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**EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY
(CDLR)**

**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON DEMOCRATIC
PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC ETHICS
AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL
(LR-DP)**

C.L.E.A.R. TOOL

Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the Directorate General of
Democracy and Political Affairs
Directorate of Democratic Institutions

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Introduction

This document contains the CLEAR tool, as revised following the first wave of testing. In the second wave of testing the tool has been used in this form.

The results of the second wave of testing are contained in a separate document, LR-DP(2008)1.

On the basis of these results, the tool is to be further revised in order for it to be validated by the CDLR at its meeting in June.

Action required

See document LR-DP(2008)1

APPENDIX**A****CLEAR: An auditing tool for citizen participation at the local level****Version April 2007**

The CLEAR tool exists to help local governments and other organisations or groups at the local level to better understand public participation in their localities. It is a diagnostic tool: one which helps public bodies to identify particular strengths and problems with participation in their localities and, subsequently, to consider more comprehensive strategies for enhancing public participation.

The CLEAR tool develops from a framework for understanding public participation¹ which argues that participation is most successful where citizens:

- C an do** – that is, have the resources and knowledge to participate;
- L ike to** – that is, have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;
- E nabled to** – that is, are provided with the opportunity for participation;
- A sked to** – that is, are mobilised by official bodies or voluntary groups;
- R esponded to** – that is, see evidence that their views have been considered.

The tool is organised around these five headings and provides a focus for individuals to explore participation in their area. This tool was developed through the Council of Europe's intergovernmental co-operation supported by a team of experts consisting of Vivien Lowndes (De Montfort University, UK), Lawrence Pratchett (De Montfort University, UK) and Gerry Stoker (University of Manchester, UK).

This version reflects the experience of the road test conducted by 23 municipalities in five countries during the Spring of 2006.²

Part one of this document provides guidelines on using the tool. Part two provides the main body of the tool and Part three contains Guidelines on creating a CLEAR profile and finding policy responses

¹ For more details on the CLEAR framework and its conceptual and empirical basis, see: Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G. (2006) 'Diagnosing and remedying the failings of official participation schemes: the CLEAR framework' *Social Policy and Society*, Vol 5, No 2 pp281-91; V. Lowndes, L. Pratchett and G. Stoker (2006) *Locality Matters: Making Participation Count in Local Politics*, London: IPPR

² See documents from the Council of Europe Conference 'Tools for strengthening democratic participation at the local level', Tampere, 28-29 June 2006.

PART 1: Guidelines on using CLEAR

Self diagnosis using CLEAR

It is important to distinguish the process of self-diagnosis from the audit and evaluation tools that have proliferated in the public sector in recent years. The tool does not seek to provide standardised objective data that can be used to compare localities and reach some ranking or classification of different municipalities. It does not produce a benchmark which judges a particular area. Indeed, any attempt to compare localities on this basis misunderstands the aim of self-diagnosis and misuses the information that is produced from the process. The tool does not generate directly comparable information on participation that can be used by third parties to contrast or evaluate areas.

The self-diagnosis process facilitates reflection and understanding of local political participation among those who are most in a position to do something about it. Potential users of the tool, therefore, include:

- Elected or appointed officials in local government
- Other public bodies that have an interest in sponsoring participation initiatives
- The organisations of civil society within a locality
- Citizens interested in enhancing the participation opportunities within their localities

An important feature of the CLEAR framework is that its five factors are neither hierarchical nor sequential. The presence of one factor is not a precondition for others and effective participation does not necessarily depend on all of the components being present although, in an ideal world, they would be. Furthermore, the model does not attach a specific weight or importance to any particular factor: there is no assumed balance between the different factors that should be expected in any given locality. Rather, the underlying assumption of the diagnostic tool is that it will serve two purposes:

1. It will help those conducting the diagnosis to identify and understand the balance of factors affecting participation in their localities;
2. It will provide an opportunity for all those involved in a diagnosis to reflect upon the relative strengths and gaps in participation in their localities and to consider strategies for addressing these gaps.

How to use the CLEAR tool

The tool works by posing a series of questions which those conducting the diagnosis seek to answer. The way in which these questions are asked and the people involved in answering them (government departments, local voluntary organisations, citizens' groups, politicians, individual citizens and so on) will vary between localities, as will the techniques that are employed (e.g. interviews with key stakeholders, surveys of citizens, focus groups of municipal employees and so on). The key point is that the tool is adaptable to local circumstances to enable interested parties to diagnose the strengths and limitations of publicly sponsored participation initiatives in their area, with a view to improving them.

For each of the five factors the tool provides a series of themes which have been elaborated into indicative questions. These questions suggest the types of issues that users of the tool might want to investigate under that heading. Not all questions will be relevant in every context. Moreover, in different local or national contexts it may be necessary to adapt the questions to suit the type of data that is available. For example, some countries can provide very accurate statistical information about the socio-economic conditions of each locality. In others, it may be more appropriate to use specially collected information or even the informed judgments of local people. The tool is for self-diagnosis: the way in which the questions are developed, therefore, should suit local needs while remaining honest to the main themes that the tool is articulating.

Similarly, it may be necessary to adapt the range of questions depending upon the types of respondents to which the tool is being addressed and the types of method being used. Local politicians might be expected to have different knowledge of the locality and the ability to offer insightful judgments on particular issues that would not be reasonable to expect of citizens who are not politically active.

The methods for collecting information and evidence are deliberately underspecified in the CLEAR tool. The information that municipalities have access to varies both between and within countries, as do the resources that municipalities have to commit to the diagnosis. Similarly, the amount and nature of cooperation with other organisations and citizen groups in the municipality will be locally specific, requiring different approaches to meet those needs. The tool does not assume a single methodology for implementation. Each user can design their own method to suit local needs. However, in implementing the tool, users should be sensitive to the following points:

- *Existing data sources* – what data is already available that can be used to answer the questions and what data will it be necessary to collect fresh? For some questions it may be particularly useful to seek proxy measures – those that give a good indication of the general picture (e.g. measures of educational attainment are normally a good proxy for socio-economic status). For other questions it may be more useful to seek judgments and opinions from a variety of stakeholders. The tool inevitably requires some new data collection but this aspect can be a relatively small and low cost part of the diagnosis.
- *In-house or consultancy activities* – where data needs to be collected from stakeholders (as opposed to simply being retrieved from existing data) there are a variety of ways in which it can be achieved. Some users of the tool may feel it is most appropriate to collect the information themselves, using their in-house expertise. Others may employ specialist consultants to collect and/or analyse the evidence on their behalf. Both approaches are potentially appropriate. However, it is eventually the responsibility of the commissioning organisation to take on-board the findings and respond to them.

- *Quantitative and qualitative information* – the tool does not anticipate a particular technique or approach. Some questions lend themselves to collecting quantitative information (e.g. those around skills). Others are more suited to more qualitative techniques such as interviews or focus groups. Inevitably, therefore, users of the tool will need to have a mixed approach: interviews with some stakeholders, perhaps a survey to collect particular information, focus groups with particular citizens, as well as drawing upon existing information sources. The precise mix will depend upon the resources available to the users of the tool and the amount of effort they want to commit to the diagnosis.
- *Range of stakeholders engaged* – the range of stakeholders in this field is potentially large: from elected politicians and their political parties; through employees of various public bodies; to organised interests, community groups and, indeed, individual citizens with no recognised affiliation. Again, it is up to the sponsoring users of the tool to decide which stakeholders it will want to involve, although inevitably it will want to ensure that a range of voices are heard, beyond those that are already recognised as being influential. For the tool to be effective, however, it is necessary to reflect the interests of a range of stakeholders.
- *Level of analysis* – the tool is not limited to a particular administrative jurisdiction or geographic community. In some areas it may be best suited for use at the municipal level. However, in cities it may be more appropriate to think in terms of smaller communities or neighbourhoods or, even, for comparing between neighbourhoods in the same city. In these circumstances the goal would not be to compare absolute levels of participation between communities but, rather, to diagnose which participation techniques are most useful for engaging different communities.
- *Sequences* – users of the tool may not want to collect all of the information at the same time. They may want, first of all, to undertake an initial diagnosis in-house, using a small team of officers or elected politicians, before extending the process to other stakeholders or focusing upon specific communities of geography or interest. The CLEAR tool can thus already be used even when little resources are available.
- It is also possible to diagnose only one or some of the five factors, or to sequence the diagnosis of the five factors. They are independent and need not be taken together or in any specific order. Of course, a full picture can only be made from the diagnosis of all five factors.

