



# WeGovNow

## Newsletter #1 November 2016

### **Towards WeGovernment:**

Collective and participative approaches  
for addressing local policy challenges

Dear Reader,

WeGovNow is a research and Innovation Action focused on civic participation in local government. The project objective is to involve citizens into decision making processes within their local neighbourhood by using the stateoftheart digital technologies in community engagement platforms.

The project is cofunded by Horizon 2020, the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and will run for three years from March 2016. It brings together a dedicated team of developers, municipalities, researchers and consultants belonging to twelve organisations from five countries across the European Union.

This first edition of the newsletter aims at showing how WeGovNow works, what it wants to achieve and which is the state of art in the trial sites where it will be tested. In the following numbers, we will keep you in the loop by giving the voice directly to the project partners, the citizens, the civil servants, and all the community involved in the implementation phase.

*The WeGovNow Team*

## From eGovernment to weGovernment

The project aims to promote the transition from **citizen as customer to citizen as partner** in the delivery of public services. WeGovNow will therefore generate a new type of citizen engagement platform expanding the viability of and capacity for citizen coproduction in the public sector.

How can we ensure the local government will take aged people's needs into account when planning a new care service? How can local associations propose innovative solutions for co-managing a public space to the local government? How can a citizen report problems about public security in his or her neighborhood?

WeGovNow aims to answer such questions by **changing the relationship between citizens and government**.

## Technology at citizens' service

The WeGovNow platform will take into account different users' perspectives (e.g. citizens, public administrations, civic society organizations, business) and users' diversity (e.g. gender, age, abilities, ethnic groups, family status) by adopting a usercentred design approach.

The platform will allow people to report local community problems and suggest improvements, discuss their relevance, and explore ways of solving problems through collective action. It will strive for finding solutions to face resource shortages affecting the quality of public services, debating strategies, as well as developing and voting upon concrete suggestions for local policy action. Some relevant actions will be possible such as: launching a call for solutions on the codesign of green spaces, facilitating the co-management of public areas, allowing citizens to report problems like "the communal garden has fallen into disrepute" or involving aged citizen in designing a new home care service etc.

The platform will be validated and evaluated from a multiple stakeholder perspective in dedicated **trial sites set up in three European cities**: London Borough of Southwark in the United Kingdom, as well as Turin and San Donà di Piave in Italy.

## State of the project

The WeGovNow consortium is currently working on two basic tasks: defining a strategy for engaging stakeholders and developing the platform.

The **engagement strategy** aims to identify, recruit and involve representatives from local authorities and public service providers, citizens and action groups as well as local enterprises, associations and all the other relevant stakeholders. The project will sustain their participation during the implementation phase in each trial site. It will enable a new type of interactivity in the coproduction of citizencentred services and in the codevelopment of strategic approaches towards more collaborative practices.

The project's trial site managers, together with the municipality departments and some other key stakeholders, are developing scenarios that will be used as canvases to define – in a second step – concrete projects, target groups, and engagement processes. Workshops, interviews and focus groups will help develop realistic scenarios and revealing users requirements.

## Implementation at the trial sites

The three trial sites in London Borough of Southwark, Turin and San Donà di Piave will test the platform's expected outcomes.

Testing how WeGovNow will be used to offer new and improved ways for residents to engage online with the government is one of the main issues.

### The project's trial sites:

London Southwark, UK; Turin and San Donà di Piave, IT.



## TURIN

Turin is a NorthWestern Italian city, with a population of about 900,000 inhabitants in the municipality, and 1.7 million people in the metropolitan area. It is the capital of the Piedmont region (4.5 million inhabitants), and the fourth Italian city in terms of population. For decades Turin had been an industrial city whose main production had been represented by the internationally known FIAT cars factory. Since the nineties Turin has been starting a deep transformation from an industrial city into a creative and smart city. Today Turin is characterised by ongoing conservation and developing projects, is the Italian city with the highest percentage of green spaces per inhabitant.

In order to test the platform's features, Turin targets a new way of managing public spaces: a co-management model shall improve the coordination of the activities. The pilot area is Dora Park, the new urban park whose spaces are designed for a flexible use, such as daily activities or big events (i.e. concerts, festivals, cultural or reli-

gious activities) gathering together thousands of people. The park offers several playgrounds for children, and sporting facilities such as skate spaces and volleyball, basketball, tennis and football courts.

