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European Citizens Crowdsourcing project

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EUCROWD EVENT REPORT

Crowdsourcing a new European democracy

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

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www.netdem.nl

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SECTION 1: DESCRIPTION OF EVENT

I. Information about event

Venue	Pakhuis de Zwijger (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
Start date	Tuesday14 March 2017
End date	Wednesday 15 March 2017
Title of event	»Crowdsourcing a new European democracy«
Type of event	Conference
No. of participants	73
No. of countries involved	14
Web site	http://netdem.nl/en/articles/eucrowd-conference-amsterdam/
Event report	www.inepa.si/eucrowd/2017/10/10/report-eucrowd-event-amsterdam/

II. Description of event

The EUCROWD conference in Amsterdam combined an evening part and an afternoon session on the following day that together included all necessary parts of the national events methodology.

Evening program - New Democracy: Who's Afraid of the People?
The evening program started with a networking dinner to bring together the present EUCROWD partners, the evening's speakers and the project partners from Netwerk Democratie's D-CENT project. At 19:30 started a public program with a roundtable discussion with four experts: Hille Hinsberg (co-organizer of the crowdsourcing initiative The People's Assembly from Estonia), Dick Pels (Dutch sociologist and political writer on topics on democracy and the role of the people, latest book: A Heart for Europe), Godelieve van Heteren (Director International Networks Erasmus University and director of Europa Arena), and Ramin (Firoez) Azarhoosh (Founder of community managed center Meevaart in Amsterdam). The discussion among experts was facilitated by moderator Natasja van den Berg and discussed the following questions: Who are 'the people' and how are people currently positioned in the political process? What strategies, such as crowdsourcing are there to enable citizens to take up another position in political processes on the national and EU level? Should the input of the crowd be included in policy and decision making? What are the challenges for citizen participation?

Afternoon program – Crowdsourcing a New European Democracy
The afternoon program was split up in two parts: case presentations and a facilitated workshop with a networking coffee break in between.
The cases presented were:
  ➢ Elisa Lironi (Digital Democracy Manager at ECAS) with an introductory presentation »Towards a crowdsourcing pilot at the EU level«. What is digital democracy and how could crowdsourcing work at the EU level?
  ➢ Hille Hinsberg (Co-organizer The People's Assembly) showed how an online platform was used during The People's Assembly Rahvakogu in Estinia to crowdsource new ideas and proposals to amend Estonia's electoral laws, political party law and other issues related to the future of democracy in Estonia.

- ➢ Paul Isaris (developer of democracIT at SciFY) gave a presentation of DemocracIT, an open-source, open-ended collaborative platform for commenting and annotating laws. The tool reinforces citizen participation in law consultations, and allows for smart analysis and organization of consultation comments.
- ➢ May-Britt Jansen, program manager at OpenStadsdeel of municipality Amsterdam, and Jeroen van Berkel (member of the Executive Committee at Stadsdeel West, municipality of Amsterdam) presented on the new tool Stem van West and how to organise bottom-up participation on the level of the neighborhood by engaging both government and citizens with the use of e-tools.

The facilitated workshop took place in the shape of a World Café. First the table hosts presented their discussion question in 2-5 minute pitches:
- Maarten de Groot and Kimberly Beijersbergen of the European Student Forum: »How can we strengthen youth participation in the EU?«
- Godelieve van Heteren, director Europa Arena on »When should crowdsourcing take place in order to have political impact?«
- Paul Isaris on »What technology should be used in a crowdsourcing tool at the EU level?«
- Anthony Zacharzweski (Democratic Society) on »What topic or policy field should be crowdsourced at EU level?«

People divided themselves over the four tables and discussed these questions in four rounds of 20 minutes so everyone could share her or his ideas about every issue. On every table there was paper to write down the ideas and at every new round the table hosts gave a two minute summary of the discussion to the new group so they could built upon the knowledge of the previous group.

