month.
- Was hired by the World Bank to disseminate this work in Mozambique by advising 3 municipalities in implementing, supporting the creation of a network and a national PB policy.

What makes the Organisation innovative?

"The initiative has several innovative features:

- Its coordinated by In Loco, a non-governmental organization that provides consulting and support to municipalities in designing, implementing and evaluating citizens participation public policies;
- Aims to create participatory democracy processes in a context of citizens distrust in relation to institutions and high rates of electoral abstention;
- Allows designing PB models adapted to the reality of each municipality, ensuring the transfer of knowledge to politicians, technicians and citizens so that processes are sustainable;
- Is based on a systemic conception of participation, according to which citizens are involved at all stages of the procedure - submission of proposals; technical analysis of its viability; public voting on the proposals; physical implementation of the winning projects.

In addition to these, the PB is also capable of:

- Approaching elected citizens, reinforcing the mechanisms of dialogue and mutual trust;
- Increase transparency in the management of the municipalities public resources;
- Promoting citizens' knowledge regarding the functioning of municipalities;
- Fostering dialogue and consensus among citizens on public investment priorities, thereby increasing the sensitivity and social cohesion;
- Developing an educational process on democracy and participation for all involved (politicians, technicians and citizens);
- Promoting intergenerational dialogue and equal opportunity for participation of men and women;
- Strengthening the role and the responsibility of citizens in the development of their municipalities."

Contribution to European values:

"The initiative contributes to promote several European values, such as:

- Democracy – represents a wager on deepening the qualification of representative democracies, ensuring a more intense and regular participation of citizens in the management of municipal resources. In the PB processes with children and youth that In Loco has supported, there is an educational dimension to democracy and citizenship even more explicit. There is in all PB a learning of democracy by practical experience of the participants.
- Liberty – the PB represents an area of freedom of participation among all participants, without any restriction, where you can discuss the problems of the territory, make proposals, find solutions and publicly vote on priorities.
- Equality – PB are spaces of equality among all citizens, regardless of economic and social situation as well as linguistic and oral domain of each. Everyone has the same space and voting power.
- Respect for minorities – PB integrates participants of all nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, everyone has the opportunity to participate at all stages of the process, without any kind of limitation that differentiates them.

- Pluralism – the PB are spaces of diversity and pluralism of opinions and ideas. It is not required any previous preparation or specific qualifications to participants. Just wishing to participate with their ideas and contributions to the development of their municipality is sufficient.

- Solidarity – the PB are specifically intended to build more supportive and more cohesive societies. The PB methodologies designed by In Loco aim to ensure that participants, regardless of the ideas of each, are able to listen to the proposals of all, discuss priorities and reach consensus on the most urgent projects in each issue of the process. They are recurring examples of situations in which many citizens renounce their ideas and proposals for recognizing that other people are more urgent and necessary.

- Gender equality – the PB ensure equality in access conditions for both men and women. For example, simultaneously with the holding of PB public meetings (usually at the end of the day and night), in which citizens can present and discuss proposals, is available children occupation service and youth coordinated by educators which aims to facilitate the participation of men and women with children. It is very important to ensure equal participation between men and women because they usually represent different sensibilities, but complementary, on the priorities for municipal investment.

- Respect for human dignity – the PB processes are a mean of integration for groups that are often marginalized. That's why we have raised the municipality's awareness to the need for sessions of participation in areas easily accessible for people with reduced mobility. The same applies to other social groups, such as the deaf and mute population. For these groups explanatory videos are produced and organized specific sessions, with translation into sign language.

These and other principles are worked by In Loco in the preparatory training given to politicians and technicians of the municipalities supported by the initiative, thus ensuring their inclusion in the PB model that will be defined. The same principles are monitored and evaluated by In Loco over the implementation of the PB in all municipalities."

Website or promotional materials:

"The initiative is supported by several communication materials: - Associação In Loco's website - www.in-loco.pt.

In the News and Projects sections there are several references to the work that In Loco has developed in the field of Participatory Budgeting; - Portugal Participa initiative's website - www.portugalparticipa.pt.

The first national participatory democracy platform, created and coordinated by In Loco, in which there are daily updated news regarding participatory processes developed in Portugal; a national observatory with several experiences; a library with many bibliographic resources on the subject, among other options.

Portugal Participa initiative's Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/portugalparticipa>;

PB Information System's website (infoOP) - www.infoop.pt. This is the first software in the world to support the design, management and monitoring of Participatory Budgeting. It was created by In Loco."