

# PB YOUTH ACCELERATOR OPEN SPACE ZOOM MEETING, 22<sup>ND</sup> APRIL 2020

## Notes and description of the workshop.

The participatory budgeting youth stakeholders open space was a 1.5 hour online workshop, using the zoom platform. With over 28 participatory budgeting youth accelerator partners from across Europe, our aim was to envision how far youth participation may go in Scotland, in Europe and worldwide, especially within the context of covid-19.

Using zoom break out rooms, polling and a live online document enabled us to achieve a high degree of participation and develop new perspectives on the challenge question.



## Our question:

***“What would it take to go bigger, deeper and further in accelerating youth participatory budgeting in a post covid-19 world?”***

## Programme:

- **10:00: Welcome:** Jez Hall and Agnieszka Maszkowska, who gave an introduction to using zoom and an overview of the participatory budgeting Youth Accelerator Programme. We also ran two polls to understand the geographic spread and expertise of the participants.
- **10:15: Deciding our Open Space topics:** Pete Bryant, supported by Jayne McFadyen of Shared Future CIC facilitated the next step of the process; to generate conversations that addressed the theme and help people to choose which conversation they wished to attend.

- **10:30: Open Space Round 1:** We ran three breakout conversations with live note taking for 20 minutes each.
- **10:50: Return to the main room:** A brief whole group session was held to enable the meeting hosts to reassign people into a second round of conversations and to check that the process was working and people were comfortable
- **10:55: Open Space Round 2:** We repeated the earlier process with three new conversations and with participants once again choosing which they wished to join.
- **11:15: Discussion:** We ended the online workshop with a group plenary discussion and also ran some evaluation polling
- **11:30: Close:** The meeting hosts thanked everyone for their active participation.

## How we developed topics and assigned zoom breakout rooms

In the Open Space, people who wanted to start a conversation (the conversation conveners) wrote their name and their topic into the online document. Each topic was allocated a breakout room and given a code and participants used the rename function in Zoom to indicate to the organisers which breakout room to join (e.g. 1A Joe Bloggs). They were then assigned into their group. As not everyone was able to join every break out group it was stressed how important it was that each group produces notes from the conversation for others to read later.

## An interpretation of the Open Space break out group notes are given below.

Raw text has been re-edited and prepared by Jez Hall of Shared Future CIC to enable those reading the notes to follow the conversations. Additional links to supporting information has also been added.

## What do we need to consider if running a deliberation online with young people?

Young Scot used their existing online platform and Card ID to support participatory budgeting youth projects in Scotland, though with more focus on voting at the end of process rather than deliberation earlier. Participation rates were very high. Supporting information and features of the Young Scot platform included what the participatory budget was about, the funding criteria, safety, security and overcoming access issues. The Madrid based Consul platform is now being increasingly used in Scotland and it potentially offers some additional or useful functionality on these issues and allows improved deliberation. We know the demand from young people is there due to the high participation rates - we need to meet this demand.

It can be more difficult to involve those 18-22 years into a university based participatory budget, as they operate within their own digital 'eco-system', and naturally prefer to be active on their own channels. Attempts have been made to combine on-line and in-room participatory budgeting processes. The issue or themes needs to be of high importance to them otherwise they are going to be less interested. Using gamification techniques within participatory budgeting processes might

bring new opportunities. It is helpful to focus on using existing tools for gamification, tailored to make participatory budgeting processes more fun and engaging. There was a suggestion to try this approach during the participatory budgeting Youth Accelerator programme.

Self directed education is very important now. We need to be in touch with new tools and methodologies for encouraging learning through participation in participatory budgeting. We also need to consider platforms that are already available, and how we might use or adapt them to address issues of handling personal data and security, which is an important consideration for Local Authorities. We know there have been public concerns over issues with the security of Zoom and this will be the same for other platforms. This issue is especially important when discussing 'sensitive' topics and caution in adopting online technology is required. Possibly the Consul platform (and others) has a solution to this.

The group discussed what platforms are already being used by younger people and that we need to focus on learning how and why younger people are already using e.g. the recent popularity of Tiktok. Are we making assumptions on the availability or inclusion of younger people, who may prefer different formats at different ages? We need to ask young people what they think and how they want to participate. Whilst recognising that In room (face to face) connections are important we also see that through going online there are opportunities to include those who are not 'in the room', especially where we don't have pre-existing links or trust.