The afternoon was concluded by Josien Pieterse (Director of Netwerk Democratie) who summarized the conclusions and recommendations. For this also the input of the table hosts and the public were asked.

III. Citizens involvement during event and target groups presence

During the evening program Netwerk Democratie connected the public program with the project »E-participation tools in the Netherlands« which Netwerk Democratie organizes in collaboration with the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs and Waag Society. This project builds upon the knowledge of the European D-CENT project that brings together different stakeholders in digital democracy and gathers successful crowdsourcing tools that are used throughout Europe. Netwerk Democratie translates and introduces a few of these open source tools to Dutch to be used by local governments. By connecting this project with the EUCROWD conference interesting links could be made between them and both networks could exchange.

The public evening program hereby also had the support of both the projects' interest groups. Present at the event were students, entrepreneurs, NGOs, experts, government ministry employers, European institutions representatives, academics, and software developers.

The audience was actively invited to join the conversation by the moderator and via two microphones specially set up for audience participation. After the debate the audience was invited to continue the conversation in the café.

The afternoon session was interactive with the audience divided over four tables with no more than

ten people so everyone at the table was able to join the conversation and share his or her thoughts in the World Café. The conversation was split up in four rounds so everyone could share ideas on every discussion question. At every table there was someone who noted down the input to be used in writing the report.

One of the discussion questions during the World Café specially targeted young people with the question »How can we strengthen youth participation in the EU?«. For this topic active participation was asked from two representatives of the Dutch division of the European Student Forum (AEGEE) by pitching the question and giving a short presentation about the European Citizens' Initiative »More Education«.

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

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

> ➢ **Crowdsourcing should be deliberative**

The discussion brought up the argument that the function of crowdsourcing should not just be gathering the input of citizens, but that there should be a deliberative quality to the crowdsourcing process. Participants agreed that crowdsourcing should be framed as a method to strengthen the communication between institutions and citizens. A two-way mode of communication, instead of an excuse to legitimate policy decisions.

✓ Also governmental institutions need to take up a participative role

> ➢ **Dealing with the results of crowdsourcing**

One of the recommendations that resulted from the World Café session is that it does not matter when crowdsourcing takes place, if the results of the crowdsourcing process are not implemented. It should be clear for citizens where they have impact on. If there is no real impact in the very last phase of the crowdsourcing process (implementation phase), there is no use for the whole process.

✓ Crowdsourcing is a method for trust building in European institutions
✓ Always make sure to give feedback on what is done with outcomes (also when not implemented)
✓ Don't be afraid to do big projects. Real impact makes for real participation

> ➢ **User-centered design of the crowdsourcing tool**

To increase the accessibility of a crowdsourcing tool it should be designed with the needs of its users in mind. A European crowdsourcing tool should have national platforms, adjusted to national or even local interests and language. Also on beforehand there should be enough support by policy makers or by those within governmental institutions to work with a crowdsourcing tool in order to truly create the new working methods that are necessary to support the process.

✓ Crowdsourcing tools should not burden but fit into the work process of politicians and policy makers
✓ Custom made tools for target groups and user-centered design take away obstacles for participation

> ➢ **Offline activities are crucial**

> ➢ **Be as transparent and inclusive as possible**

To make digital participation a success it is crucial to organize the offline aspect of crowdsourcing. The example of The People's Assembly in Estonia showcased that a crowdsourcing process should be a carefully enabled procedure. It included large-scale online deliberation, small stakeholder meetings, expert analysis of the proposals, a random sample meeting supported by an

organizational group of civil society actors, scientists and politicians. The whole process should be built as transparent and inclusive as possible. Going into different groups for input and being interactive and communicative about and during the whole process.

- ✓ Communicate transparently about the process
- ✓ Organize diverse deliberation groups / opportunities
- ✓ Democracy of minorities instead of majority
- ✓ Involve civil society organizations and other representatives of different interest groups
- ✓ Everyone who wants to participate should be able to do so
- ✓ Keep up communication with media channels during the whole process

- ➢ **Digital democracy tools should be open source and privacy by design**

Governments should take up responsibility over democracy and should not let commercial companies like Facebook define how they communicate with citizens. EU and national governments should create and use democratic participation tools that are not based on commercial interests. This means that digital democracy tools should use open standards, be open source and protect the privacy of its users.

