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Danube Transnational Programme

URBforDAN

URBforDAN Participatory Approach Evaluation Report *Final report*



Developed by the City of Ljubljana and ZaVita d.o.o.

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Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

ES	Ecosystem Services
IMMP	Integrated Multi-use Management Plan(s)
LP / PP	Lead Partner / Project Partner
SFS	Slovenia Forest Service
UPF	Urban and Peri-urban Forest(s)
WP	Work Package

1. Introduction

1.1. About the URBforDAN Project

Management and Utilization of Urban Forests as Natural Heritage in Danube Cities (with acronym URBforDAN) is an EU co-financed project, which was designed to deliver a change in urban forest management and utilization of ecosystem services. URBforDAN project is being implemented in 7 Danube Cities – Ljubljana (SLO), Vienna (AT), Budapest (HUN), Zagreb (CRO), Cluj-Napoca (ROM), Belgrade (SRB) and Ivano-Frankivsk (UA). Its' implementation is closely observed by 3 associated partner cities – Prague (CZE), Sarajevo (BIH) and Podgorica (MNE), as well as by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Urban and Peri-urban Forests (UPF) in Danube Cities play extremely important role as “green city lungs” - preserving rich biodiversity of Europe and its vivid landscape. They also deliver many economically/socially important ecosystem services – UPF are key areas for experiencing natural/cultural heritage within cities, important tourist attractions, areas for recreation and high quality of living.

All URBforDAN Cities face similar challenges – all manage substantial NH areas (mostly UPF) within their city limits. Due to their characteristics they attract many users (citizens, tourists...), but also have many stakeholders (managers, owners, interest groups...) trying to manage those activities. Today, this is usually done without proper coordination of all stated key actors. UPF also lack appropriate infrastructure and equipment to cope with ever increasing number of users. Thus, UPF are under increasing pressure from diverse set of activities, arising conflicts and unsustainable use of resources – all leading to poor state of NH. Management of UPF in some cities is further challenged by the extreme fragmentation of the ownership (which is often mostly private).

This is why URBforDAN takes on the challenge of mobilization of key actors in URBforDAN Cities to ensure their active participation in integrated planning/management. Protection regimes, mapping/valuation of ecosystem services and development ideas will be combined through a participatory process to deliver Integrated multi-use Management Plans for UPF on strategic and operational level. UPF Danube Network will be established to strengthen the cooperation between key actors, ensure timely knowledge/best-practice sharing, dissemination/transferability of project outputs and enable further capitalization. UPF managers, owners and users will be equipped with management tools supporting multi-purpose use of UPF and exploiting new opportunities for sustainable development. Participatory Planning & UPF Management Guidelines will be developed, based on lessons learned and best practices used.

1.2. About URBforDAN Participatory Approach

The subject of this evaluation is the whole URBforDAN Participatory Approach and its implementation process – represented by URBforDAN WP3 activities, alongside with its overlaps with WP4 and WP5. The key aim of this report is not only to present and explain the URBforDAN Participatory Approach, but also learn from it and improve it based on lessons learnt.

This document represents a deliverable “D.4.3.5. Integrated multi-use Management Plans methodology/approach evaluation report” of the URBforDAN Project. It was designed and developed by the City of Ljubljana and a team of external experts from the company ZaVita d.o.o. tasked to provide expert support to the City of Ljubljana (Lead Partner) and the URBforDAN Partnership.

2. Reasons behind the need for participatory approach in URBforDAN project

Urban lifestyle is fast and intensive, thus vast numbers of citizens and visitors actively search for places to relax from daily stress. Often, there is no time for “the escape from the city”, so they look for alternatives. Traditionally, they find them in Urban and Peri-urban Forests (UPF).

Their status of “green city lungs” is the main reason why UPF in 7 project partner Cities (covering over 35 km²) have so-far survived all urbanization pressures relatively intact. However, multiplication of activities and increasing numbers of citizens (6,5 mio in 7 cities) and visitors (over 15 mio per year in 7 cities) put UPF under unprecedented pressures. Even if many of UPF are protected as natural and cultural heritage areas, inappropriate management, overuse and poor coordination between key actors’ plague most of UPF today.