How might we attract 'new' voices? Online can help us reach those with barriers to participating face to face, such as carers or those with disabilities. Or we could extend our reach by exploring tools like Cahoot, Consul, Menti-meter, through online games, or social media platforms like Tiktok or Instagram – and always going further by finding out what other channels are out there.

Finally, what about those who don't have Wi-Fi or computer access, such as homeless young people. How do we support them to access participatory budgeting processes and connect them? The answer must be about taking a blended approach.

#### **Supporting information:**

- Report on the [North Ayrshire/Young Scot participatory budgeting youth project](#)
- Portuguese [experiences of gamification and participatory budgeting](#).
- Article on using cards and other techniques in [Helsinki's participatory budgeting](#)

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### **Given that budgets are already tight, how do we 'sell' participatory budgeting as a good thing for schools?**

Often, if you can just find one headteacher who understands the values of participatory budgeting and 'gets it', they take ownership and can drive the process. Then other school leaders become interested - almost 'jealous'! Yet there will always be 'conditions for success'. For example a specific leader's degree of influence among their circles, the role of wider political influences or support from elected members.

The group shared an example from Renfrewshire of a youth champion, who through participatory budgeting received help 'from the top' to enable their 'grassroots' leadership role to be recognised. This led into a debate on finding the balance between participatory budgeting that is 'Top down' (so seen to be taken seriously) versus 'bottom up' (an emergent or organic idea). What works best will probably be context specific, but if we can combine the two it probably ensures a better outcome.

Ultimately, it's about whether the focus is first and foremost placed on increasing participation and promoting values around democracy, or affecting decisions - but the budget is important. We need to make participatory budgeting as both an integral and an integrated process. One that's not seen as an 'add-on', done with tokenistic amounts of money.

We know that too often teachers have many competing demands on their time. They are often exhausted by those day to day pressures and coping with limited resources. So it can be hard to convince them to adopt a new idea. We must also recognise that there is a risk that those "jealous" or overly competitive head-teachers as they seek to shape it to match their own understanding and priorities might lead to a 'contamination' of the values behind participatory budgeting.

Values we need to safeguard include the co-creation of the process, being adaptive about what approaches to use, always seeking to give young people more agency and to find ways for them to be actively rather than passively engaged. We need to recognise there can't be a one size fits all approach. Not least we need to be mindful how the age of students influences the chosen process, with different models at Primary and secondary school level, for example.

When considering what works very important is the individual personality of the teachers; of finding school leaders who can support the process in an open and co-designed way. That means building good relationships with teachers, with students and with school coordinators. The key focus of that relationship should be reinforcing the values of democracy, of making empowered choices and building community. Building future leaders and promoting positive role models of and for young people.

Always critical to spreading good practice will be: showing examples of finished and evaluated participatory budgeting within other schools. Taking a practical approach to sharing learning from those to gain that essential buy-in. Whilst participatory budgeting is not just about the budget, and about the quality of participation, that budget remains an important element, especially if the ambition is build scale. Which inevitably means to move from discussing small amounts of discretionary funds to the core budgets of the school. The time factor is critical. The process does take time and cannot be rushed.

### **Supporting information:**

- Report on [Renfrewshire's youth participatory budgeting](#) and the [results](#)
- Information on [the participatory budgeting in Schools project in the USA](#)

## **What about those young people who have less of a voice such as those in care? How can we make sure they have the opportunity to get involved?**

Spreading the word through colleagues and making connections peer to peer remains one of the most effective approaches to take. Information sharing is important and most effective when coming from a trusted source. There also needs to be a dedicated and well designed platform where people have an opportunity to participate.

Incentives are important. Ideally there should be an opportunity to receive a reward for taking part in participatory budgeting. An incentive could be non financial, such as through reward points - Young Scot do this already rewarding participation with rewards that money can't buy, such as to be a zoo keeper for the day!

Having strong connections between levels of local government and the community makes a difference. In NI this is happening between District Electoral Area (DEA) level officials and community networks

Existing structures can also be useful with the example cited of a Youth Forum using participatory Budgeting to address homelessness in Norwich, England. There is an opportunity if we recognise that participatory budgeting is a practical pathway that can lead to change.

Examples were raised from Germany with those who may not speak the national language, or the language being used for facilitation, such as those within ethnic minority groupings. For there to be meaningful participation you have to have cultural knowledge of these minorities – in order to communicate and engage you have to know your audience.