Implementing the CLEAR tool, therefore, requires those charged with responsibility for it to think carefully about the techniques they will employ and the way in which they will be sequenced. While they can learn from how others have undertaken the process,³ there will always be a requirement to adapt the tool and its questions to local circumstances.

³ See the documents from the Council of Europe Conference 'Tools for strengthening democratic participation at the local level', Tampere, 28-29 June 2006.

PART 2: The CLEAR tool

The context of citizen participation in the municipality

This first section provides the opportunity to gather contextual information on the nature of participation in the area and some indication of the initiatives that the municipality is already taking to encourage more active citizen engagement.

1. What is the population of the municipality?
2. What are the key features of the locality (e.g. rural/urban, economic activities, regional position, etc.)?
3. What are the main service responsibilities of the municipality?
4. What is the turnout at local elections? How does it compare with the national average and is it increasing or decreasing?
5. What is the level of *non-electoral* participation in the area (e.g. compared with the national picture or similar localities)? Is it increasing or decreasing?
6. Which form of participation are citizens most likely to use in seeking to influence municipal decision makers (e.g. petitions, protests, media campaigns, contacting politicians or municipal employees)?
7. Which forms of political engagement (e.g. letters, demonstrations) are decision-makers most likely to respond to?
8. Which groups of citizens tend to be the most disengaged or excluded from the political process (e.g. young people, elderly people, single parents, people with disabilities, ethnic minority groups)?

Optional questions:

9. Which groups of citizens does the municipality focus its participation initiatives on (e.g. users of a particular service, residents of a neighbourhood, specific sections of the community)?
10. What are the main issues (e.g. environmental, planning, economical or social issues) that trigger participation in the locality?

Can do

This section is concerned with the socio-economic arguments that have traditionally dominated explanations for variations in local participation rates. It is the argument that when people have the appropriate skills and resources they are more able to participate. These skills range from the ability and confidence to speak in public or write letters, to the capacity to organise events and encourage others of similar mind to support initiatives. It also includes access to resources that facilitate such activities (resources ranging from photocopying facilities through to internet access and so on). These skills and resources are much more commonly found among the better educated and employed sections of the population: those of higher socio-economic status. The questions are designed to help municipalities explore the strengths and limitations of citizens from this perspective.

Educational attainment

What are levels of education like in the locality? Have most people got basic education, or higher level qualifications? How does the picture differ for different groups of citizens – young people, older people, minority groups?

Employment and social class

What is the class make-up of the locality? What is the balance between different occupations – e.g. professional, skilled, semi or unskilled work, self-employment? What are the main employers in the area? Is there a problem of unemployment in the area? Is unemployment concentrated among particular parts of your community?

Demography

What is the age profile of the population in the municipality? What proportion of the population belongs to an ethnic minority group? How many significant ethnic minority groups are there in the municipality (i.e. that the municipality recognises and addresses in its communications with citizens)? What languages are spoken in the locality? Are there other demographic factors that may be significant for participation (e.g. family structure, student concentration, commuters)?⁴

Resources

Do citizens have easy access to appropriate resources for political participation? For instance, are there plenty of accessible meeting venues? Can citizens get access to computers, photocopiers or telephones to help them participate? Are these resources available to those who don't have access to them through at work or at home? Do the local media support participation by providing information and communication channels (e.g. local TV, newspaper or radio)? Do citizens have time to participate?

⁴ Some information may already have been gathered under questions 1 and 3 on the context of citizen participation in the municipality (see p.10).

Skills/knowledge

Do citizens have the necessary skills for participating in political life (e.g. the ability to write letters, speak in public, organise meetings etc)? Do citizens have the competence to utilise the resources in their community (e.g. to use computers, the Internet etc.)? Which skills are in short supply? Do some groups of citizens have more access to resources, and more skills to use them, than others?

Like to

This factor rests on the idea that people's felt sense of community encourages them to engage. The argument is that if you feel a part of something then you are more willing to engage. Evidence from many studies confirms that where people feel a sense of togetherness or shared commitment they are more willing to participate. This concern about a sense of attachment to the political entity where participation is at stake has been given new impetus in recent years in relation to debates about social capital. A sense of trust, connection and linked networks can, according to the social capital argument, enable people to work together and co-operate more effectively. Sense of community can be a strong motivator for participation. Conversely, an absence of identity or commitment to a locality can militate against participation.

The questions in this section focus particularly on the sense of identity and community that exists in the locality and associated stocks of social capital (in terms of trust and reciprocity)

Identity

What is the main focus of identity for people – the local neighbourhood, the town or city as a whole, or the region they live in? How well do people in the same neighbourhood know each other? Do citizens identify with the municipality? How attached are people to the area in which they live? How important are *non-geographical* sources of identity – like cultural, ethnic, religious or other philosophical identity, social class, or 'communities of interest' (among young people, or gay people, or those with a particular interest – like sport)?

Homogeneity

How stable is the community – have people lived at the same address a long time or is there a lot of mobility? Does the community have a strong sense of history and tradition? To what extent is there a similarity of identity across the community (i.e. are people largely the same – and if not, where are the main cleavages)? Are values and priorities the same across the community – and if not, where are the major cleavages?

Trust

How much do citizens trust one another? Are people generally helpful to one another or do they tend to put self interest first? Is anti social behaviour a problem? How much do citizens trust the municipality to make decisions that are in the interest of the community as a whole? How much do citizens trust the national government to make decisions that are in the interest of the community as a whole?

Citizenship

Is there a strong community spirit that supports collective action? Do people feel a sense of responsibility towards the community? Are there groups or sections of the community that are likely to feel excluded? Is there a sense in the municipality that the voices of some groups are more legitimate than others?

Enabled to

This factor is premised on the research observation that most participation is facilitated through groups or organisations. Political participation in isolation is more difficult and less sustainable (unless an individual is highly motivated) than the mutually reinforcing engagement of contact through groups and networks. Collective participation provides continuous reassurance and feedback that the cause of engagement is relevant and that participation is having some value. Indeed, for some, engagement in this manner is more important than the outcome of such participation. The existence of networks and groups which can support participation and which can provide a route into decision-makers, therefore, is vital to the vibrancy of participation in an area.

The questions in this section focus on the existence and membership of groups to support political participation, and the existence of a 'civic infrastructure' that can encourage the development of such groups and ensure that they remain connected with local decision-makers.

Types of civic organisation

What sorts of organisations exist and are active in the locality (e.g. youth groups, environmental campaigns, social welfare organisations, parent-teacher associations, sports or hobby groups, ethnic associations, cultural bodies)? Is there a complete list of such bodies? Which organisations have the most members? Which have the most influence on municipal decision-making? Is the range of existing groups sufficient to address the full range of (political) issues that citizens wish to engage in?

Activities

How active are civic organisations? Are they increasing in number? Is membership increasing? Do such bodies seek to influence decisions at the municipal level, or get involved in running local services? What are the main ways they do this?

Civic infrastructure

Are there any 'umbrella' or coordinating agencies that exist specifically to support the development or growth of civic organisations in the area? Do they have sufficient resources and capacities to reach out to a range of organisations? What support does the municipality give to civic organisations (e.g. grants, premises or equipment, staff support, access to facilities, opportunities to meet decision-makers)? What are the major weaknesses of the voluntary and community sector in the area? Does the local media support the work of civic bodies (e.g. publicising their activities)?