- ✓ Everyone should be able to verify the code to prevent misuse
- ✓ Guarantee privacy of citizens' data
- ✓ Use Facebook only as a marketing tool, reaching target groups

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

Participants shared the following considerations on the most suitable policies and topics to be crowdsourced:

Personal interests
- The topic for crowdsourcing should **connect to people's every-day life**. Crowdsourcing should bridge big issues on the EU level with their impact on people's personal lives. Like TTIP, the constitutional design of the EU itself, and other issues in which people feel stakeholdership and impact in their local communities.
- People need information on the **impact** of EU decisions on their personal life
- **Emotions** are important it is an intangible result of participating in the decision-making process – it is a value in itself

Agenda-setting
- **Any topic** should be crowdsourced. It is the wrong question to ask which topic/policies to crowdsource, **citizens should be able to put something on the agenda**
- There are **not just certain topics that are relevant** to crowdsource. A crowdsourcing platform should therefore also incorporate an agenda setting component.

Role of intermediaries
- There is a need for intermediaries, like **media and civil society organizations** to play a role in translating the information on the EU level to the local context of everyday life. People will want to participate on issues when they sense the urgency and understand the impact of the issue on their daily life. Experiences in national and local crowdsourcing projects indicate that civil society and media play a very important role to get people to participate.

- Diversity goes hand in hand with **equal opportunities**. For this you need intermediary organizations and representatives.

Intersection between governmental interests and citizen interests
- The platform 'Stem van West' developed by the municipality of Amsterdam explained how they **designed the crowdsourcing tool to work on the intersection** between the processes and projects within the municipality and the interests and needs of citizens in the neighborhood. The development and the use of the tool should depend on a preliminary inquiry on both these sets of interest.
- There needs to be a sense of **urgency that is being felt by politicians**. A political buy-in.

Engagement of youth
- Young people are **individualistically** minded. Find **interest points** youth are involved with. Young people filter out things they enjoy and do not see the rest. This can also be positive in a hype on social media.
- **Issue focused participation** could trigger involvement of non-typical stakeholders such as youth. Young people don't believe anymore in traditional ways like elections. Crowdsourcing should not be community but interest point focused.
- Should not make it too simple, **take young people seriously**. Go into dialogue, ask opinion.
- Have **key figures** that can reach out to them.

Communication strategy
- There is a balance in how to frame an issue in a way that it is of interest for different stakeholders. **It should be focused, but not too focused** because then you loose the interest of the wider public. Big issues such as TTIP are too abstract, but they do effect everyone. This is where crowdsourcing comes in, you have to make it small.
- Once an issue is discussed **people expect an answer** on it.

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

Short description of practice cases and tools presented at event.

1. **The People's Assembly in Estonia**

In 2012 the Estonian Parliament questioned how they could make Estonian politics more democratic. **Together with civil society organizations** the online platform The People's Assembly was initiated in order to crowdsource new legislation on political parties, the electoral system and citizen engagement. The process was made out of different phases of **online deliberation**, **stakeholder deliberation** and **expert deliberation**. Designed in a process called crowdsourcing, because it was the people that came with a list of proposals that were analyzed, synthesized and put into clusters and matched and mixed in order to come to a sort of consensus, an agreed set of proposals that were taken to the parliament. In the online phase there were 6000 proposals that were worked on and 60.000 people visited the website, and then they did small circle stakeholder meetings and a **random sample demographically representative meeting**. Based on deliberative poling methods of John Fishkin modified to their own context. It exemplifies a carefully enabled procedure to get input from the bottom-up. Organized in collaboration between civil society actors, scientists and politicians. Main recommendation: the process should be built up to be as transparent as possible and inclusive as possible. **Go into diverse groups to involve them, be interactive and communicative about the process.**