This reinforces the importance of developing a network of practitioners and strengthening the links between them. Thereby enabling practitioners to connect to those who have direct connections with people who face additional barriers or limitations to their participation, whether they be homeless, those living in care, or indeed those with caring responsibilities

It is important to use simple graphics and visual aids to initiate participation – as these level the playing field. The goal would and should be to always empower from the beginning through finding more creative ways of initiating participatory budgeting. Ways that are accessible to all.

That could include using social media platforms where young people are already present. Such as developing a Tiktok participatory budgeting channel! Something that is fun and engaging!

### **Supporting information:**

- Outcomes are Fun was a project in Scotland that aimed to engage those [living with life limiting learning and other needs to participate in participatory budgeting](#)
- Glasgow Disability Alliance have done extensive work on [making participatory budgeting accessible in Scotland](#)
- Dundee Decides created a [graphic novel to engage people](#) in its participatory budgeting projects

## How can Government best support participatory budgeting with young people?

Government has an important role in their convening power. That is, the bringing together of organisations able to co-ordinate new approaches. That convening power has been demonstrated, for example, in Scotland. Nevertheless, there is also a culture shift required for public sector staff, who may have traditionally been choosing the programs that they believe are best for children and parents. If government is to play its role as convener successfully we need to win that internal trust first.

Therefore often the first stage in successfully rolling out participatory budgeting is focussing on how we can build a convincing evidence base for the benefits from and willingness of young people in having a greater role in making decisions.

The next stage might see a shift towards operationalising participatory budgeting. With increase focus on putting it into practice, and sharing learning about what works.

Ultimately it's going to be a two way process. We need to build trust in our communities, including within school based communities. Decision makers must trust school communities in order to in turn win their trust in the decision makers. Where possible we should look for legislative opportunities. Through for example a focus on governments meeting their own statutory responsibilities, such as enshrined in a children's rights act.

### Supporting information:

- Blog article from participatory budgeting Scotland website on [children's voice and rights](#)
  - Save the Children undertook a [global review of Child Participatory Budgeting](#) in 2017
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## We are seeing a cutting in funds for school participatory budgeting. How do we talk about the need for participatory budgeting in the era of savings?

Whilst we know that budgets for school based participatory budgeting will be under threat from Covid19, we can be debating not about why we have less money but what to do with the remaining money. There could be helpful conversations around the differences between 'soft' projects, that might create wellbeing or rebuild democratic culture and hard projects, like school capital spending on infrastructure. As one of the participants stated *"we will survive another year without 100 km of new road, but we will not recover if we cut education and participatory processes."*

We should also be mindful that emerging from and during the Covid19 crisis there will be a massive reconfiguration and even an increase in public funding. Undoubtedly there should be an increased interest in participatory budgeting's role in supporting the energy within grass root responses and in projects that might help us work through the collective trauma of the pandemic. Yet we already see that Covid-19 is negatively influencing the cutting down of funds for participatory budgeting in cities and in schools. Something that is already happening in Poland and elsewhere.

We know from examples of participatory budgeting processes happening in Scotland that they are also being largely delayed by at least 6 months. Though it's unclear if there will be an overall reduction in the level of spending the idea of participation as valuable is being challenged. Whilst there may be a bigger requirement and need for participatory budgeting there is less motivation among local councils and national government. Spending on participatory budgeting is being seen as a lower priority and indeed, as not essential.

On the other hand there is an increasing interest in the role of deliberation, with more innovation and still opportunities being found for conversations on the role of deliberative democracy. Effectively, since participatory budgeting is a process linked to budgeting cycles we will inevitably see a sharp break in activity, and we may in effect lose a year, but there will be a new budget cycle starting in 2021.

We need to tap further into those ethical dimensions for doing participatory budgeting. In this time of crisis is it not the case that the healthcare system, social security and local responses are more important than ever? Does this offer an opportunity to move the conversation about participatory budgeting forward, away from a focus on capital budgets and one off spending into discussing services, fairness and inclusion?

