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European Citizens Crowdsourcing project

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EUCROWD EVENT REPORT

From Crowd to Action - the future of digitalised democracy in Europe?

(Riga, Latvia)

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SECTION 1: DESCRIPTION OF EVENT

I. Information about event

Venue	University of Latvia Faculty of Social Sciences (Riga, Latvia)
Start date	Thursday 23 November 2017
End date	Thursday 23 November 2017
Title of event	»From Crowd to Action - the future of digitalised democracy in Europe?«
Type of event	International conference & discussion
No. of participants	51
No. of countries involved	12
Web site	https://manabalss.lv/pages/eucrowd-project
Event report	http://www.inepa.si/eucrowd/2017/12/29/report-eucrowd-event-riga/

II. Description of event

The international event "**From Crowd to Action - the future of digitalised democracy in Europe?**" was organised on 23 November 2017, at University of Latvia Faculty of Social Sciences in Riga. The evening part of the event was held in Kanepes Culture center in Riga. Both locations were chosen to engage youth in the project, as both place are where the young, bright Latvian people are spending their time either for educational or cultural reasons.

We aspired to bring together international and local experts in the field of digital democracy, as well as activists, political scientists and students to learn from the best digital participation examples in the region and encourage further discussions on the power of crowdsourcing tools that can influence decisions and policies which are essential for the EU citizens!

To reach the goals of the EUCROWD project, Riga event was separated in three parts - the national as well as regional crowdsourcing cases was presented during the **first part** of the event.

The event started with the opening remarks from the event host, as well as the project partner - Simon Delakorda, Director of Institute for Electronic Participation (Slovenia).

Case presentations: How can crowdsourcing bring real changes?

- *Valdis Porneiks, ManaBalss.lv: pop-up legislations platform ParVaiPret.lv*
- *Sebastian Starzyński, company "TakeTask": crowdsourcing application "TakeTask" (Poland)*
- *Eduards Ozoliņš, Communication Department, State Chancellery of Latvia: governmental platform MazaksSlogs.lv (Latvia)*
- *Linas Šivis, Sveiko Vaiko Institutas: crowdsourcing platform "Sveikas Vaikas" (Lithuania)*

Workshops, where participants, together with workshop moderators, shared their thoughts on EU level crowdsourcing tools, took place on the **second part** of the day, following the concluding remarks about the cases presentations and workshop results.

World Café style workshops:

- *"What should the citizens be able to decide on EU level?" moderated by Simon Delakorda*
- *"Is there a right time & place for crowdsourcing to have political impact?" moderated by Elisa Lironi, Digital Democracy Manager at ECAS (Belgium)*
- *"What should be the right technology for crowdsourcing at the EU level?" moderated by Raimo Muurinen, Open Ministry representative (Finland)*

At the **evening part**, the discussion continued in the form of panel discussion amongst the experts, with an interactive engagement with the audience.

Discussion "Digital democracy in Europe - dream or reality?"

Speakers: Simon Delakorda, Valdis Poriņeks, Sebastian Starzyński and Lolita Čigāne, member of Latvian Parliament. Moderated by Ansis Bogustovs, journalist.

The networking part was organised as a networking dinner for the project partners, host organisation and case experts. Participants were involved in the networking during the coffee break and before/after the discussion part.

III. Citizens involvement during event and target groups presence

The first part of the event was based on the presentations of the case experts, where EU citizens were involved in the Q&A sessions. Later, participants were interactively involved in the facilitated "world café" style workshops, where each of them had a chance to share their opinions on all three main questions. Evening part was a panel discussion amongst experts - nevertheless, the audience were interested and contributed to the discussion greatly, by challenging the speakers about the role of citizen participation and digital democracy itself.

Target groups present at the event: pensioners, students, youth, entrepreneurs, NGO sector representatives, democracy and digital democracy experts, academics, crowdsourcing experts, Latvian State Chancellor representative, Nordic Council of Ministers representatives, Parliamentary deputy, journalist, Student Council representatives.

