



# Empower your city transition

Citizen Engagement learnings from SmartEnCity Lighthouse City Vitoria-Gasteiz

**We all want more engaged communities. Whether you are a politician leading a municipality government or a general manager running a business, involving your people is a must. This article offers an overview on how citizen engagement is realised in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Lighthouse City of SmartenCity.**

Innovation has brought us many sustainable technical solutions, such as EV cars, solar panels, smart meters, etc. However, innovative solutions can realize their full potential only if the customers are willing to adopt them (Noppers et al. 2015)<sup>1</sup>, thereby making the innovation diffusion an extremely important aspect. Diffusion of innovations is a theory about the process of how, why and at what rate new ideas and technologies are spread (Rogers 2003)<sup>2</sup>.

The above-mentioned research findings corroborate that the world is full of technical solutions – district heating for your energy system or e-bikes for your mobility system, for example. But these solutions will not come into place until you start addressing the policy level and until you create a movement in your society – society participation.

## **SmartEnCity Lighthouse City Vitoria-Gasteiz as test bed for citizen engagement activities**

The SmartEnCity project demonstrates how this can be realized – on the example of Vitoria-Gasteiz. The city is one of the three Lighthouse Cities of the project – a city that works as a demonstrator of such activities and that could be a good example for many other cities in Europe and beyond.

---

<sup>1</sup> Noppers, E.H., Keizer, K., Bockarjova, M., Steg, L. (2015) The adoption of sustainable innovations: the role of instrumental, environmental, and symbolic attributes for earlier and later adopters. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 44, 74–84.

<sup>2</sup> Rogers, E.M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). New York: Free Press.

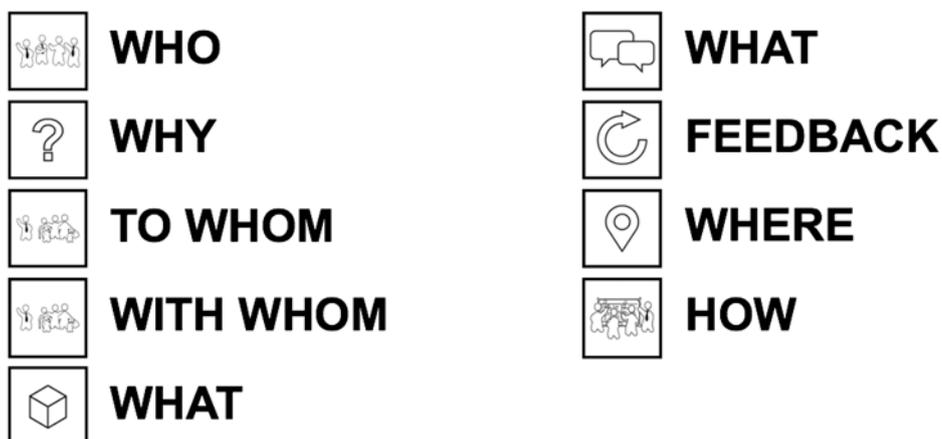
H-Enea, member of the SmartEnCity consortium, is contributing to the co-development of the citizen engagement strategy in Vitoria-Gasteiz and highlights a few points that are considered to be essential in the process.

### The CES Model and its nine components

For the development of the citizen engagement strategy for Vitoria-Gasteiz, the CES Model has been applied. The CES (Citizen Strategy Model) is a tool created by H-ENEA and developed over five years of practice and research on collaborative projects. This Model includes the perspective of users and project collaborators in the development process of a citizen engagement strategy of a city.

The purpose of this model is to create a frame that can be useful for Cities that are developing citizen engagement strategies that involve the offer of innovative services and products<sup>3</sup>.

Based on our experience, we have identified nine fundamental or key elements that, interconnected, play a fundamental role designing strategies to engage citizens:



The following section provides a brief overview of these nine key areas – based on the experiences made in Vitoria-Gasteiz:



# WHO

## Governance

**Who are the decision makers for the strategies and who is implementing them on governance level?**

In Vitoria-Gasteiz, we identified two main categories actors:

- The **local Steering Committee** that guarantees a smooth and efficient development of the project, formed by the SmartEnCity consortium partners Visesa, Tecnalia, the Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council, Mondragon, Giroa Veolia and ACEDE/H-Enea.
- The **local Communication and Citizen Engagement Committee** with the task to promote the project locally and to guarantee the community involvement and citizen engagement. This group is made up by staff from Visesa, the Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council and ACEDE/H-Enea.