#### **Supporting information:**

- Report on the WFD website on the importance of [transparency and participation in government](#)
  - Blog on opportunities for [rebuilding local government in a time of covid-19](#)
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### **What are the training needs? How do we encourage creativity in approaches whilst retaining a degree of quality?**

The conversation began by developing a shared understanding of the underlying challenge: How do we support young people to gain an understanding of participatory budgeting, and also deepening their ideas and choices around what can be funded beyond the 'easier' low hanging fruit of, for example, buying equipment. But then avoiding stifling creativity and introducing standardisation through doing this. In designing a participatory budgeting process should we simplify what can be delivered, or can we deepen understanding of what might be possible to achieve an outcome. Quick and simple 'wins' can develop into deeper and more meaningful outcomes if you are able to engage in an area or with a group over an extended period of time. But if you don't then it becomes more challenging.

The challenge of not being able to engage with young people in the long term and having the time to develop skills brings us back to the design of the participatory budgeting Accelerator Project. Which is to develop a toolkit. These are commonly held ambitions, and it is believed Young Scot are also in the process of developing new tool kits for participatory budgeting.

But is this approach effective? The danger always exists of participatory budgeting being used in an instrumental way, without an understanding by leadership and decision makers that this is not just

another engagement method. Tools should not be being developed and used without sufficient clarity of purpose and intention. Otherwise it becomes what might be called box ticking exercise. Something to be done, and then moved on from when the next idea comes along. Citizens and government are still not understanding the distinctiveness of participatory budgeting from other ways of accessing money for an idea or project.

Training for participatory budgeting mustn't stop at the process, voting methods or assessing the cost of purchasing equipment. It should also consider how to include a better understanding of the deeper and related budgeting issues. Such as: how much different services or projects might cost to run over the long term? How to differentiate between a short term output like a purchase and a longer term change or outcome that may prevent future spending? How to think more deeply about where resources might otherwise come from, or what has to be sacrificed to afford a particular spend? Exploring who is eligible to apply for support based on the statutory or legal requirements upon government, or what influences the pattern of existing spending or depends upon annual budgets? Participatory budgeting happens within a whole system and needs to take a similar whole system approach.

Learning by 'doing and practising' is always going to be a central part of 'training'. Making sure there is time for reflection is critical to going deeper and being more creative. It might be easy to write a 'how to' guide to doing participatory budgeting, but harder is communicating the 'why' or even the 'why not' of choosing to do participatory budgeting. It remains really important to recognise that participatory budgeting is not a one-off event. Rather it is a repetitive and ongoing process seeking to build practice and learning over a number of annual cycles.

The Scottish participatory budgeting Charter has been useful in advancing that deeper thinking, but that is only one part of the wider picture. Despite ongoing great community based practice the challenge for participatory budgeting practitioners remains in getting government officials, whether in Poland, Spain or the UK, or wherever participatory budgeting takes place, on board and understanding the deeper purposes and outcomes that could be achieved by a sustained process.

### **Supporting information:**

- The [participatory budgeting charter](https://pbscotland.scot/charter) in Scotland: <https://pbscotland.scot/charter>
- Report of [Youth Lead the Change](#) in Boston
- Video of the [Garvagh Forest Schools participatory budgeting](#) on Youtube

New participatory budgeting youth accelerator website:

<https://youthpb.eu/>

New participatory budgeting youth accelerator facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/youthpbaccelerator/>

Online survey to submit participatory budgeting youth cases:

<https://forms.gle/K597QJArMrH8hfQH9>

## More information about the PB Youth Accelerator Project



We know young people wish to be good citizens, as has been seen by the recent climate change school strikes happening across Europe. This project will harness that energy and help make democratic participation a lifelong learning opportunity.

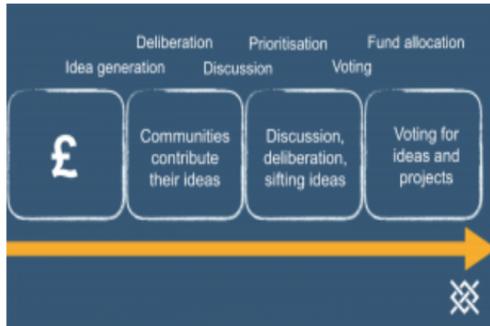
This **Erasmus+ funded project** will provide opportunities for youth workers, educators and teachers to explore how to implement a participatory budget (PB) processes. We seek to develop capacity and competency towards ensuring the participation of young people in the civic life of a city, a community or a school. It aims to be an innovative project that gives opportunities to experience democracy in action, especially at the local level.

The project consists of 5 partners from 3 countries – Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom. All involved in activities that seek to develop civic participation and who share a particular interest in the empowerment of young people.