2. Stem van West in Amsterdam

Two representatives of the municipality of Amsterdam illustrated the use of e-participation in Amsterdam-West. The tools they develop and use are always located at the **intersection between the processes and projects within the municipality and the interests and needs of citizens in the neighborhood.** The newly launched **open source** tool 'Stem van West', for example, enables citizens to propose and discuss their ideas for improving the neighborhood and present the best idea during the city council meeting. For citizens it has proved important that the tool is custom made for them and for politicians it is important that the e-participation is not a burden but fits into their work process.

3. D-CENT / E-dem in the Netherlands

D-CENT (Decentralised Citizens ENgagement Technologies) is a Europe-wide project bringing together citizen-led organizations that have transformed democracy in the past years, and helping them in developing the next generation of open source, distributed, and privacy-aware tools for direct democracy and economic empowerment. D-CENT tools form a federated architecture based on open standards, open APIs and a shared identity system to **allow for the growth of an ecosystem of modular, interoperable and decentralised tools**.

Netwerk Democratie has translated two D-CENT tools to Dutch and made them open source available on the E-dem platform to be used by Dutch municipalities. These tools are:

- Your Priorities from Iceland

Developed by Citizens Foundation Your Priorities' enables citizens to submit ideas, bring in arguments for and against them, prioritize the best ideas and get these discussed in the city council.

- Consul from Madrid

Through Decide Madrid citizens can propose ideas, join discussion, vote on ideas for the city and enables citizens to decide on the use of 60 million euros of the city budget.

❖ Consul has a lot of potential for implementation at EU level, because it has a verified log-in and **multiple options for participation** such as debates, proposals, voting, processes, and participatory budgeting. It also provides a clear timeline of the process and the phase it is currently in.

These open source tools are used by municipalities throughout Europe. Feedback, fixes and improvements are communicated to the software developer and updated to all local users of the tool. In this way **knowledge is shared** and users work together on the development of tools for digital democracy.

Conclusions from the discussion:

- Public and democratic tools should be **transparent and open source**. There should be no commercial stakes in the use of the platform, also not via a Facebook log in. For a tool to be truly democratic it is important to develop it according to open source and open standards to secure the **privacy** of user data and enhance political trust.

- There should **not be one European crowdsourcing platform,** this would be a monopoly and unappealing. European crowdsourcing should happen in a **decentralised** manner with a local look and feel. This could happen by using existing local platforms and integrating the input, or by using the same technological background, but have a local look and campaign. By using open source software, technology, improvements, security testing and a knowledge manual on how to use the platform can be easily shared.

- To make a crowdsourcing tool accessible and inclusive for everyone it should **enable different modes of participation**. People should be able to co-write legislation, propose their own ideas, vote or comment on existing proposals, advise on the decision-making process by expressing emotions, and be able to deliberate on the topics in an offline context. The crowdsourcing platform and process should accommodate these different layers of participation. The Citizen Initiative in Finland could serve as an example.

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

Conclusions from participants:

- Crowdsourcing should **ideally take place from the start of policy making onwards**. Involving citizens from the start better enables them to impact the policy-making process with their input. Also in the rest of the policy making process there are moments for crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing at EU level can be used for agenda setting, collaborative policy making, decision-making, and giving feedback on the implementation of policies.

- An **entry point can be before a law proposal** goes to European parliament. National level should enter early in the policy making process in order to have any impact. Crowdsourcing could be used for national deliberation about law proposals before they go to parliament.

- **There should be political support from Members of European parliament**
One of the important conclusions during the discussion groups on this question was that crowdsourcing should both impact the democratic gap as well as the lack of trust between MEPs and citizens. There is thus need for a cultural change within EU policy making by reconnecting the mind-set of MEPs to the local context. Next to a local focus this can be done by making the crowdsourcing process incorporated and beneficial to the work process of MEPs so there is enough motivation and willingness to take the input seriously and implement the result of the crowdsourcing process.