SECTION 2: DISCUSSION ON CROWDSOURCING IN THE EU POLICY-MAKING

IV. General considerations on using crowdsourcing as (e-)participation method in politics and policy-making

Driven from the discussions on Latvian national initiative platform ManaBalss.lv as well as other national crowdsourcing examples, event participants and experts raised few important challenges for the EU level digital democracy/crowdsourcing pilot project:

- Could there be a situation, when there is too much power to determine the content for digital platform itself? Should the platform or government make decisions about the platform content? Should the platform work only as a infrastructure not content watchdog?
- Freedom of speech/ freedom of opinion - should it really exist 100% in the light of extremism threats?
- Where is the “red line” for determining the content of the platform? Few discussion participants stressed out, that the platform shouldn’t go against the national or pan-national core values and constitution, as well as the human rights,
- Liquid democracy could be a method used in digital democracy that could possibly bring more trust to the system itself,
- It is essential to take into account and mitigate the possibility of cyberattacks to the liquid approach as well as crowdsourcing platforms.
- Crowdsourced topics should have an attachment to the people's’ experiences, so they can find relationships bonds between the European legislation and the impact to their everyday life.
- Participants had a common agreement, that crowdsourcing is and could be very useful to the EU decision making process, as it has already been proved to be useful from national experiences.

V. Policies that could be crowdsourced at EU level in relation to the future of Europe

1) Topics not to be crowdsourced at the EU level:

- taxes;
- budget;
- issues undermining core EU values;

Because they might be emotionally driven and therefore manipulated.

2) What topics / issues to crowdsource at the EU level:

- common topics of the EU concern, such as EU values;
- topics relating to the real decisions to be made at the EU level and for which the people should have their say;
- topics which are simple and easy to understand (however the danger of oversimplifying should be avoided);
- ad hoc topics when something very important happens and impacts peoples lives;

- general topic of people's interest: education framework, quality of food, health, security of the EU, military issues;
- specific topics under EU Commission competences: digital technologies/ information society (privacy, trust), Horizon 2020 topics, environment regulation;
- topics not being discussed elsewhere (e.g. Debate Europe, Your Voice in Europe);
- topics relating to the European Citizens Initiative.

Regardless the topics itself, it is important that these topics have an attachment to the people's experience, so they can also find these relationship bonds between the European legislation and the impact to their everyday life.

3) Crowdsourcing aims

- testing of opinions / getting opinions to co-decide with the European Commission in the early stage of policy-making;
- refining the issues from idea to the policy proposal.

4) Crowdsourcing requirements

- people should feel they can influence the outcomes of crowdsourcing;
- proper communication with people engaged into crowdsourcing;
- user experience with the crowd sourcing tool is important.

5) Open issues / questions relating to crowdsourcing at the EU level

- how to ensure the representative sample of people / European nations participating;
- what is the originality of wisdom of the crowd (what is the added value of the crowd in relation to the experts knowledge)?
- the fake-news issue, which can capture the crowd (crowd needs to be safeguarded).

VI. E-participation examples relevant for a crowdsourcing pilot at the EU level

1. Pop-up legislations platform **ParVaiPret.lv (Latvia, ngo)** provides every citizen an opportunity to follow-up and vote on the decisions. The site allows people to go online and vote on topics which are currently being debated on Parliament. Members of Parliament are voting upon every week in the Parliamentary sessions.

Should the EU create one? The same idea could be applied on the European Union level, however there are two challenges, first one is that all of European Union countries should participate and interact with this site regularly and second issue is that it could be difficult to create this type of organizational structure, and different countries have different access to trustable, secure personal data that then have to be combined on an EU level.

2. Crowdsourcing application “**TakeTask**” (**Poland, co**) helps companies in performing tasks in the field by providing one task management application for employees and external communities. With their easy use task management and instant learning application companies can split their tasks between their employees and external communities (crowdsourcing), thus giving them flexibility, scalability and cost-effectiveness in the field of human resources. At the same time, “TakeTask” allows people to earn money and increase their qualifications.

Should the EU create one? The project could be replicated to the EU level. Already from February 2017, the project will be capable to work on multinational level. In January 2017, new

version of the system will be launched and it will be multilingual. The owners of the application encourages any NGO to contact “TakeTask” and get the access to the platform for free. It will work for the organisations by sharing the community with “TakeTask” and “TakeTask” will provide the system.