SmartEnCity Vitoria-Gasteiz press conference





## WHY

### Purpose

#### Which are the purposes of the Citizen Engagement Strategy in your city?

Vitoria-Gasteiz advocates transforming the city into environmental issues and promoting the transition from the European Green City to the CO2 neutral city. Smartcity pilot in Vitoria-Gasteiz Coronación District is the first City pilot that aims to:

- Reduce the energy demand of the neighborhood and the use of renewable energy in substitution of fossil fuels.
- Improve housing habitability and improve comfort.
- Save on heating and domestic hot water (DHW).
- Integrate the participation of neighbors in the definition of the project.
- Sustainable urban mobility.

In addition, various neighbourhoods of the city will be energetically renovated following the best learnings and practices of the first pilot experience within the next years. This means that the district of Coronation will be the local demonstration

Vitoria-Gasteiz European Green Capital Icon



area for future replications. However, innovative solutions can realize their full potential only if the citizens are willing to adopt them. The purpose of the citizen engagement strategy is to design and implement processes that creates conditions for people to adopt the innovations that are been offered.



# TO WHOM

## Segments and target groups

### To whom are we delivering the activities?

In the case of Vitoria, there will be mostly private home owners affected by these refurbishing activities – they will be responsible for paying 46% of the cost for the refurbishments of their flats. 1.305 dwellings organized in 108 communities are planned to be renovated. Almost 50% of the owners are older than 65 years.

Informative conference with home owners



Informative meeting with associations





# WITH WHOM

**Key actors and roles**

**Formal and informal leadership**

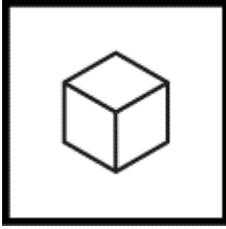
**With whom are we designing and implementing the inclusion of the citizens into the process?**

Some cities have clearly organized channels for the innovative solution implementation. For example, House Associations in the refurbishment solutions case. Others have also organizations devoted specifically to the transition towards smart zero carbon cities (Amsterdam Smart City ASC platform as an example). Other Cities will have to start nearly from scratch. In any case, actors that help us to implement the inclusion of the citizens into the process. This means that different partners can help along the project to achieve the goal.

In Vitoria-Gasteiz case, many different actors took part in the Citizen Engagement issues, designing the strategy step by step, creating consensus of different actors: Visesa, Vitoria-Gasteiz Municipality, Associations located in the District and H-Enea Living Lab. Some other actors are being incorporated depending on the needs of the process.

Stakeholder working meeting





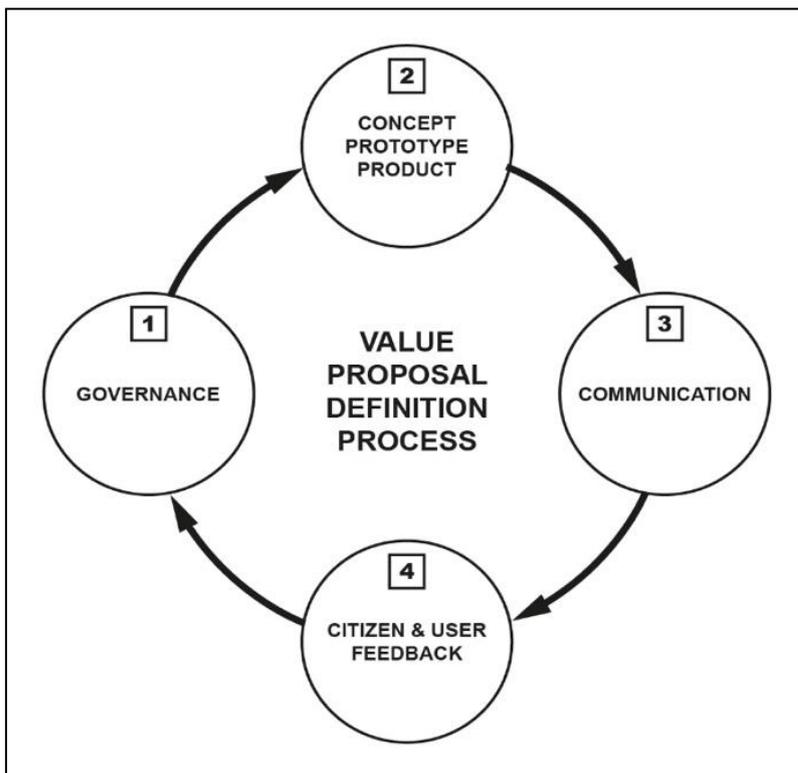
# WHAT

## Value proposition

### What are we offering to the citizens?

When the information strategy works in the right direction, the result can be that the citizens and different target groups increase their positive perception of the activities. The recommended steps for the development of the value proposition are:

