

# From participatory budgeting to community-led services: The co-production journey of Çanakkale in Turkey

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**Organisation:** Çanakkale Municipality

**Country:** Turkey

**Level of government:** Central government

**Sector:** Economic affairs, General public services

**Type:** Partnerships, Public Service

**Launched in:** 2005

**Overall development time:** 1 year(s)

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# Description

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Outside Turkey, Çanakkale is widely known for the nearby historic site Troy, which is visited by thousands of tourists every year. In Turkey, Çanakkale has also developed a strong reputation for citizen participation in public decisions and community co-production of public services.

The driving force has been the directly elected Mayor Mr Ülgür Gökhan of the CHP, which is a Social-Democratic Party. In the early 2000s he used the Agenda 21 process in Turkey as a window of opportunity to introduce citizen involvement in Çanakkale. A partnership with the Municipality of Çanakkale was key to the participation process from the very beginning within a UNDP project in 2006. Eight years after this project, citizen involvement in Çanakkale has matured and taken some new directions.

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## Why the innovation was developed

- A number of legislative changes were made in 2005 to introduce a double devolution, from central government to both local government and to citizens. A 'citizen assembly' (Kent Konseyi) was established (which is not dissimilar to the former Local Strategic Partnerships in the UK).
  - Furthermore, Çanakkale Municipality faced the challenge of drafting a multi-annual investment budget, following a legislative change making the development of strategic plans and multi-annual investment plans mandatory for all municipalities.
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## Objectives

Enhance public trust, Enhance transparency, Improve service quality, Improve social equity, Improve user satisfaction, Increase citizen engagement

- The objectives of this so-called participatory budgeting project were to build up trust in the new participation mechanisms such as the Kent Konseyi;
  - To strengthen local accountability and financial discipline in the local council;
  - To improve the decision-making process on priorities in local neighbourhoods;
  - To strengthen social capital and community cohesion in the local area.
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## Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, Ethnic or racial minorities, General population, Government bodies, Government staff, High-risk populations, Low-income groups

- Municipality of Çanakkale
  - Çanakkale citizens
  - The Roma community Çanakkale
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## Existing similar practices

### Participatory Budget

In other countries' public administrations

Porto Alegre, Brazil

A similar participatory budgeting initiative implemented in Porto Alegre, Brazil served as inspiration for the programme in Çanakkale.

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# Results

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## Effectiveness

- In 2007, nearly 500 inhabitants participated in the meetings at neighbourhood level. This number corresponds to about 0.6% of the total population of the city. However, the citizens who did attend the meetings have said that the participation of the mayor and the open dialogue with citizens have increased levels of trust and the interest of wider groups of citizens in local projects and services.
  - Based on the survey conducted in 2007 to assess the citizens' priorities, the municipality built a new community center in one of the neighborhoods populated by our Roma citizens. This community house is now being managed by local citizens and it is quite successful in improving the vocational skills of the locals.
  - In the process of preparing the 2015 budget and investment plan, 750 citizens took part. The Citizen Council set up seven neighbourhood councils to increase citizen input.
  - Encouraged by the experience; the municipality made up its new strategic plan for 2015-2019 under the logo of "Have your say – sense your city." From all spheres, 750 citizens participated in the formulation of the new plan.
  - The municipality will soon begin participatory budgeting consultations with the citizens, focusing especially on urban regeneration projects which need the active engagement of local people concerned for the proper design and implementation of the projects.
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## Service quality

### Responsiveness:

- The personal priorities of the mayor have been replaced by the priorities of citizens voting in the neighbourhoods, giving a better understanding of local needs. Moreover, because of the active interest and involvement of citizens and the muhtars the delivery of the local infrastructure projects was on budget. This is a positive step towards an accountable local government and a vibrant local democracy.
- As a result, muhtars have gained in importance in the Çanakkale Municipality. They are now also in charge of strengthening partnership working of NGOs at neighbourhood level and across the city.
- Most importantly, more and more citizens have become active in their neighbourhoods to improve green spaces, which has also fostered community cohesion. As the Director of Parks of the Canakkale Municipality confirmed his department is getting more and more requests from the public to look after parks.