Asked to

This factor builds on the finding of much research that mobilisation matters. People tend to become engaged more often and more regularly when they are asked to engage. Research shows that people's readiness to participate often depends upon whether or not they are approached and how they are approached. Mobilisation can come from a range of sources but the most powerful form is when those responsible for a decision ask others to engage with them in making the decision. Case studies have demonstrated how open political and managerial systems in local municipalities can also have a significant effect by extending a variety of invitations to participate to their citizens. The variety of participation options for engagement is important because some people are more comfortable with some forms of engagement such as a public meeting while others would prefer, for example, to engage through on-line discussions. Some people want to talk about the experiences of their community or neighbourhood while others want to engage based on their knowledge of a particular service as a user.

This section asks questions about the ways in which the municipality is seeking to engage with citizens, the variety of initiatives that it supports, and the way in which it communicates these initiatives to the public.

Forms of participation

How does the municipality seek to inform citizens about and engage them in decision-making processes (e.g. surveys, consultations, focus groups, citizens' juries or panels, advisory councils, school and youth councils, regular forums)? Does the municipality seek to use the internet for citizen engagement (e.g. putting information online, online consultations or discussion forums, use of email or SMS texts)?

Strategy

Does the municipality have a strategy for engagement or are initiatives more piecemeal? Does the municipality collaborate with any other organisations in consulting or engaging the public? Are citizens offered incentives to participate (e.g. honoraria, gifts, IT equipment, service enhancements, discounts on charges)? Are participation activities normally held at official premises? Has the municipality experimented with unusual locations to encourage participation (e.g. citizens' homes, schools, supermarkets)?

Reach and diversity

Are existing forms of engagement sufficient to reach all the different sections of the community (young/old, ethnic minority groups etc)? Are particular forms of participation used to reach specific citizen groups? Do decision-makers give higher priority to the findings of some forms of participation over others (e.g. those that produce quantitative preferences)?

Responded to

This final factor captures the idea that for people to participate on a sustainable basis they have to believe that their involvement is making a difference and that it is achieving positive benefits. For people to participate they have to believe that they are going to be listened to and, if not always agreed with, at least in a position to see that their view has been taken into account. Responsiveness is about ensuring feedback, which may not always be positive – in the sense of accepting the dominant view from participants. Feedback involves explaining how the decision was made and the role of participation within that. Response is vital for citizen education, and so has a bearing on the 'front end' of the process too.

This set of questions asks how different messages are weighed by decision-makers and how conflicting views are prioritised. They also examine how information on decision-making is fed back to citizens.

Listening

What are the procedures for ensuring that the citizen's voice is considered in decision-making? What mechanisms are used to feed the results of particular consultation or participation initiatives into the decision-making process?

Balance and prioritisation

How are the views of citizens balanced against the opinions of professionals and elected members, especially where they diverge? How good are decision-makers at understanding and taking into account the views of citizens?

Feedback and education

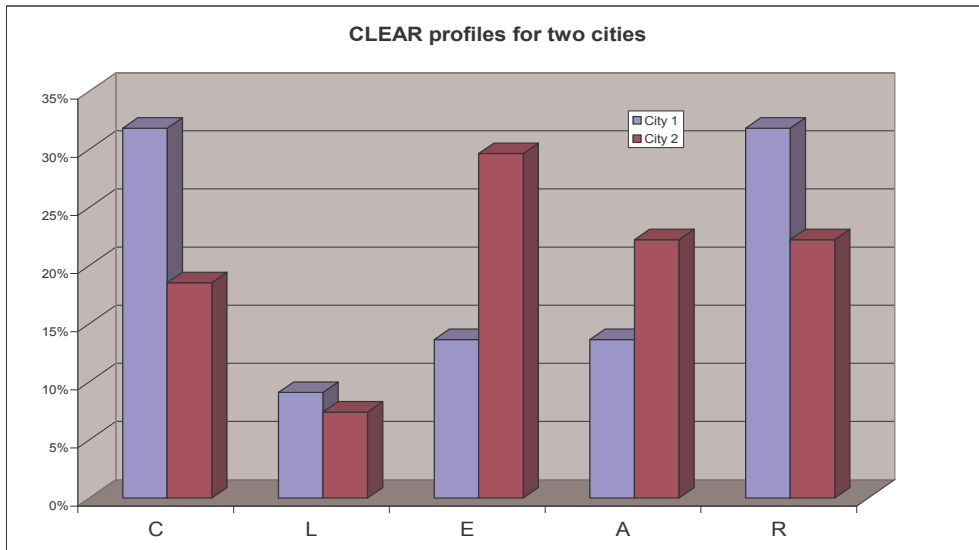
How good is the municipality at explaining to citizens the reasons for a particular decision and the ways in which citizen views have been taken into account? To what extent do citizens understand and accept the decisions made by municipalities? What efforts is the municipality making to improve its communication with citizens? Does the municipality have a programme of citizen education in relation to participation? Does the municipality provide support to politicians and/or officers in learning how to respond more effectively to participation?

PART 3: Guidelines on creating a CLEAR profile and finding policy responses

Analysing the evidence – the CLEAR profile

As the information is collected it is likely that particular problems and issues (as well as strengths) will present themselves. These are part of the diagnosis and will require action on the part of the user of the tool. However, beyond these very specific responses it is also useful for the user of the tool to create a 'CLEAR profile' of participation in their locality.

The point of such profiles is to develop an understanding of how the different aspects of CLEAR look in a given city. The chart below offers an example of CLEAR profiles for two cities.



In order to create a CLEAR profile it is necessary to set a scale on the basis of which the responses from the CLEAR diagnosis can be assessed. After that a scoring procedure has to be carried out for each of the five components of the tool. The scores are arrived at by adding the responses from all the questions and considering their relative significance. Once a score has been given to each of the five factors, they can be transformed into percentages. For each local authority, the total per cent across the five factors adds to 100, it is just differentially distributed between them.

For example, for the two cities presented above, the following analysis was concluded:

	City 1		City 2	
C	Population and socioeconomic profile identified Citizen have access to resources and skills for participation Other forms to engage citizens in participation	32	Socio economic and population profile has been identified Citizen have access to resources and skills for participation	19
L	People do not trust each other No strong community spirit Some group voices are more legitimate than others and some groups are excluded	10	People have low trust in each other and in the municipality No strong community spirit	7
E	Voluntary sector is active and some organisations are influential Umbrella organisations exist Municipality supports the voluntary sector Sector's weakness identified	13	Several voluntary organisations exist Voluntary sector is very active and influential Voluntary organisations sufficient to reach all citizen groups Umbrella organisations exist Municipality support the voluntary sector Sector's weakness has been identified	30
A	Several forms of participation are promoted Internet used for information purposes Sufficient forms to engage citizens into participation	13	Wide range of forms of participation are promoted Internet used for information purposes Strategy on participation exists Not all forms of participation reach all community groups	22
R	Statutory procedures exist on citizen participation Decision makers good at understanding citizen views and municipality good at explaining decision to citizens Communication strategy has been improved to engage citizens in decisions Citizen programme exists and politicians have been trained	32	Statutory procedures exist Decision makers are good at understanding citizen views Municipality is good at explaining decisions to citizens Citizen education projects exist and some politicians trained	22

There is, inevitably, an element of judgment in this process. However, the outcome is also objective in so far as it draws upon systematically collected evidence.

Creating such profiles inevitably begs the question, what should be the appropriate profile for a municipality within CLEAR? It is tempting to assume that all factors in the CLEAR framework should be equally distributed and that any deviation from that equal distribution should be subject to correction. From this assumption, policy responses to a CLEAR diagnosis would seek automatically to build up those areas which register low and, possibly, to diminish the effects of higher scoring components, in order to achieve balance. However, such an assumption misses a fundamental point in the CLEAR framework: the framework is derived from an analysis of participation in different localities and takes, as its starting point, the understanding that all localities are different. This difference means that citizens' resources, cultures of trust and reciprocity and networks of civil society all vary. As a consequence, the integration of civil society into public life and the extent to which public authorities will need to promote and respond to public engagement will also be different across localities. If the very simple point that all localities are different is accepted, then it is inevitable that the balance of different components in the CLEAR framework will also vary.

