



# EUCROWD

European Citizens Crowdsourcing project

(EUCROWD)

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EUCROWD EVENT REPORT

## **Let's Crowdfund the Future of Europe**

(Athens, Greece)

Vassileios Giannakopoulos - Science For You

[www.scify.org](http://www.scify.org)

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## SECTION 1: DESCRIPTION OF EVENT

### I. Information about event

Venue	HIGGS, 15 Victoros Ougko St., 10437, Athens, Greece
Start date	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> May 2017
End date	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> May 2017
Title of event	»Let's Crowdfund the Future of Europe«
Type of event	International Conference & Workshop
No. of participants	47
No. of countries involved	9
Web site	<a href="http://www.scify.gr/site/en/impact-areas-en/e-democracy/eucrowd">www.scify.gr/site/en/impact-areas-en/e-democracy/eucrowd</a>
Event report	<a href="http://www.inepa.si/eucrowd/2017/06/20/report-eucrowd-event-athens">www.inepa.si/eucrowd/2017/06/20/report-eucrowd-event-athens</a>

### II. Description of event

The event was designed to include:

- a wide range of stakeholders;
- focused presentations, to give to the participants information needed, so as to effectively contribute to the following sessions;
- workshops, that allowed all participants to contribute to all the issues under investigation, in an interactive way;
- networking of the participants.

The programme of the event was as follows:

#### **Cases presentations:**

- What is crowdsourcing? *Assya Kavrakova (ECAS)*
- Presentation of the process of drafting laws in the EU. *Vassiliki Dalakou (Ministry of Administrative Reconstruction)*
- Presentation of Best Practice (Greece - DemocracIT). *Paul Isaris (SciFY)*

#### **Discussion Panel Among Experts:**

1. Claiming our time - When is the time to speak?

The purpose of the panel was to set the issue of the stage (when) of the legislative process in the EU should we crowdsource.

*Moderator: Vassilis Giannakopoulos (SciFY)*

*Panel: Assya Kavrakova (ECAS) - Vassiliki Dalakou (Ministry of Administrative Reconstruction of Greece)*

2. Claiming our space: On what should we intervene?

The purpose of the panel is to set the issue of the topics (where) that we should crowdsource and the local best practices that can be used on an EU level.

*Moderator: Vassilis Giannakopoulos (SciFY)*

*Panel: Amalia Zepou (Municipality of Athens) - Stefanos Loukopoulos (VouliWatch)*

3. Doing it our way: How should we intervene?

The purpose of the panel is to set the issue of the tools and the methodologies (how) that can enhance the crowdsourcing in the legislative process in the EU.

*Moderator: Vassilis Giannakopoulos (SciFY)*

*Panel: Dr. Dimitris Gouscos (Athens University) - Dr. George Giannakopoulos (NRSC  
»DEMOKRITOS«) - Paul Isaris (SciFY)*

### **Facilitated workshop (World Cafe)**

1. When would the crowdsourcing take place?
  - a. Forming the law - Finalizing the law - Impact assessment
  - b. Which could be the entry point(s) for crowdsourcing?
  - c. Are you aware of specific best practices?
2. Which are most suitable policies / topics / areas of public concern to be crowdsourced at EU level in relation to the future of Europe?
  - a. How could citizens prioritize their efforts?
  - b. Good/ bad practices in crowdsourcing on: Immigration - Economic crisis - Shaping the future of Europe?
3. How should we use IT tools for crowdsourcing?
  - a. How to select tools/ technologies
  - b. Privacy vs Public Voice
  - c. What features are mostly needed?
  - d. Are you aware of specific best practices?
4. How can we engage EU citizens to participate in the formulation / assessment of policies?
  - a. How can we motivate the unengaged youth?
  - b. Are you aware of specific best practices?
5. How we can make sure that all EU citizens are going to be included?
  - a. What about people with disabilities?
  - b. How about people with no access to internet?
  - c. Elderly people?

### **Conclusion session**

Presentation of the World Cafe findings and mention to the findings of the past events.