3. Governmental platform **Mazaksslogs.lv (Latvia, gov)** is an online platform which was developed by State Chancellery of Latvia to promote public participation, improve the customer service culture in public administration and to assess the performance of public administration employees by submitting their feedback. Their main goal is to help to reduce administrative burden for entrepreneurs and residents.

Should the EU create one? The platform could be introduced to the needs of EU citizens. It should be taken into account that the majority of people doesn't come in direct contact with EU institutions, but it is possible to customize the solutions for the ones in need though.

4. Crowdsourcing platform "**Sveikas Vaikas (Lithuania, ngo)**" was a crowdsourced platform, which helped to promote additive free products. The project was revolutionary – it reached over 1 million unique users (that is 1/3 of Lithuanian population), in 2009 it was awarded as the best social innovation on Internet (“Login/2009”). In 2010 organization was awarded as the best social initiative in Lithuania (Lithuanian National Person of the Year Election). Moreover, the project had huge social impact - Lithuanian parliament has implemented a law banning 39 hazardous food additives in kindergartens and schools.

Should the EU create one? A the project author admits, the whole idea about Sveikas Vaikas was to make it work on European Union level. Regulations comes to all European Union countries, that means if you want to ban something (in this case - hazardous food additives) in one European Union country, you have to do it in all EU. Project author concludes, that although they tried it, it was hard to scale in multicultural, multilingual market. If these obstacles are resolved, then it is possible to launch this project on EU level.

VII. Policy-making / consultation phase in which the crowdsourcing would take place

In the workshop, we asked the participants in which phase of EU policy-making would a crowdsourcing experience make sense according to them.

We briefly explained how the European decision-making process works and the functions of the EU institutions:

- The European Commission has the right of initiative and considered an autonomous promoter of the community interest;
- The European Parliament is composed of the direct representatives of the citizens;
- The Council of the EU holds the negotiations of national interests.

We also explained that there are four main entry points in legislative procedures - Ideas, Planning, Decision-making and Implementation - and we asked the participants in which phase of do they think crowdsourcing processes should take place.

Most of the participants agreed that a Crowdsourcing experience at the EU level should certainly be during the Ideas phase, especially to gather broad inputs from citizens from all parts of society. In the Ideas phase, the questions should not be too technical so that citizens can feel free to answer on the topic according to their knowledge and personal experience.

However, although the Ideas phase is a good one to ask for the “wisdom of the crowd”, it is important that citizens are also involved in the next phases too as impact needs to be somewhere ensured. For example in the case of France’s participatory mechanisms, citizens can contribute to the Ideas phase then contribute again in a later stage when there is a draft legislative text and citizens have possibility to have a say on the text itself. At the second stage, citizens are usually also more aware of the policy topic because of their involvement in the ideas phase.

The participants agreed France’s case could be a good example to follow when piloting a crowdsourcing project at the EU level too.

Besides the appropriate topics and entry phases, event participants also discussed the possible **technological solution for EU level crowdsourcing pilot**. Here are some of the considerations.

Participants together with workshop moderators concluded, that there are already a few good crowdsourcing platforms – some of them in Finland, France and Latvia, where a person can read, vote and comment on law proposals on the platforms. Partly from experience of these and also other well known examples, participants came to the definitions of the necessary requirements, risks and problems as well as the ownership of the desired technological solution for the EU level pilot platform.

Requirements:

- Optional anonymity (higher risk of cyber attacks);
- Open source solution;
- Great user experience;
- Quick response time.

Risks & problems:

- Internet “trolls”, that could disturb the discussions;
- Cyber attacks - appropriate and safe authorisation level, as well as technical system should be ensured to prevent this risk;
- Contemporary trends of the internet should be taken advantage of (for example, video trend amongst the youth);

Answering the questions - who should own this kind of platform - the group concluded that it should be a hybrid form of ownership (state institution + NGO).