- A lot of crowdsourcing processes fail because nothing is done with the results. Before crowdsourcing takes place there should be a **clear agreement on what will be done with the results**. In the end there should also be a feedback loop in order for citizens and media to see what is done with the results. This enhances the trust and transparency of the crowdsourcing process.

- There should be a **clear timeline of the crowdsourcing process**, on what moments citizens can participate, and when decisions are made. Citizens should be well informed.

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:

-some who already studied or knew a lot about the EU did not learn much new information;
-some who knew a lot about the EU learned about new opportunities in the EU such as crowdsourcing;
-some who did not know much about the EU beforehand learned a lot.

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 all participants indicated to have learned more about crowdsourcing in EU policy making. Many of the participants indicated that crowdsourcing was a new topic for them. Some people heard about the use of digital tools in decision making processes for the first time. Others indicated they learned more about the possibilities and potential of crowdsourcing tools and about the different kind of platforms.

Report submitted by Anne de Zeeuw on 10 October 2017 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Appendix 1: Event Agenda

<u>Tuesday 14th of March</u>

13:00 – 16:00 »E-participation tools in the Netherlands« event at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, The Hague. International and national crowdsourcing tools discuss their best practices with Dutch local governments.

18:00   Arrival and dinner at venue Pakhuis de Zwijger with speakers and EUCROWD partners

19:30   Start of the **EUCROWD panel discussion: »Who's afraid of The People?«**
             > Welcome by moderator Natasja van den Berg

19:40   **Roundtable discussion 1: how are The People currently positioned in political processes?**
             > Introduction by Hille Hinsberg on crowdsourcing platform The People's Assembly in Estonia
             > Reflection by Dick Pels on the situation in the Netherlands
             > Godelieve van Heteren on the divide between politics and citizens
             > Firoez Azaroosh on the participation society and inequality
             > Anthony Zacharzewski on media and populism in the U.K.

20:30   **Roundtable conversation 2: How can technologies enable citizens to take up another position in the political process?**
             > Current strategies and digital tools
             > Connecting crowdsourcing principles with fundamental democratic principles of effective participation, enlightened understanding, control over the political agenda, political equality and inclusion of different voices

21:30   End and drinks

<u>Wednesday 15th of March</u>

12:00   Introduction Crowdsourcing a new European democracy by Josien Pieterse (director Netwerk Democratie)

12:10   **E-participation: the status quo - Case presentations:**
             > Elisa Lironi, Digital Democracy Manager at ECAS on the current situation of e-participation in the EU
             > Hille Hinsberg presents experiments on the national scale: The People's Assembly Rahvakogu in Estonia
             > Paul Isaris, Science For You, Greece, presents DemocracIT an open source collaborative platform for commenting and annotating laws
             > May-Britt Jansen and Jeroen van Berkel from OpenStadsdeel of the municipality of Amsterdam on designing the participation process and presenting the use of open source tool »Stem van West«.

13:35	Coffee & tea break
14:00	**World Café workshop: raise your voice** Interactive groups hosted by: > Maarten de Groot and Kimberly Beijersbergen of the European Student Forum: *»How can we strengthen youth participation in the EU?«* > Godelieve van Heteren, director Europa Arena: *»When should crowdsourcing take place in order to have political impact?«* > Paul Isaris, SciFY: *»What technology should be used in a crowdsourcing tool at the EU level?«* > Anthony Zacharzewski, Democratic Society: *»What topic or policy field should be crowdsourced at EU level?«*
15:35	Gathering conclusions
14:00	End

Appendix 2: Photos

Evening debate, 14 March 2017

Evening debate, 14 March 2017

Evening debate, 14 March 2017

Case presentations and workshop, 15 March 2017

Case presentations and workshop, 15 March 2017

Case presentations and workshop, 15 March 2017

More photos:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/NetDem/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1419238868114839

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