**Networking session:** Time and encouragement for the participants to discuss the issues under investigation.

### **III. Citizens involvement during event and target groups presence**

Throughout the event the participants had the opportunity to actively engage in the discussions. At the 1st and 2nd session (Presentation and Facilitated Discussion Panel) they participated with questions to speakers and experts.

The Workshop (World Cafe) was dedicated to the citizens, since they had the time and encouragement to express their ideas and views on all the 5 different key questions addressed by the event.

The participants represented: Pensioners, Students, Young Entrepreneurs, NGOs, Experts, Government Ministry Employers, European Institutions Representatives, Academics, Youngsters, Disadvantaged people, etc.

Twitter moment from Athens event is available at  
<https://twitter.com/i/moments/972409654050480128>.

## 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

Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from discussions and workshops are described as follows.

#### A. What are the prerequisites for crowdsourcing to succeed?

- **The impact should be made very clear and personally and locally relevant.** This came up again and again as the most important factor to be taken into consideration. The expected impact should be made as clear as possible, on a personal level.
- **Role of NGOs:** Non governmental organizations can have a very strong role in crowdsourcing efforts. They can act as communicators and curators of content. In this way they can make sure that information is widespread, easily understood and ascertain credibility.
- **The role of education** has been stressed: citizens need to have some basic knowledge of their civil rights and the options they have for contributing to the formation of their common future.
- **The role of the media** has also been discussed: Media can communicate what legislation efforts are currently being crowdsourced, and how citizens can contribute, so as to raise awareness and encourage participation.

#### B. The role of IT

This section was targeted on technological tools that can be used to build crowdsourcing-based platforms and products. Topics discussed:

- **The importance of visual appeal of the platform.** How can we create visually pleasing and easy-to-use platforms and how to design a unique user experience in order to assure high user engagement.
- **Privacy and security concerns.** Should social media login methods be used in crowdsourcing platforms? The answer was that every platform should follow a strict-yet understandable privacy policy and present it as clearly as possible. In terms of security, the importance and role of open source paradigm in security was discussed. How can an open source platform be verified for its secureness and what is the importance of persuading the users that a platform is secure? This can be achieved in two ways: Firstly, by ensuring that the platform is tested by several open source engineers who can then verify the algorithmic security. Secondly, by educating the end users that open source software does not essentially mean poorly designed software, but software that can be more easily verified and tested.
- **The importance of setting clear goals in the platform.** A newly-registered user should understand immediately what the platform is about and what its goals are. Content-centered applications tend to be more favorably viewed by users because they induce the user directly into the platform's functionality.
- **Dealing with large volumes of textual input and many languages:** Artificial intelligence tools (e.g. Natural Language Processing) can help solve such problems.

#### C. Inclusion

How do we ascertain inclusion of people with disabilities, people with no access to internet, or the elderly?

- **The importance of an accessible platform.** In order for a crowdsourcing tool to be used by as many citizens as possible, they should first be aware of its existence and more importantly to be able to use it, as if it is not user friendly they will not be engaged. Having this in mind, tools created for computers or for mobile devices should be inclusive and people with disabilities have to contribute on the specification analysis.
- **The problem of limited Internet access.** It is quite common for the people of remote areas to not have Internet access. This means that they are blocked from the decision-making process, not having a say on issues that concern them. Municipalities and local authorities should provide and set up facilities where citizens without internet access can participate in the platform.
- **Educational activities can be focused around two main pillars.** Initially, there is the problem of illiteracy in technology and computers, which can be addressed through seminars and workshops specially designed for the elderly. The second pillar concerns the education of citizens on issues concerning their civil rights. Local communities of Civil Society should educate citizens about their civil rights, participation and decision making, since part of the population does not know how to express their opinion in a constructive and well defined manner.
- **Information distribution.** Though EU decisions concern us all and affects our everyday life as citizens, we do not have the information to be involved in the decision-making process. In this case, it would be crucial to have a citizens' information tool, where people can access all the information they need in an easy and comprehensible way, regardless of their level of education.

#### **D. Citizen engagement**

How can we engage EU citizens to participate in the formulation / assessment of policies?