City of Ljubljana, being The Green Capital of Europe 2016, composed the transnational URBforDAN partnership in order to capitalize on its so-far achievements and present new standards in sustainable and participatory UPF management.

Through introduction of the participatory approach, URBforDAN project aimed to improve cooperation between key stakeholders and actively involve them in development of 7 Integrated Multi-use Management Plans (IMMP) – delivering not only improved UPF management and utilization of ecosystem services, but also a constructive dialogue with citizens and mind-change needed to resolve concrete conflicts.

It also aims to improve the current image of 7 UPF focus areas and turn them into places for socialization, relaxation, recreation, education and natural heritage experience for a diverse set of target groups. At the same time, it aims to diversify and enrich “the green content” of 7 URBforDAN cities through new and improved services and products, accessible on over 1.200 ha of UPF.



3. Methodological approach

As Urban and Peri-urban forests (UPF) represent areas where many interests overlap and sometimes collide, the participatory approach was built into the URBforDAN project as one of key methodological approaches. In fact, methodological approaches of all other work packages (WP) were based on the participatory approach.

This is also the main reason why the URBforDAN development process model (see below) shows almost symbiotic relationship between all WPs, enabling active and dynamic cooperation between all involved parties, as well as integration of all information gathered through the participatory process. On one hand this can be understood as a key methodological advantage. However, if not implemented properly, it could also become an important methodological liability.

"Public participation is the process by which an organization consults with interested or affected individuals, organizations and government entities before making a decision."

"Public participation is a two-way communication and a collaborative problem-solving process with the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions."

Source: International Association for Public Participation
URL: www.iap2.org

The overall methodological approach can be broken down into the following key stages:

- ✓ **Stage 0 – Internal training of trainers** ensures proper implementation of the participatory approach. It was delivered to all project partner staff working on the project.
- ✓ **Stage 1 – Mobilization of key stakeholders** is an extremely important stage, as the participatory approach demands active participation of UPF owners, managers and users. Thus, it is very important to not only attract, but also mobilize all key actors and address all key target groups. All project partners used the same common approach and adapted it to their specific circumstances and needs.
- ✓ **Stage 2 - Active involvement of key actors in development of management plans** is the stage where we activate key stakeholders, their knowledge, ideas and potentials. Once activated, we make sure they are used for identification of key challenges and in search for best possible solutions. In this stage, a significant overlap between WP3 and WP4 is necessary to ensure integration of proposed solutions into IMMPS.
- ✓ **Stage 3 - Active involvement of key actors in future development of UPF** is the stage not reached by many "classical" participatory processes, as majority of them end after adoption of the management plan. The main purpose of this stage is to ensure active participation of most interested key stakeholders also in management plan implementation phase, thus establishing long-term coordination and cooperation between UPF owners, managers and users.

For easier understanding of WP3 and its most important links with other WPs, all stages and their steps are schematically presented on the URBforDAN development process model at the end of this chapter.

3.1. Internal training of trainers

To ensure proper implementation of the participatory approach an internal training of trainers (ToT) was designed. It was based on the assumption that all project partners already possess basic understanding of the participatory processes (existing experience) and staff capable of its execution or that adequate external experts will be brought in to support them. This is why ToT was directly linked to the topic and challenges of the URBforDAN project itself.

Step 0.1 – Development of URBforDAN Participatory Approach Workshop Implementation Guidelines

[URBforDAN Participatory Approach Workshop Implementation Guidelines](#) were developed with a primary aim to ensure common approach and establish universal understanding of all steps. The secondary aim was to equip less experienced project partners with theoretical background, ensure adequate understanding, as well as provide them useful “tips and tricks” – all to ensure best possible implementation of WP3 in each project partner city.

However, the URBforDAN lead partner project team and its external experts felt that additional support, which would clarify how we want to use participatory approach in practice, was needed. This is why a custom-made participatory approach training exercise was developed. It is based on a role-play game principle. In it, trainees take over roles, ambitions and characteristic of key stakeholders. Throughout the game trainees simulate participatory approach-based search for solutions to specific URBforDAN challenges with clear mission – to achieve consensus between all key actors and come up with best possible solutions.

