

WORKSHOP ON THE REVISION OF THE FINANCIAL REGULATION

TOWARDS AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE BUDGET CYCLE

Organised by the Policy Department D on Budgetary Affairs

European Parliament, Brussels

21 March 2017

Citizen engagement

Dr Edward Best,

Head of Unit “European Decision-Making”

European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) Maastricht

Commission Proposal – new Article 54(3)

Citizens may be consulted on the implementation of the Union budget by the Commission, Member States or any other entity implementing the Union budget.

What will this be understood to mean in terms of process and actors? - “may” / “consult” / “citizens”.

At what levels of governance in the EU can citizen engagement in the budget meaningfully apply?

Citizen engagement and the EU budget (1)

Better Regulation – already more opportunities for input and feedback.

Positive message to do even more to engage citizens in budget implementation and to strengthen local action and choice.

Present context – all the more important to create realistic expectations and make initiatives work.

Citizen engagement and the EU budget (2)

One lesson from comparative studies:

be clear as to what aims are being pursued

better targeting / impact / management / monitoring of funds?

increased participation and awareness of citizens?

enhanced legitimacy for the system?

Citizen engagement and the EU budget (3)

Limitations of existing mechanisms for direct participation at EU level by individual citizens (and frustrations)

- European Citizens' Initiative
- online public consultations
- petitions to EP

What next ?

digital democracy? crowdsourcing? Participatory Budgeting?

... at EU level?

Participatory budgeting - challenges

Different models, different aims

PB = allocation of funds for projects at local level

(ref. EU budget cf . local development strategy, CPR)

- deliberation, repetition, monitoring, reporting

can PB apply to mainstream budgets at higher levels?

cities = still local projects

national budgets? not really (spending reviews?)

Participatory budgeting – success factors

Meaningful citizen engagement is not one-off collections of opinions from citizens as individuals.

- **representative majority is not automatic**
- **challenges of participation + vulnerability to lobbying**
- **is not well-suited to long-term complex problems that are hard to break down into discrete tasks**
- **deliberation with stages of moderation and interaction**
- **intermediary organisations are essential**
- **does not replace the role of experts**
- **is complementary to parliamentary democracy**

Participatory budgeting – risks

Capture by organisers / interests

**(therefore need for deliberation / oversight /
“objective criteria”)**

**Low participation (and therefore less benefits in
efficiency and accountability)**

**Rejection as “tokenism” / “window-dressing” if no
sustainable involvement and responsibility.**

Some concluding thoughts

**How can direct citizen engagement work “at EU level”?
- avoid frustrated expectations.**

**Consultation over implementation is mainly for the
Member States / regions / local authorities and will take
place with organisations.**

**Meaningful engagement by individual citizens will
mainly be local.**

**Where there is EU (co-)funding, this should be linked to
deliberation with clear EU recognition/perspective.**