Participants in the discussion started with defining why we need to engage EU citizens. They considered that mobilizing EU citizens is essential, as the scope is to achieve public pressure – make a mass appeal in traditional and new media.

What is needed is a comprehensive communication strategy that would be implemented at a national level. This would entail using both online and offline activities and communication tools and have a clear message. Social media would be valuable due to their popularity.

A key prerequisite in order to achieve the involvement of citizens is to have a user centric perspective when designing communication and awareness raising plans. Having a clear message is crucial and also not to forget to make it fun. The task is arduous: We are talking about changing people's mindsets and giving them an opportunity to be involved in political affairs.

Under this angle, it is proposed to strengthen all activities that have to do with educating citizens, and most of all the youth, on what being an EU citizen really means and what are the gains from EU citizenship. These are needed to motivate them to participate in the public sphere.

Patience and time is needed to gain people's trust and motivate them to use their civic power in order to shape their future.

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

The participants broke down the problem into different aspects:

1. How will citizens select what topics they will contribute to?
2. How should the legislator (EU/a state) select what to crowdsourcing?
3. How could highly technical issues be crowdsourced?
4. What are the prerequisites for crowdsourcing to succeed?
5. Should issues such dealing with the immigration problem be crowdsourced?

### How will citizens select what topics they will contribute to?

- **Personal interest:** Probably the most important factor in selecting where to contribute. Demographic factors (such as the profession), could reveal such interests.
- The issue of **personalized suggestions through automatic recommendation systems** was also raised, as a result of the previous factor.
- **Ease of understanding the issue**, which is critical in a world that promotes fast consumption of easily understood information. Law jargon, difficult wordings are examples of demotivators for participation.
- **Credibility of information provided in a crowdsourcing effort** is very important. Citizens are expected to participate in calls for action when the information provided is considered credible.
- **Credibility of person initiating the crowdsourcing effort.**
- **Being able to contribute in an anonymous way** is very important for some people.

### How should the legislator (EU/a member state/ a city) select what to crowdsourcing?

- The vast majority of the participants agreed that **practically all issues can be tackled using crowdsourcing.**
- Yet, there is a prerequisite that **the design of the methodology is sound.**
- The legislator should **focus on the problem** rather than on general descriptions and **pose specific questions and challenges.**
- It is best to **incrementally define the problem through various stages.** This is especially **important for EU-level legislation**, as we need to take into consideration country-specific aspects.
- As a result, the notion of also **crowdsourcing the definition of the problem** came up. Citizens should have a say in it.
- **The analysis of what is being discussed in social media (aided by artificial intelligence technology)** can be very useful for setting the agenda and understanding citizens' priorities. The **detection of topics that are implicitly discussed** can be very important in these cases.

### How could highly technical issues be crowdsourced?

- Most of the participants agreed that even (highly) technical issues can be crowdsourced.
- In these cases it is critical to allow citizens to have access to all information. Curation of information to allow easier understanding can help.
- Yet, **alternative models** have been discussed: participants from France described a **case in which non-expert citizens were randomly selected to propose legislation /approaches for a highly technical issue** regarding the disposal of nuclear waste. Citizens had access to all available information and exclusively worked on it for 2 weeks. The results of their work was assessed by experts as of very high quality. **Diversity of participants** is key in these cases, to ensure different view on the subject.

### Should ways to deal with the immigration issue be crowdsourced?

The answer was a definite “yes”, for many reasons. It is a multi-faceted complex issue, and at the end of the day a social one, with multiple implications that seriously divide the public. Citizens do not need highly technical / specialized knowledge to understand it, but do need well structured information to comprehend its complexity. There seems to be no clear central policy at the state / international level, and any proposed solutions will also need to be locally adjusted/customized in order to gain consensus, acceptance and active support of local communities. Therefore, as long as a sound methodological approach to crowdsourcing is available, the immigration issue can and should be crowdsourced.