Step 0.2 – URBforDAN Participatory Approach Training of Trainers

Training of trainers (ToT) was divided into 3 parts and connected to first two URBforDAN project meetings. On the URBforDAN kick-off meeting the opportunity of having all project partners in Ljubljana was exploited to visit Glovec hill (lead partner UPF focus area) and present its characteristics and challenges. On-site training was held about methods for identification of key stakeholders, as well as about methods to attract and mobilize them.

In-between first two URBforDAN project meetings, URBforDAN Participatory Approach Workshop Implementation Guidelines were developed and distributed to all project partners. Then, an on-line meeting was organized for workshop leaders to present Guidelines and resolve any open issues, as well as to support project partners in organization of Introductory Workshops for key stakeholders (owners, managers and users).

On the 2nd URBforDAN project meeting in Zagreb the 3rd part of the ToT was held. Project partners exchanged experiences from organization of Mobilization (Introductory) workshops in all URBforDAN partner cities. Based on the results, additional support was provided to project partners in improving further steps and resolving unexpected situations. As the last step, custom-made participatory approach training exercise was executed, jointly evaluated and discussed in order to respond to newly identified challenges in execution of participatory processes.

Step 0.3 – WP3 implementation on-line help-desk

Throughout URBforDAN project external experts of the lead partner held an open on-line help-desk with a clear aim, to support project partners in best possible implementation of the participatory approach. Through this tool, all project partners were able to express any open issues or obstacles they faced and received concrete problem-oriented counseling.

3.2. Mobilization of key stakeholders

Participatory approach demands active participation of all key stakeholders, whether they are owners, managers or users of urban and peri-urban forests (UPF). Thus, it is very important to mobilize all of them, as well as address all key target groups. Given its importance, one of the first tasks of the partnership was to develop a joint approach for communication with key stakeholders and target groups. This was ensured by URBforDAN Communication Strategy (developed in WP2) where specificity of various types of key actors has been taken into account.

Step 1.1 – Identification of all key stakeholders

Firstly, project partners from the same city were tasked to identify all UPF owners, managers or users. In case of owners, existing GIS land ownership databases were relied upon. In majority of URBforDAN cities UPF are predominantly owned by public bodies. However, in some cases, private ownership is prevailing – making mobilization of all owners an important issue. In case of managers, institutions with any management responsibilities or protection regimes were invited to participate. In case of users, project partners firstly prepared lists of all known types of UPF users in their city and set out to create a contact list of all potentially interested institutions, organizations and individuals.

Step 1.2 – Mobilization (Introductory) workshops

Mobilization (Introductory) workshops were executed all URBforDAN cities in order to present the URBforDAN project, its aims and participatory design, announce further steps and invite all key stakeholders to actively participate. This opportunity was also used to ask all stakeholder groups to nominate their representatives, which represented their interests in further URBforDAN project steps – in practice this meant that they remained available to city project teams for any further in-depth discussions or problem-oriented meetings.

Actually, in most cities 2 separate workshops were held – 1 for owners and managers and 1 for users. This approach was on one hand used to reduce the number and ensure active participation of all participants. On the other hand, this allowed project partners to have more UPF owner and management focused discussions on the first workshop, while giving more attention to user driven topics on the second workshop. Subsequently, project partners were also able to gain in-depth understanding of exiting challenges and conflicts from all sides, without opening the floor to confrontation of opinions between the two groups from the start.

Step 1.3 – Understanding the habits, needs and expectations of key stakeholders

A uniform topic-devoted questionnaire was developed by URBforDAN core management team and external experts to collect information about habits, needs and expectations of key stakeholders in all URBforDAN cities. Project partners translated questionnaires into their national languages, in order to remove language barriers and add additional topics specific for “in-depth understanding” of their key stakeholders. URBforDAN project partners were autonomous in execution of the survey and used different techniques to disseminate the questionnaires amongst stakeholders. Techniques like on-line survey, conducting the survey during workshops, on-site surveys, etc. were used. Some of them even combined techniques, prolonged their execution or even repeated the survey – all with one aim to get the best possible results.