It is up to each municipality to determine what the appropriate balance should be and to develop responses that might help to achieve that balance. It follows that this balance, in terms of both reality and what may be deemed desirable, may vary over time as well as place. As a diagnostic tool, therefore, CLEAR is expected to be subject to several iterations in any one locality. Over a number of years it may be possible to identify significant changes to the CLEAR profile in response to public initiatives.

A set of detailed guidelines to help users of the tool draw up the profile of the municipality concerned appears as a separate document: "Guidelines for obtaining a municipality's CLEAR profile". This document appears as document C hereafter.

Policy responses

If the locality is happy with its CLEAR profile, then there is no need for any policy response. However, it is our assumption that the process will reveal at least some areas where municipalities feel they should take some action to address gaps or limitations in what they currently observe. As the next table indicates, there are a range of responses that municipalities could make if their investigation using the CLEAR framework reveals "gaps" or areas of difficulty.

Responding to investigative lessons from CLEAR

Key factor	Policy Response
Can do	Community development, training and development and practical support through the provision of community centres and resources targeted at those groups or communities that may need help to find their voice.
Like to	Build a sense of community or neighbourliness. People have to feel part of a community to be comfortable with participation; so strategies of building social or community cohesion may be an important part in creating the right environment for participation
Enabled to	Strong civic institutions can give the confidence to express their views. They may need to be monitored, challenged and managed so that they provide channels for the representation of a wide range of interests rather than a privileged position for a few. Investing in civic infrastructure and community networks, improving channels of communication is an important part of the policy agenda for municipalities committed to participation
Asked to	Public participation schemes that are diverse and reflexive provide the best option in terms of making the 'ask' factor work. Different groups will require different forms of mobilisation. See Table Y for more details
Responded to	A public policy system that shows a capacity to respond - through specific outcomes, ongoing learning and feedback

A more detailed document setting out the possible policy responses that draw on and/or conform to the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers is being prepared.

Of course, one of the main areas where municipalities might seek to change their profiles is in relation to their promotion and sponsorship of participation. These changes might involve extending the range of opportunities and initiatives or, more simply, changing the emphasis within them. The following table provides details of some of the many and diverse ways of asking the public their opinion.

Different forms of 'asked to': applying CLEAR

Form	Description	Illustrative Case	Web Resource
Consultative innovations	Informs decision makers of citizens' views through a combination of methods to explore public opinion.	Public debate on the future of GM technology in the UK in 2001 and Norway	http://www.gmnation.org.uk/
Deliberative methods	Enabling a cross-section of citizens to have the time and opportunity to reflect on an issue by gathering opinion and information in order to come to a judgment about an issue or concern.	The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly in Canada was established in 2004 and over eleven months, 160 were given the task of reviewing the province's electoral system. A similar arrangement exists in the Netherlands.	http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca
Co-governance Mechanisms	Arrangements aim to give citizens significant influence during the process of decision making, particularly when it comes to issues of distribution of public spending and implementation practice.	Participatory Budgeting started its existence as a form of engagement in Porto Alegre, Brazil in the late 1980s but by 2004 it is estimated that over 250 cities or municipalities practiced some version of it	www.pgualc.org
Direct democracy	Decision making Referendums called by citizens that come in two broad forms. Popular initiatives allow the recall of decision made by elected representatives. Citizens' initiatives – allow citizens to set the agenda and put an issue up for public decision There are also referendums which are (only) consultative, i.e. where the outcome is not legally binding.	Quite widely practised in Switzerland and the United States	http://www.iandrinstitute.org/
E-Democracy	The use of information and communication technology to give citizens new opportunities to engage.	The UK National Project on local e-democracy has produced a wide range of tools for e-participation aimed specifically at helping local governments improve democratic engagement	www.edemocracy.gov.uk

B

DETAILED QUESTIONS FOR CLEAR ANALYSIS

1. The context of citizen participation in the municipality

This first section is, in effect, a stage 0 in the diagnostic process. It aims to provide some contextual information on the nature of participation in the area and some indication of the initiatives that the municipality is already taking to encourage more active citizen engagement.

- 1.1 What is the population of the municipality?
- 1.2 What are the main service responsibilities of the municipality?
- 1.3 What are the key features of the locality (e.g. rural/urban, economic activities, regional position, etc.)?
- 1.4 What is the turnout at local elections (average over last 4?) compared with the national average (give actual numbers as well)?

Very high	Higher than average	Average	Less than average	Very low
1	2	3	4	5

- 1.5 Which form of participation are citizens most likely to use in seeking to influence municipal decision makers? (Rank order?)

Sign a petition
 Protest (demonstration etc)
 Contact the media
 Contact a municipal employee (functionary)
 Contact a local politician
 Respond to a municipal consultation
 Other

- 1.6 Which forms of political engagement are decision-makers most likely to respond to?

Petition
 Protest (demonstration, boycott etc)
 Media pressure
 Contact with a municipal employee (functionary)
 Contact with a local politician
 Results from a municipal consultation
 Other

- 1.7 Which groups does the municipality consider to be most disengaged or excluded from the political process? (e.g. young people, elderly people, single parents, people with disabilities, ethnic minority groups)

1.8 Which groups does the municipality focus its participation initiatives on? (e.g. population as a whole, users of particular services, young people, elderly people, single parents, people with disabilities, ethnic minority groups)

1.9 How active do you consider political participation in your area to be compared with the national picture?

Very high	Higher than average	Average	Less than average	Very low
1	2	3	4	5

1.10 What are the main issues that trigger participation in the locality?

2. Can do

This section is concerned with the socio-economic arguments that have traditionally dominated explanations for variations in local participation rates. It is the argument that when people have the appropriate skills and resources they are more able to participate. These skills range from the ability and confidence to speak in public or write letters, to the capacity to organise events and encourage others of similar mind to support initiatives. It also includes access to resources that facilitate such activities (resources ranging from photocopying facilities through to internet access and so on). These skills and resources are much more commonly found among the better educated and employed sections of the population: those of higher socio-economic status. The questions are designed to help municipalities explore the strengths and limitations of citizens from this perspective.

Educational attainment

2.1 What is the educational attainment of school leavers compared with the national average? (e.g. in the UK, this could be measured by the number of students gaining 5 grade A-C GCSEs)

Very high	Higher than average	Average	Less than average	Very low
1	2	3	4	5

Employment/unemployment

2.2 What is the unemployment rate compared with the national average?

Very high	Higher than average	Average	Less than average	Very low
1	2	3	4	5

Social class

- 2.3 What is the proportion of the workforce in the following occupations (and how does it compare to the national average)? (e.g. in the UK this would be distinguished by the social groups A B C1 C2 D E)

Unemployed	
Unskilled work	
Semi-skilled work	
Skilled work	
Professional work	

Another way of asking this question would be: what is the proportion of professional and skilled workers (ABC1s) to semi- or unskilled workers (C2DEs), compared with the national average?

Demography

- 2.4 What is the age profile of the population in the municipality?
- 2.5 What proportion of the population belongs to an ethnic minority group?
- 2.6 How many significant ethnic minority groups are there in the municipality (i.e. that the municipality recognises and addresses in its communications with citizens)?
- 2.7 Are there other demographic factors that may be significant for participation (e.g. family structure, student concentration, commuters)?

Resources

- 2.8 Do citizens have easy access to appropriate resources for political participation?

The following might be considered particularly relevant:

- Easy access to a meeting venue (community centre, village hall etc)
- Easy access to photocopying or other reproduction of materials
- Easy access to a computer with appropriate software
- Easy access to broadband internet

- 2.9 Do other resources exist within the community that can act as a channel for political engagement? (e.g. local newspaper, radio station, TV station etc that shows an interest in local political issues)
- 2.10 Do people have the time for participation? What are the major factors restricting people's time availability?