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

Five Greek initiatives have been presented, ranging from city-level to country level. Each one is shortly presented below, and its EU-Level implementation potential is briefly assessed:

1. **The Greek OpenGov platform**<sup>1</sup>: established in 2010/2011, it is used for electronic deliberation on draft laws. Citizens and organisations can post their comments, suggestions and criticisms article-by-article. All submitted comments are gathered and assessed by competent authorities and in many cases they are incorporated in the final regulations. Since 2011, 661 deliberations have taken place, and citizens contributed with 180,000+ comments. Yet, a series of problems does not let it reach its full potential. The main problems are:
  - a. technical (bad user experience, lack of Artificial Intelligence tools to analyze great numbers of comments etc.),
  - b. operational (public servants do not have the expertise and do not understand the value of the process, leading to poor quality of deliberation reports) and
  - c. cultural (citizens are not convinced that their suggestions will be taken into consideration; it is also felt that many laws are imposed by the country’s lenders)

**EU-Level Implementation Potential:** Although the direction is correct, technical issues have to be dealt with before trying to implement such an effort at a European level. DemocracIT (described below) incorporates such solutions, that, if they are further developed, can be implemented in an EU level.

2. **National Pre-legislative deliberation platform**<sup>2</sup>, for the stages before the drafting of the law. It is in pilot phase and has been used in 4 cases.

**EU-Level Implementation Potential:** There exist similar EU initiatives for this stage, usually through online questionnaires.

3. **DemocracIT**<sup>3</sup>: It is an online platform for public consultation of draft laws, developed by SciFY and offer for free under open source licences. It has added intelligent features that make public consultations easier in two levels: Citizen contribution and Analysis of the results. Such features include Text analytics, automatic graphs, sentiment expression, tools for structured discussions (textual and emotional annotation of comments, option to discuss per sentence...) etc.

**EU-Level Implementation Potential:** The project has tremendous potential, as it incorporates AI solutions that can be scaled and used in many languages, it focuses both on citizens and legislators, it takes into consideration ease of use, and is offered under open source licences. Yet, since it is a pilot, it needs to be tested, further developed and

<sup>1</sup> Link: <http://www.opengov.gr/home/>

<sup>2</sup> Link: <http://opengov.diafgeia.gov.gr/minadmin/>

<sup>3</sup> Links: <http://www.democracit.org/>, <http://demo.democracit.org/>



scaled.

4. **SynAthina**<sup>4</sup>: A great city-level initiative that allows citizens to register and map their activities in the city. In this way, the contributions of the crowdsourcing are actions, not words, which shows what are the subject they really care about, and how they contribute to a common shared future. The value of the analysis is of great importance, as it also allows for synergies between crowdsourcing efforts to form.

**EU-Level Implementation Potential:** Scaling would be mostly beneficial for shaping the future of the EU in an actionable manner. Probably a network - like way (similar platforms in each city) would be ideal, so as to allow for platform customization. Yet, data should be freely shared, so as to allow for analyses, networking and synergies.

5. **VouliWatch**<sup>5</sup>: Vouliwatch (Parliament-watch) is a non for profit parliamentary monitoring organisation that engages Greek citizens with legislative politics and grants them with the opportunity to communicate, evaluate and hold elected representatives in the Greek and the European Parliament (MPs & MEPs) accountable. It offers the following options to users:
  - a. Public questioning (Ask your MP/MEP)
  - b. Votewatch (Track voting behaviour of each MP)
  - c. “Crowdsourcing legislation” and parliamentary control (Share ideas, experiences and make proposals)
  - d. “Policy Monitor” (compare party positions)

**EU-Level Implementation Potential:** Scaling would be mostly beneficial in a network - like way (similar platforms in each country) would be ideal, so as to allow for platform customization. There exist Parliament-watch in other countries, and Vouliwatch is in close contact with them.

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

Crowdsourcing can take place in different phases of decision-making or law-making such as:

1. Problem identification
2. Collecting arguments about solutions
3. Synthesis of arguments (solution proposals)
4. Decision Taking
5. Implementing solution

Ideally, crowdsourcing should funnel a problem into a solution.