SECTION 3: EVALUATION OF EVENT

VIII. Extent to which event has increased participant's understanding of the EU

According to the anonymous questionnaires that the participants of the event were asked to fill in: 53% of participants didn't know much about European Union, eventually participants learned new things, and how can they use, for example, crowdsourcing in their daily life. 42% of participants already knew something about European Union and its possibilities 5% of participants of them did know a lot about European Union, and didn't learn anything new for them.

IX. Extent to which has event improved participants awareness about the possibilities of using crowdsourcing as an innovative channel of e-participation in EU policy making-process

According to the anonymous questionnaires almost all participants indicated that they have learned something new about crowdsourcing in European Union policy making. Few of them indicated that crowdsourcing was a new topic. And yet, a lot of them indicated that crowdsourcing has a lot of potential in European Union policy making. Some of them indicated that this event has gave them wide view about crowdsourcing and how they can use it in their daily life.

Here are some of the responses from participants:

"New topic for me"

"Fascinating to learn about crowdsourcing at all"

"It has a lot of potential"

"Nice presentations of Latvian and other country cases. It has a potential for European Union policy-making"

"Wide view on the topic"

here are other responses:

"I discovered new tools and possibilities"

"There were interesting presentations"

"Very interesting"

"I learned something new today"

"Very useful workshops"

The event covered several topics, that gave opportunities for the participants to learn about crowdsourcing examples and crowdsourcing opportunities regarding the national and EU policy making process. Participants were interactively engaged and shared their opinions and thoughts in the discussions during three workshops (*World Cafe* method): "What should the citizens be able to decide on EU level?"; "Is there a right time & place for crowdsourcing to have political impact?"; "What should be the right technology for crowdsourcing at the EU level?". Event organizers additionally sent out some information about the crowdsourcing examples in the event communication channels before the event.

Appendix 1: Event Agenda

Can people come together to influence decisions of politicians & legislation? From banning unhealthy products in Lithuania to using the information from a crowd for market research in Poland - bright examples of people participating are all around us, but what it takes to influence decisions on the European level?

It is our pleasure to invite you to the international event "**From Crowd to Action - the future of digitalised democracy in Europe?**" that will be held on 23 November 2017, at University of Latvia Faculty of Social Sciences in Riga. We aspire to bring together international and local experts in the field of digital democracy, as well as activists, political scientists and students to learn from the best digital participation examples in the region and encourage further discussions on the power of crowdsourcing tools that can influence decisions and policies which are essential for you!

Agenda:

11:30 - Registration and coffee

12:00 - Opening remarks

by Valdis Porneiks, CTO of ManaBalss.lv (Latvia) and Simon Delakorda, Director of Institute for Electronic Participation (Slovenia)

12:20 - Case presentations: How can crowdsourcing bring real changes?

- *Valdis Porneiks, ManaBalss.lv: pop-up legislations platform ParVaiPret.lv*
- *Sebastian Starzyński, company "TakeTask": crowdsourcing application "TakeTask" (Poland)*
- *Eduards Ozoliņš, Communication Department, State Chancellery of Latvia: governmental platform MazaksSlogs.lv (Latvia)*
- *Linas Šivis, Sveiko Vaiko Institutas: crowdsourcing platform "Sveikas Vaikas" (Lithuania)*

14:45 - Coffee & light lunch break

15:50 - World Café style workshops:

- *"What should the citizens be able to decide on EU level?" moderated by Simon Delakorda*
- *"Is there a right time & place for crowdsourcing to have political impact?" moderated by Elisa Lironi, Digital Democracy Manager at ECAS (Belgium)*
- *"What should be the right technology for crowdsourcing at the EU level?" moderated by Raimo Muurinen, Open Ministry representative (Finland)*

16:45 - Concluding remarks

All the participants are welcome to join the second - discussion part of the event @ [Kanepes Culture center](#) in Skolas street 15!

18:30 - Discussion "Digital democracy in Europe - dream or reality?"

Speakers: Simon Delakorda, Valdis Porneiks, Sebastian Starzyński and Lolita Čigāne, member of Latvian Parliament. Moderated by Ansis Bogustovs.

Appendix 2: Photos