The City of Turin has developed three main intervention scenarios in Dora Park. They mainly focus on finding new services and comaintenance solutions for the park, developed in cooperation with every local unit or department related to a specific topic. On the basis of some interviews, the scenarios have been developed with the main stakeholders and all the local administration units related to the project topics.

Scenarios are characterized by different types of actions: designing and creating an area for teenagers and young people, as well as furniture for the public square inside the shopping mall, and comanaging the *Hortus Conclusus*, a section of the park, by monitoring the first implementation of the regulation of common goods.

The next step will be assessing the feasibility and timing of each project. After that, Turin will start the engagement of the stakeholders to work with, in order to find and validate stable prototype solutions answering to daily needs.



### "Cooling Tower" Parco Dora, Turin

The ex Michelin tower represents a landmark of the Turin former industrial district recently converted into Parco Dora.

Photo credit by: Marco Spano



## SAN DONÀ DI PIAVE

Located on the bank of the Piave River, counting 42,500 inhabitants, San Donà di Piave is the third largest town of the Metropolitan City of Venice. Its strongest economic resources include SMEs, agriculture and trade. The town is sharing economic, cultural and territorial activities as well as the main public services with Venice.

San Donà di Piave is involved in a wider process of integrated planning of social policies, engaging 20 municipalities and more than 215.000 citizens. Its objective is to adopt and improve the Social Opportunities Plan launched by the City in 2015. The plan aims at transforming the delivery of public services, increasing the capacity of citizens, business and other organisations to be proactive in society. Moreover a closer relationship between the quality of life and the economic development of the City shall be achieved.

San Donà has designed four clusters for urban development thanks to a “community analysis”, led by the University of Padua based on interviews with key interlocutors, a focus group, and two workshops involving about 50 stakeholders. The clusters are the following:

1. Improving housing accessibility for aged people, by providing for example a dissemination tool for the community on social services and activities, as well as a map of affordable and accessible houses to the owners, the associations of tenants, and the social housing providers.

2. The revitalisation of an abandoned barrack less than 10 km from the city centre, in order to promote the local heritage, new cultural and entertainment activities, skateparks, gyms and handcrafts spaces also for people with disability.
3. The regeneration of the City Centre, with the purpose of collecting ideas and sharing information on how to promote the City Centre and support business initiatives.
4. Empowerment of skills, education and training to ease the transition from school to work reducing the gap between competences and job opportunities, as well as making the City more attractive for foreign students.

## LONDON SOUTHWARK

The London Borough of Southwark is one of the thirtytwo London boroughs and is made up of eight very distinctive neighbourhoods that extend along the river Thames and down into South East London. They encompass some of London’s top attractions, creative hotspots, scenic villages and acclaimed green spaces. The inner London borough, which is located south of the City of London, is the 9th most densely populated across England and Wales, with 9,988 residents per square kilometre. The resident population, recorded in the 2011 Census, is 288, 200 and comprises a relatively young and ethnically diverse demographic, with significant contrasts of poverty and wealth. Social housing is a distinctive feature of the borough’s urban geography.

All the evidence indicates that as with other parts

### “Cantina Sociale”, San Donà del Piave

This building is part of the Urbact III City Centre regeneration project that will transform this abandoned space in an innovation area focused on talents attractions and on generation of new economic activities.

Phot credit by: *Finotto Francesco*





“Tower Bridge & Riverside in Southwark”, Southwark Borough of London

of London, Southwark’s population will continue to grow so that by 2021 the resident population is estimated to increase by 61,147 persons.

Southwark plans to use the WeGovNow Platform across the council and is developing several different scenarios:

*Housing:* Southwark Council wants to enable residents on an estate stay connected using the social network component, a mechanism with which they could report any issues using the interactive map component.

*Transport:* Southwark Council wants to make it easier and safer for people to get around in Southwark. The Highways team want to conduct online consultations with residents and businesses in areas where they plan to carry out future major street improvement schemes. Engagement of residents and businesses via the WeGovNow platform can help inform design briefs for improvements schemes

*Young people:* Southwark Council wants to test how the WeGovNow platform could help get more young people engaged in the council’s work.

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