Skills/Knowledge

- 2.11 Do citizens have the necessary skills for participating in political life (e.g. the ability to write letters, speak in public, organise meetings etc)?
- 2.12 Do citizens have the competence to utilise the resources in their community (e.g. to use computers, the Internet etc)
- 2.13 Which skills are in short supply?
- 2.14 To what extent are these skills and resources differentially distributed across the community? (i.e. do some groups have more access to resources and more skill to use them than others)

3. Like to

This factor rests on the idea that people's felt sense of community encourages them to engage. The argument is that if you feel a part of something then you are more willing to engage. Evidence from many studies confirms that where people feel a sense of togetherness or shared commitment they are more willing to participate. This concern about a sense of attachment to the political entity where participation is at stake has been given new impetus in recent years in relation to debates about social capital. A sense of trust, connection and linked networks can, according to the social capital argument, enable people to work together and co-operate more effectively. Sense of community can be a strong motivator for participation. Conversely, an absence of identity or commitment to a locality can militate against participation.

The questions in this section focus particularly on the sense of identity and community that exists in the locality and associated stocks of social capital (in terms of trust and reciprocity)

Identity

- 3.1 What is the main focus of identity for people? (either select 1 from the list below or rank into order of importance).

A neighbourhood within the municipality
 A community of interest/identity that spans several neighbourhoods (e.g. ethnic or cultural identity)?
 The administrative unit of the municipality (e.g. town/city)?
 An area bigger than the municipality (e.g. region/sub-region)?
 Nation state

- 3.2 How well do people in the same neighbourhood tend to know each other?
- 3.3 How much do citizens identify with the municipality (i.e. 'felt identity')?
- 3.4 How attached are people to the area in which they live?

Very attached								Unattached
1	-	2	-	3	-	4	-	5

Homogeneity

- 3.5 Is the community a stable one with a strong sense of history and tradition? (this might be measured by examining the length of time that people have lived at the same address or by a more informal sense of how homogenous the community is).
- 3.6 To what extent is there similarity of identity across the community (i.e. are people largely the same – and if not, where are the main cleavages)?
- 3.7 Are values and priorities the same across the community – and if not, where are the major cleavages?

Trust

- 3.8 Are people in this community most likely to be helpful to others or are they more likely to put their own self interest first?

Helpful						Self interested
1	-	2	-	3	-	4
						5

- 3.9 Will most people in this community try to be fair or will they try to take advantage of others given the chance?

Fair						Take Advantage
1	-	2	-	3	-	4
						5

- 3.10 How much do citizens trust one another? (e.g. would one citizen lend a small amount of money, such as a bus fare, to another?)

High trust						Low trust
1	-	2	-	3	-	4
						5

- 3.11 How much do citizens trust the municipality to make decisions that are in the interest of the community as a whole?

High trust						Low trust
1	-	2	-	3	-	4
						5

- 3.12 How much do citizens trust the national government to make decisions that are in the interest of the community as a whole?

High trust						Low trust
1	-	2	-	3	-	4
						5

Citizenship

- 3.13 Is there a strong community spirit that supports community action?
- 3.14 Do people feel a sense of responsibility towards the community?
- 3.15 Are there groups or sections of the community that are likely to feel excluded?
- 3.16 Is there a sense in the municipality that the voices of some groups are more legitimate than others?

4. Enabled to

This factor is premised on the research observation that most participation is facilitated through groups or organisations. Political participation in isolation is more difficult and less sustainable (unless an individual is highly motivated) than the mutually reinforcing engagement of contact through groups and networks. Collective participation provides continuous reassurance and feedback that the cause of engagement is relevant and that participation is having some value. Indeed, for some, engagement in this manner is more important than the outcome of such participation. The existence of networks and groups which can support participation and which can provide a route into decision-makers, therefore, is vital to the vibrancy of participation in an area.

The questions in this section focus on the existence and membership of groups to support political participation, and the existence of a 'civic infrastructure' that can encourage the development of such groups and ensure that they remain connected with local decision-makers.

Types of civic organisation

- 4.1 What sorts of organisations exist and are active in the locality? (if it is possible to quantify these then even better)

Youth
 Environment
 Conservation
 Animal rights/protection
 Peace
 Humanitarian/human rights
 Social welfare (e.g. housing)
 Medical (e.g. patients associations)
 Sports/Hobby
 Parent/teacher
 Residents/neighbourhood
 Ethnicity based
 Cultural
 Religious/church based
 Other

- 4.2 Which of the above organisations have the most membership?

- 4.3 Which have the most influence on municipal decision-making?

- 4.4 Is the range of voluntary and community organisations in the area sufficient to address the full range of political issues that citizens may wish to engage in?

Activities

- 4.5 Is the voluntary and community sector in an active state?

Active				Inactive				
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
1	-	2	-	3	-	4	-	5

4.6 To what extent are voluntary and community organisations increasing their membership in the area?

4.7 To what extent are voluntary and community organisations seeking to influence decisions at the municipal level?

Active influence					No influence			
1	-	2	-	3	-	4	-	5

Civic infrastructure

4.8 Are there any voluntary or community organisations that exist specifically to support the development or growth of civic organisations in the area (e.g. 'umbrella' organisations such as Councils for Voluntary Service)?

4.9 Do these 'umbrella' organisations have sufficient resources and capacities to reach out to a range of organisations?

4.10 What support does the municipality give to voluntary and community organisations in its area?

- Financial support
- Support from municipal staff
- Use of municipal facilities
- Access to other municipal resources
- Access to decision-makers

4.11 What are the major weaknesses of the voluntary and community sector in the area?

4.12 What role does the local media play in relation to participation?

5. Asked to

This factor builds on the finding of much research that mobilisation matters. People tend to become engaged more often and more regularly when they are asked to engage. Research shows that people's readiness to participate often depends upon whether or not they are approached and how they are approached. Mobilisation can come from a range of sources but the most powerful form is when those responsible for a decision ask others to engage with them in making the decision. Case studies have demonstrated how open political and managerial systems in local municipalities can also have a significant effect by extending a variety of invitations to participate to their citizens. The variety of participation options for engagement is important because some people are more comfortable with some forms of engagement such as a public meeting while others would prefer, for example, to engage through on-line discussions. Some people want to talk about the experiences of their community or neighbourhood while others want to engage based on their knowledge of a particular service as a user.

This section asks questions about the ways in which the municipality is seeking to engage with citizens, the variety of initiatives that it supports, and the way in which it communicates these initiatives to the public.

Forms of participation

5.1 In what ways does the municipality seek to engage citizens in decision-making processes?

Invites open comments on services
 Conducts Surveys/opinion polls
 Conducts regular panel survey of citizens
 Opens meetings to public
 Allows public to participate in meetings
 Co-opts citizens onto committees/meetings
 Holds public meetings
 Issues consultation documents
 Arranges area/neighbourhood forums
 Arranges other types of forum
 Conducts focus groups
 Holds citizens juries/panels
 Runs consultation events (e.g. visioning exercises)
 Other.....

5.2 Does the municipality seek to use the internet for engagement by:

Publishing all agendas, reports and other materials online?
 Providing email addresses for elected members?
 Holding online consultations?
 Using electronic means (email, SMS texts) to alert citizens to consultations?
 Providing online discussion forums?
 Other.....

Strategy

5.3 Does the municipality have a strategy for engagement or are initiatives more piecemeal?

5.4 Does the municipality collaborate with any other organisations in consulting or engaging the public?

5.5 Does the municipality offer incentives to citizens to participate (e.g. honoraria, gifts, IT equipment, service enhancements, discounts on charges)

5.6 Are participation activities normally held at official premises? Has the municipality experimented with unusual locations to encourage participation (e.g. citizens' homes, schools, supermarkets)?

Reach and diversity

5.7 Are these forms of engagement sufficient to reach all the different sections of the community (young/old, ethnic minority groups etc)?

- 5.8 On what basis are different forms of participation used (e.g. are some used specifically to reach particular groups)?
- 5.9 Do decision-makers give higher priority to the findings of some forms of participation over others (e.g. those that produce quantitative preferences)?

6. Responded to

This final factor captures the idea that for people to participate on a sustainable basis they have to believe that their involvement is making a difference and that it is achieving positive benefits. For people to participate they have to believe that they are going to be listened to and, if not always agreed with, at least in a position to see that their view has been taken into account. Responsiveness is about ensuring feedback, which may not always be positive – in the sense of accepting the dominant view from participants. Feedback involves explaining how the decision was made and the role of participation within that. Response is vital for citizen education, and so has a bearing on the ‘front end’ of the process too.