## The Democratic Society resources on participatory budgeting:

<https://www.demsoc.org/demsoc-at-lga-2019-our-resources/>

# Participatory budgeting



A growing part of our Local Democracy work includes [Participatory Budgeting \(PB\)](#). From 2015/16 we became the digital support partners for the Scottish Government's programme to encourage the adoption of [Participatory Budgeting in Scotland](#), and are now working on PB in the [Netherlands](#). Our resource highlights include our podcast series, [Weighing Digital](#), [An Experts' Guide](#), and webinar series about making your own PB process which you can watch on the [Demsoc Youtube channel](#).

## The participatory budgeting Charter for Scotland:

<https://pbscotland.scot/charter>

### What is the Charter?

**The PB Charter sets out seven key features showing what a fair and high quality participatory budgeting (PB) process should look like.**

It aims to ensure PB is inclusive, uses good quality methods and is truly participative.

The Charter is a co-produced resource, developed by people with experience of PB processes in Scotland, including those from equality groups, community organisations and public bodies.



### Conversation One

#### **(1A) How to do deliberation online with youth? Convened by Agnieszka Maszkowska**

Participants included: Gavin Crosby, Esteban Romero, Louise O’Kane, Karin Eyben, Sylwester Zagulski, Susan Stewart, David Patterson

### Conversation Two:

#### **(1B) Given that budgets are already tight, how do we ‘sell’ PB as a good thing for schools to take part in? Convened by Kevin Ditcham.**

Participants included: Claire Rea, John Kennedy, Pauline Rettie, Pauliina Lehtonen, Marta Chmielewska, Marcin Gorecki

### Conversation Three

#### **(1C) How can Government best support PB with young people? Convened by David Reilly**

Participants included: Kathy Peacock, Linda McGlynn, Mateusz Wojcieszak, Kelly McBride, Javi Canton, Sarah McAdam, Antonia Dixey, Alisa AV, Sandra Haro.

### Conversation Four:

#### **(2A) What about those young people who have less of a voice e.g. those in care? How can we make sure they have the opportunity to get involved? Convened by Louise O’Kane**

Participants included: Susan Stewart, Antonia Dixey, Kathy Peacock, Sarah McAdam, Pauline Rettie, Pauliina Lehtonen, Claire Rea, David Patterson, Sylwester Zagulski.

### Conversation Five:

#### **(2B) What are the training needs? How do we encourage creativity in approaches whilst retaining a degree of quality. Convened by Gavin Crosby.**

Participants included: Karin Eyben, John Kennedy, Kevin Ditcham, Kelly McBride, Javi Canton, Agnieszka Maszkowska.

### Conversation Six:

#### **(2C): Cutting down funds for school PB. How to talk about the need for PB in the era of great savings? Convened by Mateusz Wojcieszak**

Participants included: Linda McGlynn, David Reilly, Alisa AV, Marta Chmielewska, Esteban

## APPENDIX THREE: PARTICIPANTS AND EVALUATION

### Participant's responses to online polls:

First Poll: Which group or category best describes your background?	Number
PB Expert / Consultant	11
Researcher / Academic	4
Local Authority Worker	3
Youth Worker	3
Other	6
Responses	27

Second Poll: Where are you from	Number
Scotland	9
Poland	6
Northern Ireland	4
England	3
Spain	2
Other	2
Responses	26

Closing Poll: What do you think would accelerate PB youth activity post Covid-19 (Choose your top 3)	Times chosen
Pressure by Young People	12
A Network of Practitioners	11
Support from Elected Politicians	10
Support from Youth Workers/Educators	9
Technological Tools	9
Support from Senior Public Officials	8
Examples of Best Practice	4
Responses	63

### Of the 23 responses to the evaluation online poll at the workshop:

One person rated it 'Useful', nine people 'Very Useful', and thirteen people said it was 'Excellent'.

### Comments from the online chat included:

- All great discussions - I'm torn!
- That is a fantastic facilitation technique for online open space. Love it.
- This worked well, hard to facilitate but the breakouts were very well organised
- Enjoyed listening and learning from everyone's experiences
- Thank you was very interesting
- Thanks, really enjoyed it
- Thank you to all - really enjoyed this morning and seamless technology and facilitation.
- Incredible morning. Thank you all so much!
- Thanks everyone! So nice to meet you all :)