Most commonly, crowdsourcing should take place when:

- people initiate the process (e.g. initiating legislative ideas for future laws)
- people contribute to problem identification
- implementation takes place and commitment from decision-makers is required

The most suitable cases for Implementing crowdsourcing at the EU level seems to be for:

1. The agenda setting phase (problem identification)
2. Formulating policy alternatives / variations of law proposal

Cases of crowdsourcing contributed by participants were :

- A wiki platform for energy policy in Helsinki (<http://avoiminministerio.fi/>)

<sup>4</sup> Link: <http://www.synathina.gr/en/>

<sup>5</sup> Link: <https://www.vouliwatch.gr/>

- Citizens parliament in France (<http://www.democratieouverte.org/>)

Issues regarding the preconditions of crowdsourcing and the challenges faced were spontaneously raised in this topic, as well. They are well-aligned with findings from other topic discussions.

Preconditions for crowdsourcing:

- EU members states should clarify the issue to the people to understand the problem
- educating citizens to understand different languages / discourses in law-making (political, expert, civic language etc.)
- proper time frame for crowdsourcing (there should be enough time)
- enable simple way of drafting law texts
- address practicalities important to better life of citizens at local level

Problems that can challenge crowdsourcing:

- law-making functions designed to work without citizens participation
- government does not inform / raise awareness about law making (people hear about it from media)
- law-making is too complicated for people to understand

## **SECTION 3: EVALUATION OF EVENT**

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

According to the statics of the evaluation questionnaire that participants were asked to fill out, 83.3% mentioned that after the event, they feel that they know more about EU.

### **XI. 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-proces**

According to the statics of the evaluation questionnaire that participants were asked to fill out, 96,6% mentioned that after the event, they feel that they know more about tools helping citizen e-participation.

Also, 93,1% of the participants stated that after the event, they feel that they know more about how a citizen can participate in the shaping of policies and 79,3% of them know more about when a citizen can participate in the shaping of policies.

Authors of this report:

1. Vassilis Giannakopoulos (SciFY)
2. Despoina Chalvatzi (SciFY)
3. Simon Delakorda (INePA)

Report submitted by Vassileios Giannakopoulos on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2017 in Athens, Greece.

## Appendix 1: Event Agenda



### Let's Crowdfund the Future of Europe! International Conference

**Date:** Tuesday 9th of May 2017

**Venue:** [HIGGS](#), 15 Viktoros Ougko St., Athens 10437 ([Map](#))

**Participants:** 40 people from 6 EU countries, and 6 EU organizations

10:00-10:30	Registrations
10:30-11:00	<u>Cases presentations</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is crowdsourcing?</li> <li>- Presentation of the process of drafting laws in the EU</li> <li>- Presentation of Best Practice</li> </ul>
11:00-12:00	<u>Discussion Panel:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Claiming our time - When is the time to speak?</b> The purpose of the panel is to set the issue of the stage (<i>when</i>) of the legislative process in the EU should we crowdsourc.</li> <li><b>2. Claiming our space: On what should we intervene?</b> The purpose of the panel is to set the issue of the topics (<i>where</i>) that we should crowdsourc and the local best practices that can be used on an EU level.</li> <li><b>3. Doing it our way: How should we intervene?</b> The purpose of the panel is to set the issue of the tools and the methodologies (<i>how</i>) that can enhance the crowdsourc in the legislative process in the EU.</li> </ol>
12:00-12:30	Coffee Break
12:30 -13:30	<u>Facilitated workshop (World Cafe)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Claiming our time</b></li> <li>● <b>Claiming our space</b></li> <li>● <b>Doing it our way</b></li> </ul>
13:30-14:30	Lunch
14:30-14:45	<u>Conclusion session</u>
14:45-15:00	<u>Networking session</u>

## Appendix 2: Photos



Conference opening remarks from Vassilis Giannakopoulos (SciFY)



Claiming our space: On what should we intervene? Panel participants Amalia Zepou (Municipality of Athens) and Stefanos Loukopoulos (VouliWatch). Moderator: Vassilis Giannakopoulos (SciFY)



Facilitated workshop (World Cafe) enabling citizens to express their ideas and views on EU level crowdsourcing pilot



Presentation of results from facilitated workshop by Despoina Chalvatzi (SciFY)