This set of questions asks how different messages are weighed by decision-makers and how conflicting views are prioritised. They also examine how information on decision-making is fed back to citizens.

Listening

- 6.1 What are the procedures for ensuring that the citizen’s voice is considered in decision-making?
- 6.2 What mechanisms are used to feed the results of particular consultation or participation initiatives into the decision-making process?

Balance and prioritisation

- 6.3 How are the views of citizens balanced against the opinions of professionals and elected members, especially where they diverge?
- 6.4 How good are decision-makers at understanding and taking into account the views of citizens?

Very good						Very poor
1	-	2	-	3	-	4
						5

Feedback and education

- 6.5 How good is the municipality at explaining to citizens the reasons for the decision and the ways in which citizen views have been taken into account?

Very good						Very poor
1	-	2	-	3	-	4
						5

- 6.6 To what extent do citizens understand and accept the decisions made by municipalities?
- 6.7 What efforts is the municipality making to better communicate its decisions to citizens?
- 6.8 Does the municipality have a programme of citizen education in relation to participation?
- 6.9 Does the municipality provide support to politicians and/or officers in learning how to respond more effectively to participation?



GUIDELINES FOR OBTAINING A MUNICIPALITY'S CLEAR PROFILE

Version February 2007

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Summary

This report provides a guide to local authorities, citizens and organisations of civil society who are interested in constructing their own participation profile after implementing the CLEAR tool.

Before creating the CLEAR profile, the person or team responsible for implementing the tool need to be aware of two sets of elements against which the information collected is going to be assessed:

1.1. Quality Information Set:

How good is the information which has been collected? Here, the analysts need to pay attention to such elements as:

- The nature of the answers – how complete and accurate is the information collected?
- Interpreting the questions - how relevant were the issues being raised by the tool to the circumstances of the locality?
- The thoroughness of the questions – how detailed and referenced was the information collected?

1.2. Significance Set:

What are the implications of the data collected with regards to the practices, methods and programmes promoting participation? Within this set the analysts need to pay attention to elements such as:

- Quantitative answers – how is the numerical data providing a sample of the locality's reality?
- Qualitative answers – how is the qualitative data providing a useful classification of the locality's reality?
- Interrelationship between answers – how are quantitative and qualitative data being interrelated in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the locality?

In creating the CLEAR profile, three steps are suggested to be followed by the analysts. Throughout this process analysts will take into account: a careful archive management and consultation with different local stakeholders.

2.1. Defining the Aims – what are the aims that guided the implementation of the CLEAR tool?

2.2. Resources for implementing the tool – once defined the aims, what will be the resources available to implement the tool? This point includes time, human, informational and financial resources.

2.3. Developing the profile - once established the resources, what will be the criteria to measure or assess how good is the information collected and its implications? In other words, this step assesses the data collected based on the elements specified in the quality information and significance sets.

The assessment criteria can be based on a scoring scale which can be determined by the analysts' interests. Following the scale definition, a scoring procedure has to be completed for each of the five components of the CLEAR tool.

Finally, analysts must remember that the CLEAR tool does not provide standardised objective data that can be used to compare localities and reach some ranking of different municipalities. However, if a comparative approach is to be made, it is important to bear in mind that the tool is adaptable to local circumstances: it would be a mistake to ignore or underestimate these aspects throughout the comparative exercise or in using Likert scales.

Introduction

The report provides a guide to local authorities, citizens and organisations of civil society who are interested in constructing their own participation profile after applying the CLEAR tool. This guideline works as the second stage of the diagnosis process. The first stage is considered as the collection of data required to implement the CLEAR tool. The second stage is concerned with the analysis of these data in order to develop an assessment of where do local authorities or organisations stand with regards to promoting participation. This stage builds a municipality's picture with regards to its position based on the CLEAR tool.

This report does not provide any background information on the CLEAR tool as the details are available in academic documents and reports prepared for the Council of Europe.⁵ Part 1 of this report suggests a series of elements that have a twofold use: assessing the quality of the information obtained after applying the CLEAR tool and assessing the relative significance (e.g. weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and challenges) of the strategies promoting participation. These elements are organised into two different sets which work as the basis for building the municipality's CLEAR picture.

Part 2 of this report reflects on the process required to construct a municipality's CLEAR profile. It draws upon the elements for assessing the quality of data and identifying the level of significance obtained from the tool's answers with regards to the municipality's participation strategies or initiatives.

Part 3 develops two cautionary notes. The first refers to the use of a comparative approach after the diagnosis process has been achieved and the second refers to the use of Likert scales as part of the comparative approach.

Part 1: Developing the elements for assessing information and level of significance

To start with the analysis process of the self-diagnosis tool (CLEAR), the elements against which the information collected is going to be assessed have to be developed. Two sets of elements are suggested: the set assessing the quality of information obtained after applying the CLEAR tool and the set diagnosing the implications of the strategies promoting participation in a particular municipality. The former set coined as 'quality information set' aims to identify what questions were answered, how they were answered and the extent of the answers. The latter set of elements coined as the 'significance' set aims to examine the implications of the answers in the CLEAR tool in order to improve participation methods, strategies and local policies.

⁵ For details on the CLEAR framework see: Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G. (2006) 'Diagnosing and remedying the failings of official schemes: the CLEAR framework' *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 5, No. 2, pp 281-99; Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker G. (2006) *Locality Matters: Making Participation Count in Local Politics*, London: IPPR. Also, see documents from the Council of Europe Conference 'Tools for strengthening democratic participation at the local level' Tampere, 28-29 June 2006; Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G. (2006) *CLEAR: An auditing tool for citizen participation at the local level*, CDLR/LR-DP document, Strasbourg, 14 September 2006.

1.1. Quality information set

In order to identify what questions were answered throughout the CLEAR tool, what methods were followed to answer them and the extent of the answers, the following three elements are suggested.

1.1.1. The nature of the answers:

This element assesses the ability for answering the questions of the CLEAR tool. The nature refers to the extent of the answers, thus being able to detect their completeness and clearness. By assessing the nature of the answers the person or team in charge of developing the diagnosis will be able to identify what type of information is missing or unclear, being able to report this gap in a future stage of revision (see example 1.1).

Example 1.1. Missing information

Assume that to the question 'what proportion of the population belongs to an ethnic minority group?' Municipality A answered the following: 31.6% immigrants and 23.9% non-westerns.

This answer is unclear, it can be interpreted as 23.9% of the 31.6% of immigrants are non-westerns or it can also be interpreted as 23.9% are non-westerns in addition to the 31.6% of immigrants.

Furthermore, it may be the case that in Municipality A there is an ethnic minority who is western and non-immigrant, such as a Jewish group or a converted Muslim family in a Christian community. Thus it is important to clarify what are the percentages representing and to include in the answer the cases that can be an exception to the rule (if applicable).

This element also assesses the alternatives used for collecting information in order to answer the questions. For example, the range of groups and individuals consulted, the use of primary and secondary data, diversity of methods for collecting information (surveys, focus groups, etc.), and in-house or consultancy activities for collecting data. By focusing on this aspect of the criterion the person or team in charge developing the diagnosis will be able to identify if the methods of data collection were enough to generate clear, complete and thorough answers.

1.1.2. Interpreting the questions:

This element detects some of the questions in the CLEAR tool that were difficult or challenging to answer. By detecting this sort of question, the person or team in charge of the diagnosis can suggest possible alternatives to overcome the difficulty of interpretation. A definition of a term can be established either consulting with the nearest colleagues (example 1.2a) or organising surveys and focus groups (example 1.2b) in order to obtain a wider vision of how a certain word can be interpreted.

