

checklists on preconditions and  
quality criteria for participation  
processes in the public sphere

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## Checklist on preconditions for participation processes in the public sphere

This checklist is intended for initiators of participation processes (authorities, project promoters, ordinary citizens, process facilitators, NGOs etc.). It is meant to help them to ensure the success of the participation process in question by checking the relevant preconditions **in advance**.

Crosses in the columns on the right indicate which preconditions should be fulfilled:

- > for informatory participation processes (i),
- > for comment-centred consultative participation processes (c),
- > for decision-influencing participation processes (d), (covering cooperative, mediative and empowerment processes)

(x) = applies only to full-blown processes, not to one-off events

## Checklist on preconditions for participation processes in the public sphere

Preconditions for participation processes		i	c	d
<b>Participants</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/>	All relevant interest groups are represented around the negotiating table in balanced proportions.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender Mainstreaming requirements are taken into account in selecting group members (e.g. parity between women and men in each subgroup).		x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary talks are held with groups and individuals about their understanding of the process and their role in it.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	At the preliminary talks possible benefits of participation are explained.		(x)	x
<b>Commitment by the decision-makers</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/>	The politicians and administrators should be sounded out, and their support ensured if possible.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The initiators do their best to obtain a firm commitment from decision-makers "downstream" from the participation process that these will take the results of the process into account and will provide reasons for their decisions, particularly where these run counter to the results.		x	x
<b>Results</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Everyone involved is aware what scope for influence and action the participants have.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	It has been clarified/agreed who decides what during/after the process (what powers of decision are located where).	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	All participants are aware whether the results will be binding or not.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The participants are aware what will be done with the results of the process.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The outcome of the process is open – there is scope for action.		x	x
<b>Time</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/>	A clearly defined and adequate timeframe exists.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Some flexibility to accommodate unexpected contingencies during the process timewise is ensured.		(x)	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	It has been ensured that the time demands to be made on all participants, particularly on voluntary participants, can be estimated and are acceptable.		x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The stakeholders are brought into the decision-making process early enough for the scope available for action to be utilized.		x	x
<b>Money</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate funding is ensured.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rules exist for financial requirements and for distributing funds.		x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Civic activity receives recognition, either financial or of some other kind.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	A contingency fund to cope with unexpected events (e.g. additional meetings, experts' reports etc.) during the process is budgeted.		x	x
<b>Other resources and information</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/>	The resources that ensure a "level playing-field" (temporary redistribution of power) during the process (e.g. information, money) will be provided.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	All participants receive sufficient information about the content and course of the process.	x	x	x

	Preconditions for participation processes	i	k	m
	<b>Managing the process</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional advisers have been commissioned.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	An independent, competent process management has been commissioned.		(x)	x
	<b>Process design</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	The design of the event/process is adapted to the specific issue and to the funds available.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Formal and informal processes are aligned (e.g. interfaces to politicians have been clarified).	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	In the case of processes that benefit from public interest, efforts are made to generate such interest (public relations, etc.).	x	x	x
	<b>Clarifications in advance</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	The organizational framework (e.g. distribution of roles, setting and location for the participants' meetings, etc.) has been clarified.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The initial state of affairs has been analysed.	x	x	x

## Checklist on quality criteria for participation processes in the public sphere

Good participation processes satisfy the following quality criteria. This should be ensured particularly by the process management (mediators, process facilitators).

	Quality criteria	i	k	m
	<b>Process management</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	The process is steered by a professional process management.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Process and content are the subject of continual reflection and supervision.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Care is taken that a variety of methods are employed within the process.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Care is taken that activity proceeds smoothly and continuously.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The course of the process is well organized (timetable, rooms for meetings, records of meetings, etc.).	x	x	x
	<b>Treatment of information and knowledge</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	If necessary additional expertise is made available, so that decisions can be taken on a sound basis.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	All information relevant to the process is made available to the participants in good time.	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The course of the process is documented clearly and fully (minutes of meetings, interim reports, etc.).	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	A measure of flexibility as regards the framework and the issue to be negotiated should be built into the process.		(x)	x

	Quality criteria	i	k	m
	<b>Rules / interaction</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	The process management see to it that procedural rules, agreements about the sequence of events, roles, the participants' rights and obligations, and the decision procedure(s) within the process (consensus decisions, majority decisions, etc.) are clear.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The process management agrees rules about group culture with the participants: fair behaviour toward one another and the knowledge acquired during the process, open atmosphere.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	All opinions are listened to and discussed in the process.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Room is given to differing claims, contributions and perspectives within the process.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	During the process all participants' roles are perfectly clear (e.g. who speaks on whose behalf with what powers).	x	x	x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mutual trust should be strengthened, so that the results become more binding.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Care is taken that the composition of the group does not keep changing, and that any new participants are integrated satisfactorily.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The ratio of time invested to benefits obtained is acceptable for all participants.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	Details of what resources are used but not paid for are made available.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The distribution of funds is made visible.			x
	<b>Communicating and implementing the results</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Robust structures should be set up for implementing the results and monitoring progress in this respect.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	All participants commit themselves to the outcome being presented as a collective achievement.			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	A collective agreement is made about how to communicate the decision (the results).			x
<input type="checkbox"/>	The course of the process is continually communicated to the outside world along agreed lines.	(x)	(x)	x

## ÖGUT STRATEGIC GROUP ON PARTICIPATION

In 2002, on the initiative of the Ministry of the Environment, ÖGUT set up the Strategic Group on Participation, which is intended to

- > give the notion of „Participation“ clearer contours, develop it further and make it more widely known,
- > promote awareness of participation in the public eye and among decision-makers in politics, the administration and business,
- > work out participation strategies for policies relevant to the environment and sustainability,
- > contribute to sustainable development by promoting participation,
- > promote participation at communal, regional and national level,
- > make concrete “how to” guides available to people with practical interests.

The members of the Strategic Group on Participation are qualified experts on the subject with backgrounds in many different fields. The following experts were members of the group when this worksheet was drafted. For the status quo of membership please visit <http://www.partizipation.at/mitglieder.html>.

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## THE WORKSHEETS AS PRODUCTS OF THE STRATEGIC GROUP

The results of debate within the Strategic Group are summarized and published as “Worksheets on Participation” and aim at facilitating practitioners’ work.

- > The Worksheet No. 1 on Participation drawn up in the Strategic Group contains a checklist on preconditions for participation processes in the public sphere and a checklist on quality criteria for participation processes in the public sphere.
- > The Worksheet No. 2 on Participation presents an array of arguments in connexion with the question of what benefits participation provides for which groups of agents.
- > The Worksheet No. 3 on Participation deals with the limits of and possible obstacles to participation processes, and with the risk of such processes being misused.
- > The Worksheet No. 4 on Participation (at present only available in German) contains recommendations on how to improve consultation in formal and informal participation processes.

All products from the Strategic Group are available on the website >> [www.partizipation.at](http://www.partizipation.at). Utilizing the worksheets is permitted and encouraged, provided that reference is made to the “authorship of the ÖGUT Strategic Group on Participation”. Responses and comments are welcome, and will be taken into account as revised versions are generated. Any queries should be addressed to: Martina Handler, [martina.handler@oegut.at](mailto:martina.handler@oegut.at), Tel.: +43 (0)1/315 63 93 - 21

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