#### Value proposal definition process







# WHAT

## Communication: activities, materials and channels

### What are we using for the citizen calls?

There are two main levels that need to be considered regarding the communication activities:

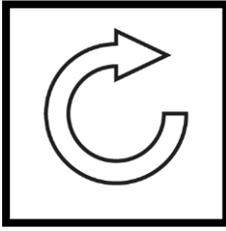
- Media activities, both online and print media/channels, such as local social media channels, websites, flyers, articles in local newspapers.
- Face-to-face promotional activities related to community development, such as public or private meetings, workshops, surveys.

In Vitoria-Gasteiz, the project partners organised different communication activities, such as informative events (with 350 attendees), district renovation information sessions (with 175 attendees), exhibitions and consultations about the district renovation and the planned refurbishments, leaflets and regular meetings with the community of over 100 property owners.



Informative and interactive materials and activities





# FEEDBACK

## Reshaping Value Proposition

### How we are going to get feedback from involved users?

Engaged citizens want to see the results of their involvement. Therefore, a feedback culture should be introduced in the Value Proposition development process, as citizen feedback is key in these processes. The feedback can be collected by:

- Offering the citizens, the possibility to ask questions about the project and resolve some of their doubts during events, local exhibitions and meetings.
- Proposing ideas of the district reurbanisation or receiving citizen feedbacks about District Renovation proposals.
- Offering home owners, the possibility to express doubts about the building retrofitting project proposals.
- Creating spaces and possibilities to co-create solutions.

Receiving feedback from home owners at mini-market exhibitions





# WHERE

## Real and Virtual

### Where are the interactions with the citizens happening?

Spaces can be digital or physical depending on the purpose. In any case, one of the challenges this project faces is to prevent that the citizens have the perception of a fragmented engagement experience around the SmartEnCity project.

In Vitoria-Gasteiz, several physical spaces were chosen for citizen engagement activities: big event venues, local citizen offices, district associations spaces and similar.

Exhibition in a local citizen office



Regarding the virtual spaces, the Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council's official website ([www.vitoria-gasteiz.org](http://www.vitoria-gasteiz.org)) provides detailed information about the process.



# HOW

## User perspective integration strategy

### How are we designing and implementing the citizen engagement actions?

The city background, how the strategy is governed, the kind of key actors that are collaborating in the process (formal or informal) and what we are offering the citizens - all these factors determine the result of the future strategy.

In Vitoria-Gasteiz, the SmartEnCity project organised large events where the neighbourhood was invited, with the collaboration of the existing district association networks and public services. There have also been meetings with the community of property owners to share information, although some aspects of the value proposal still need to be defined.

We would like to highlight that a group of 15 early adopters (people that already confirmed their adhesion with the house refurbishing and biomass heating proposal) have been involved to take part in the pilot area house refurbishing citizen engagement process. Their role is to take part in a workshop with different key actors of the neighbourhood (associations, health center personnel, sociocultural center for aged people, others) and decide which are the best alternatives (strategies and activities) to engage as many people as possible in the adhesion process.

As described before clear descriptions of the value proposals (house refurbishments, biomass heating) are key parts in the engagement processes. The product service description (including finance) evolves during the course of the project. Many aspects of the product characteristics including prices must be clarified during the process. Citizen Engagement teams that take care of supporting the commercialization process should always seeking feedback of the citizens about the proposals, ensuring the information is clear enough to them. Early adopters can also help clarifying these aspects.

To sum up, there is no unique recipe to develop successful citizen engagement strategies. The CES Model is an open frame that helps you to start and develop

a process that is divided in key areas that work independently and interdependently. Understanding the initial conditions of each City is the key factor to be taken into account when starting the designing and developing of the above described areas. In order to understand how this CES Model frame was created, you can go to the Citizen Engagement Strategy and Deployment Plan of the SmartEnCity project<sup>4</sup>.

**You can also get further information in the following links:**

- Watch the SmartEnCity Network Webinar 3: Empower your city transition – Citizen Engagement learnings from European municipalities: <http://smartencity.eu/publications/webinars>
- Lighthouse City Vitoria-Gasteiz: <http://smartencity.eu/about/lighthouse-cities/vitoria-gasteiz-spain/>
- H-ENEA: [http://smartencity.eu/about/consortium/?rx\\_consortium=7](http://smartencity.eu/about/consortium/?rx_consortium=7)