Example 1.2. Interpreting the terms and concepts

a. Consulting with colleagues. Assume that Municipality X encountered problems in answering if people in the community were helpful to others. To overcome this problem the team implementing the CLEAR tool decided to change this question by asking if people felt responsible or more involved in neighbourhood activities.

b. Consulting with other groups. Assume that Municipality Y encountered problems in answering the questions that involved 'community'. In order to overcome this problem the team in charge organised a survey distributed to all neighbourhood associations asking what their members understood by community. It was found out that the term community was equivalent to 'residential area'. Based on this latter term, the questions within the identity and homogeneity subsections were answered.

The exercise attempting to overcome the difficulties of interpretation is considered positive insofar as it prompts creativity for: defining participation, including elements that probably were not considered in an original definition of participation, such as trust or identity, or promoting participation throughout the definition process.

1.1.3. The thoroughness of the answers:

This element assesses the amount and depth of information provided by the answers obtained from the CLEAR tool. The amount of information refers to the listing of sources or references from where the information of an answer was obtained. The depth of information refers to the level of detail provided in order to construct an answer (see example 1.3).

By following this element, it is possible to assess the level of analysis that can be developed based on the amount and depth of information which identifies the positive or negative implications of the practices, methods and programmes promoting participation. This element is highly related with the set of points within the significance set.

Example 1.3. The depth of information

Suppose that to the question on 'citizens having the necessary skills for participating in political life' municipality Z answered, yes.

The answer apart from being scant, does not clarify the sources the team in charge of implementing the tool used to justify the answer. It may have been that the team based their answer in other surveys or data bases carried out by the municipality or national bodies in previous years, it may have obtained information from reports containing the minutes of specific open meetings or neighbourhood boards. Whatever the answer, especially when it creates a reason for further inquiry, it is important to provide references. This will help external auditors or researchers interested in re-implementing the tool what procedures were followed. If in addition to the references a detailed explanation is provided of how the answer turned out to be positive, in terms of citizens having the necessary skills to participate, the better.

1.2. Significance set

In parallel to the identification of quality information, this second set consists of assessing the relative significance that the answers provide when compared to a specific policy, plan, regulation or programme. The achievement of the level of significance is developed throughout two stages that will help to obtain a CLEAR profile. The first categorises the data; and the second creates inter-linkages between the information categorised. The first two elements (coined quantitative and qualitative) are contained within the first stage and the third element (coined interrelationship) is contained within the second stage of the assessment.

1.2.1. Quantitative:

This element refers to those answers that provide numerical information (the Likert scales are not considered here). Many of these numerical answers can be found in the stage 0 of the implementation tool and in some of the questions within the 'Can do' section. However, all of the questions in the other sections of the tool can provide numerical answers depending on the way they are designed to be answered. The numerical answers provide a universe of the municipality upon which the diagnosis will be developed. Through these answers it is possible to identify the quantity, percentage or change rate of employed people, ethnic minority groups, immigrants, and highly educated and skilful people residing in the municipality, as well as data relating to civil associations and media firms impacting upon the municipality.

1.2.2. Qualitative:

This criterion refers to those questions in the implementation tool that guide the answers to be classified into different groups or types. Certain classifications can crosscut questions within different sections of the CLEAR tool (see example 1.4).

Example 1.4. Classifications cross-cutting different questions

Assume that from question 1.5 in the tool the team in charge of the diagnosis process identifies that citizens are most likely to contact a politician or a municipal officer to influence municipal decision makers. The team decides to classify this fact as a 'person to person influence'. Under this classification other questions throughout the tool could provide further information about 'why' and 'how' citizens contact politicians or officers. The answers to the next series of questions can provide a deeper analysis:

- 2.8. Do citizens have an easy access to resources for political participation
- 2.11. Do citizens have skills for participating?
- 2.12. Do citizens have the competence to utilise the resources in their community?
- 2.13. Which skills are in short supply?
- 2.14. To what extent are these skills and resources differently distributed across the community?

3.11. How much do citizens trust the municipality to make decisions that in the interest of the community?
3.15. Are there groups of the community that are likely to feel excluded?
3.16. Is there a sense in the municipality that voices are more legitimate than others?
4.3. Which organisations have the most influence?
5.1. In what ways does the municipality see to engage citizens?
5.5. Does the municipality offer incentives to citizens to participate?
6.1 What are the procedures for insuring the citizens' voice is considered in the decision-making?

The tool questions that ask directly for a classification are listed in table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Questions in the CLEAR tool that help to classify information

Section	Questions
0	1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.10
Can do	2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13
Like to	All questions in this section can offer a classification if the team in charge of the diagnosis decides to make a detailed research of how neighbourhoods differentiate between each other
Enable to	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.8
Ask to	5.1, 5.2, 5.8
Respond to	6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7

1.2.3. Interrelationship:

This element is developed during the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative elements. The element offers an interrelationship between the answers contained in different sections of the tool. In some cases it will be possible to obtain a general picture from what it is answered in one question, but more commonly, it will be the case in which a general picture will be obtained from putting together different answers (as in example 1.4). However, the answers provided can generate further specific questions that the general tool does not involve, but which are relevant to reflect upon to understand better the present picture of the municipality with regards to its methods and strategies of participation. Example 1.5 provides more details.

Example 1.5. Generating further specific questions

Assume that Municipality G identified from question 4.1 that civil organisations with most membership are sport clubs, neighbourhood boards and parents associations.

From this answer further inquiry can be obtained. For example, are any of these organisations working as umbrella organisations? Municipality G identified that neighbourhood boards support the development of other civic organisations in their respective area. This information may be an opportunity for the municipality to develop participation projects that involve difficult to reach groups through neighbourhood boards' activities. However, Municipality G can ask itself if parents associations and sport clubs could also become an additional opportunity in order to involve difficult to reach groups into municipal participation activities.

In addition to the latter, from the answers developed within the section 'Like to', Municipality G detects that the questions under identity, homogeneity, trust and citizenship can be easier to answer if the neighbourhoods within the municipality are classified. It can be that under this classification Municipality G will distinguish neighbourhoods inhabited by commuters, ethnic minorities and one-individual or family households. It can also identify those neighbourhoods that preserve local traditions or organise local festivities, as well as the level of coverage of urban services and infrastructure within each area. By incorporating all neighbourhoods' characteristics, Municipality G will be able to design projects and strategies reinforcing networks and community responsibility as well as defining specific identities. Through these activities the municipality's initiatives can be expanded aiming to engage different citizen groups inhabiting in several municipal areas.

The implications involved in example 1.6 involve further action by Municipality G in order to start constructing a more solid programme which promotes community engagement and sustainable political participation. The further action required is not part of the diagnosis process, but the identification of the gaps in information and relative significance, as well as their documentation is part of the process. Thus, it is relevant for the person or team responsible in developing the diagnosis to produce notes or reports on these aspects, which can be incorporated, in a future stage, to the agenda for reviewing or improving the participation methods, strategies and policies followed by the municipality.

Part 2: The process for obtaining a municipality's CLEAR profile

The process to construct a municipality's CLEAR profile consists of putting together the elements within the quality information and significance sets, mentioned in Part 1. The assessment of these elements relies on subjective interests determined, for example, by the team responsible in carrying out the diagnosis. Because these interests are not objective to the eyes of those politicians, officers or citizens which have not been involved in the diagnosis process, this part of the report recommends the steps that can be followed in order for the process to be replicable and consequently more reliable.

For the process to be replicable two factors have to be present throughout the development: archive management and consultation.

Archive management: this aspect refers to the documentation process which gathers text and numerical information in either hard copy or electronic version as well as audio or visual materials. These documents or informative materials have to be securely kept in an ordered way and in durable formats that can minimise the lost of data. A reliable archive management (ordered and secured) is the basis for a replicable process to be carried out.

Consultation: this aspect refers the consultation procedures that the person or team in charge of implementing the CLEAR tool follow in order to determine:

- The aims of carrying out the self-diagnosis
- The terms or concepts that the tool includes throughout its questions
- The methods followed to obtain primary information required by the tool and the analysis of the data

The advantage of following these consultation procedures is the achievement of a more holistic understanding of specific concepts or terms and more holistic views of the opportunities, strengths, weaknesses and challenges that the municipality faces, in relation to the initiatives promoting participation.