# Development

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## Design

The participation process in the Çanakkale Municipality was strongly driven by the Agenda 21 process and the development of the 2006-2010 Strategic Plan.

Inspired by the introduction of so-called 'participatory budgeting' in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the Mayor wished to involve citizens in the priority setting process.

At the same time, he also involved staff in the drafting of the strategic plan, something which is not common in the hierarchical culture of Turkish local government.

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## Testing

- The Muhtars, a traditional institution in Turkey who are elected by local citizens at neighbourhood level to liaise between citizens and the municipality, also informed citizens about the participation process and built trust. They contributed to the work of the Investment Planning Committee and provided inputs to the evaluation report prepared by the Municipality.
  - The results of the local prioritisation were used for the 2008 investment planning by the Investment Planning Committee of the local council and municipal planning officers. Once the investment planning had been completed, citizens were provided with feedback on the decisions of the Mayor in a second set of neighbourhood meetings.
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## Implementation

### Tools used:

- The participatory budget pilot in 2007 for preparing the 2008 local investment budget consisted of a three-step process, including an awareness-raising campaign. The campaign was designed to raise awareness of local citizens about their right to participate in the decision-making processes around investment priorities. The campaign included meetings with residents over a period of almost three months at neighbourhood level and the distribution of 10,000 flyers to households.
- A citizen survey to assess the willingness of citizens to take part in the new participation process. Furthermore, a representative citizen survey conducted during the awareness-raising campaign showed that 30 % of citizens in Çanakkale were ready to be a part of the process of participatory budgeting, even though it was a new and unknown method back in 2007.
- Public debates at neighbourhood level and the voting of citizens on investment priorities. Public meetings were held to familiarise local people with the investment projects and the participation process and to recruit volunteers who would be interested in taking part in the monitoring and evaluation process. Local citizens were provided with information on the local budget, with a focus on the expenditure levels in previous years, and forecasts of required resources. Based on this information, participants were asked to define the investment priorities of the city and their neighbourhood by ranking various options.
- The community organisers at the neighbourhood level – the Muhtars – played a key role in the participation process by assessing the infrastructure needs of neighbourhoods which were summarised in local investment demand lists.

### Resources used:

- The estimated cost of the participatory budgeting project 2006-2007 was TRY 35 000, which corresponds to GBP 11 000.
  - These costs include the allocation of resources for the 'community fund' of TRY 25 000 and other direct costs such as communication.
  - However, staff costs are not included. The 2007 pilot project also received technical support through an UNDP-led (and EU funded) project.
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## Diffusion

- The municipality continues to encourage citizens to take ownership of their neighbourhood and to manage public spaces. At the same time, the Çanakkale Municipality now tries to engage NGOs in running larger public spaces, such as picnic areas and tea gardens, which are currently managed by the municipality.

# Lessons Learned

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## Lessons Learned

- The fact that the Mayor takes part in the meetings with citizens is a significant factor in increasing the number of engaged citizens in Turkey. It enables face-to-face communication with the local leader which is seen as a positive factor.
- The transfer of responsibility for the allocation of resources from the 'community fund' to local area committees and muhtars has also proved to be very successful. This means that the local authority cannot interfere with the allocation of resources of community-led projects, which depoliticises the commissioning process.
- At the same time, Çanakkale Municipality has become aware that it needs to do more to support citizens to overcome barriers to co-production. Public discontent with the performance of the municipality (such as long waiting times for services) may lead some citizens to take action themselves but there is a need for capacity-building both of local communities and of front-line staff and managers of the municipality, so that both work in a more collaborative way based on co-production principles.
- This will also require a clear definition of the 'mutual tasks and responsibilities' of local communities and the local authority. Most importantly, there needs to be a clearly defined role for local councillors who still have a very weak role in the recently decentralised local government system in Turkey.

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