Bearing in mind these two aspects, the next paragraphs describe the three steps to follow in order to obtain a CLEAR profile:

2.1. Defining the aims

It is important to first establish the aims for implementing the diagnosis tool. This step allows the municipality to define what aspects about the existing participation methods and strategies are to be tested, revised or improved. Table 2 exemplifies the different approaches that aims can have.

By defining the aims which will drive the implementation of the tool, it will be possible to decide what sort of strategies to follow in order to obtain the information required (see 2.2). The defined aims will also become the measuring scale for assessing the profile of the municipality in terms of its participation initiatives (see 2.3).

Table 2. List of different aims

<p>Case 1 – it may be that the municipality wants to find out the type of primary data required for implementing the CLEAR tool</p> <p>Case 2 – it may be that the municipality wants to identify which strategies of participation needs to improve in order for citizens to become more engaged in education activities</p> <p>Case 3 – it may be that the municipality wants to identify which strategies of participation could be improved within a limited time and budget</p> <p>Case 4 – it may be that the municipality wants to understand how a particular organisation perceives and develops public participation</p>
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2.2. Resources for implementing the diagnosis tool

Based on the aims defined in 2.1, the team in charge of implementing the tool will need to establish the types of resources that are available in order to implement the tool. The following five aspects provide a guideline on how to define resources.

Existing data sources: They can be quantitative or qualitative, and are identified as sources that could help to answer part of the questions within the tool.

Primary data sources: They can be quantitative or qualitative, and are designed with the specific purpose of developing the answers within the tool.

Methods of primary data collection: First, this aspect is related with the range of stakeholders that want to be consulted in order to develop some answers within the tool. The range is potentially large: from elected politicians and their political parties, through employees of various public bodies, to organised interests, community groups and individual citizens. Second, the range of methods in which this information can be obtained is also wide: from surveys and questionnaires sent by post or uploaded in a specific website, through focus groups or blogs, to interviews or documentary reviews. The wider the range of stakeholders consulted and the wider the range of methods used (as well as consulting existing data), the longer the time it will take to analyse the information collected and the costly it may be. However, the analysis developed will reflect a more precise picture of the municipality's CLEAR profile.

In-house or consultancy activities: This point depends on the municipality's time and budget restrictions to decide about the ranges of stakeholders consulted and methods used. With the appropriate budget it may be possible to hire consultancy services provided by private firms or by higher education or non-governmental organisations.

Time: Depending on the time period that the team has for implementing the tool it will be possible to define the level of analysis in which the tool will be implemented. This could be limited to a particular administrative jurisdiction, geographic community, organisation or a combination of the three. Time will also define if the data is to be collected all at the same time or if it will involve different stages of collection.

2.3. Developing the CLEAR profile

To create a general picture it is required to set a scale in which the elements within the quality information and significance sets can be assessed. For example, the team in charge of the diagnosis can set a scale from one to ten; where one represents a very low quality of information with very low significance being detected in order to understand or improve the methods and strategies of participation. Ten represents a very high quality of information with several implications being detected in order to understand, improve or innovate the methods and strategies of participation.

The scale range can vary according to the interests that the team responsible in implementing the tool wants to follow. The wider the scale the more flexibility will be obtained when assessing each of the five factors in the tool (C, L, E, A, R). It is important to document the reasoning behind the scaling approach in order to enhance the reliability of the process. Following the latter, a scoring procedure has to be done for each of the five components of tool. The scores are arrived by adding the weights given to the quality information and significance sets when compared to an existing policy, programme, regulation or other type of reference.

If the aims of the team responsible in implementing the tool were to assess the quality of information obtained from primary or secondary sources, it will be common to observe that the weight given to the elements within the quality of information set are higher than those weights given to the elements within the significance set (see table 2, case 1). The contrary will happen, if the team decides that the aims of implementing the tool have to do more with improving the citizens' engagement in a specific policy, considering or not time and budget restrictions (see table 2, cases 2 & 3).

Once a scoring has been given to each of the five factors, they could be transformed into percentages. The total percent across the five factors adds to 100, by being differentially distributed between them. It is worth noting that the total sum of the five scorings does not need to add ten, especially when the scale range that has been chosen is different from one to ten. The total sum can add to a different number to ten, however, this number has to be considered as 100 percent. Table 3 shows an example on scoring and percentages.

There is, inevitably, an element of judgement in this process. However, the outcome is also objective insofar as it draws systematically upon collected data and scoring procedure.

Table 3. Examples on scoring and percentages

	Municipality D	Score*	%	Municipality E	Score**	%
C	Population and socioeconomic profile identified Citizen have access to resources and skills for participation Other forms to engage citizens in participation	3.2	32	Socio economic and population profile has been identified Citizen have access to resources and skills for participation	0.19	19
L	People do not trust each other No strong community spirit Some group voices are more legitimate than others and some groups are excluded	1	10	People have low trust in each other and in the municipality No strong community spirit	0.07	7
E	Voluntary sector is active and some organisations are influential Umbrella organisations exist Municipality supports the voluntary sector Sector's weakness identified	1.3	13	Several voluntary organisations exist Voluntary sector is very active and influential Voluntary organisations sufficient to reach all citizen groups Umbrella organisations exist Municipality support the voluntary sector Sector's weakness has been identified	0.30	30
A	Several forms of participation are promoted Internet used for information purposes Sufficient forms to engage citizens into participation	1.3	13	Wide range of forms of participation are promoted Internet used for information purposes Strategy on participation exists, but not all forms of participation reach all community groups	0.22	22
R	Statutory procedures exist on citizen participation Decision makers good at understanding citizen views and municipality good at explaining decision to citizens Communication strategy has been improved to engage citizens in decisions Citizen programme exists and politicians have been trained	3.2	32	Statutory procedures exist Decision makers are good at understanding citizen views but municipality is not good at explaining decisions to citizens Citizen education projects exist and some politicians have been trained	0.22	22
		38.8/10	100		1/5	100
(*) Score scale: from one to ten						
(**) Score scale: from one to five						

Part 3: Cautionary notes on using a comparative approach and Likert scales

The CLEAR tool is not designed to provide standardised objective data that can be used to compare localities and reach some ranking or classification of different municipalities. However, it is natural for almost any observation to be driven by some form of comparative assessment. Comparison is the process through which the observer assesses the defining features and significance of an object under study (Pierre, 2005: 454).⁶ The tool provides an opportunity for those stakeholders (e.g. team implementing the tool) to assess the defining features and significance of the data in order to review, improve or innovate the participation methods and strategies followed by the municipality. Thus it is natural to feel tempted to compare how the municipality is doing with respect to other municipalities within the region or country.

Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the tool is adaptable to local circumstances; consequently, it can be possible that a simple comparison can overlook local aspects that have established, for example: the aims for implementing the tool, the stakeholders included within the implementation stage, the methods for collecting data, or the interpretation given to specific terms (e.g. community spirit, trust). Due to the adaptable nature of the tool, it is relevant not to underestimate these local circumstances. The advantage of comparing municipalities within a same region or country is that the analysis can be easily matched on national policies, cultural, historical, ecological and probably socioeconomic dimensions. The cost of ignoring local circumstances is the generation of a weak comparative analysis.

The oversimplification of the process in which the information is obtained, can be related to the use of Likert scales (suggested in the original tool that the municipalities on the first road-test encountered). The use of Likert scales can be attractive to elaborate a comparative approach among municipalities, as their outcome could tell, for example, that Municipality A reported that its citizens were very attached to their neighbourhoods, whilst Municipality B reported that its citizens were almost unattached. The Likert scales oversimplify the comparison, overlooking the level of detail within each case. The recommendation is that if Likert scales are to be used, then the results will be more reliable if a complementary justification is attached. Using Likert scales as a substitute to the answers will generate reasons to consider the whole diagnosis process as unreliable. A convincing self-diagnosis as well as the comparative analysis between municipalities of the former process is not their irrefutability but their coherent general sense.

⁶ Pierre, J. (2005) 'Comparative Urban Governance: uncovering complex causalities', *Urban Affairs Review*, vol. 40, No. 4, pp 446-62.