While cities with public UPF areas held meetings and interviews with UPF owner institutions, cities with combined public and private ownership carried out an additional survey for UPF owners. The purpose of both approaches was the same as in case of users – to gain in-depth understanding of habits, needs and expectations, as well as ambitions of UPF owners. In all URBforDAN cities UPF managers were identified as public institutions with clear goals and well-developed management frameworks. Thus, only individual meetings were held, if considered necessary and relevant.

A detailed stakeholder analysis was prepared by project partners on a city-level, based on gathered information from all key stakeholders. This provided them with in-depth understanding of key stakeholders, crucial for the following URBforDAN activities.

Step 1.4 – Development of key stakeholder profiles

As a follow-up activity, a project-level stakeholder analysis was prepared by URBforDAN core management team and external experts, in order to understand similarities, as well as specifics of key stakeholders across the Danube region. Although it was envisioned as a simple and high-level analysis,

the quality of delivered results enabled its authors to go one step further and deliver [URBforDAN Key Stakeholder Profiles](#). Although generalized, all URBforDAN cities were able to rely upon profiles in IMMP development process.

3.3. Active involvement of key actors in development of management plans

It is important to understand that the final goal of this activity wasn't a perfectly executed participatory process, but a sound, widely accepted and subsequently highly implementable IMMP. Therefore, implementation steps of this activity closely follow implementation phases of WP4. Success in this activity is crucial not only for successful implementation of WP4, but also for WP5.

Step 2.1 – Prioritization workshops

Prioritization workshops represent the 2nd series of workshops for key stakeholders. Firstly, key stakeholder survey results were presented to participants. This was followed by a transparent and inclusive discussion about existing challenges and conflicts linked to various activities in UPF, as well as needs and expectations. These were grouped and prioritized according to their importance – creating so-called “prioritization list” – the key input for defining priorities/goals of Strategic parts of IMMP. Again, most cities organized 2 separate workshops – 1 for owners and managers and 1 for users.

Step 2.2 – Action-planning workshops

Action-planning workshops represent the 3rd series of workshops for key stakeholders. Draft Strategic part of IMMP was firstly presented to all participants to show them how prioritization list was integrated. This was followed by a transparent and inclusive discussion about future development potentials of UPF, as well as about already existing development ideas proposed by key stakeholders. These were again grouped and turned into an Action Plan – key input for defining development of the Operational part of IMMP. Through them key stakeholders were able to influence selection of activities to be supported for development in the selected UPF focus area, their distribution in space and the manner of their development.

Step 1.3 – Public presentation and consultation on Integrated Multi-use Management Plans

As the final step, all URBforDAN cities published their IMMPs on their web-sites, as well as organized their public presentations. IMMPs were presented not only to key stakeholders, but to all interested public, which was invited to comment final draft documents and deliver suggestions for their improvement. Project partners reviewed received comments, integrated justified suggestions for improvement and developed final versions of IMMPs.

3.4. Active involvement of key actors in future development of UPF

One of URBforDAN goals was to show that active involvement of key stakeholders in joint UPF management can also become a best-practice example with numerous benefits for all involved parties. However, this approach has so-far never been used in UPF management practice. Thus, the partnership decided to develop and test it on the selected pilot site – Golovec hill (Ljubljana). It was selected due to its diverse ownership, vast number of private and public owners and low level of their current cooperation in UPF management. These pilot actions were implemented by URBforDAN lead partner, while other project partners used this opportunity to monitor and learn.

Step 3.1 – Review and capitalization on best joint management practices

Firstly, a review of all existing joint management practices was prepared in order to understand, learn from and capitalize upon already existing models and approaches.

Step 3.2 – Consultation meetings with interested key stakeholders

Conclusions of the best practice review were presented to interested key stakeholders – predominantly UPF owners – alongside the idea for establishment of the First Initiative for joint UPF management. A series of consultation meetings were held to support the whole process and to attract UPF owners to join the initiative.

Step 3.3 – Selecting suitable Management Model and drafting the Statutory Act

Based on review of all existing joint management practices and results of consultation meetings with interested key stakeholders most suitable management model for the First Initiative for joint UPF management was selected and Statutory Act drafted.

Step 3.4 – Establishing First Initiative for joint UPF management

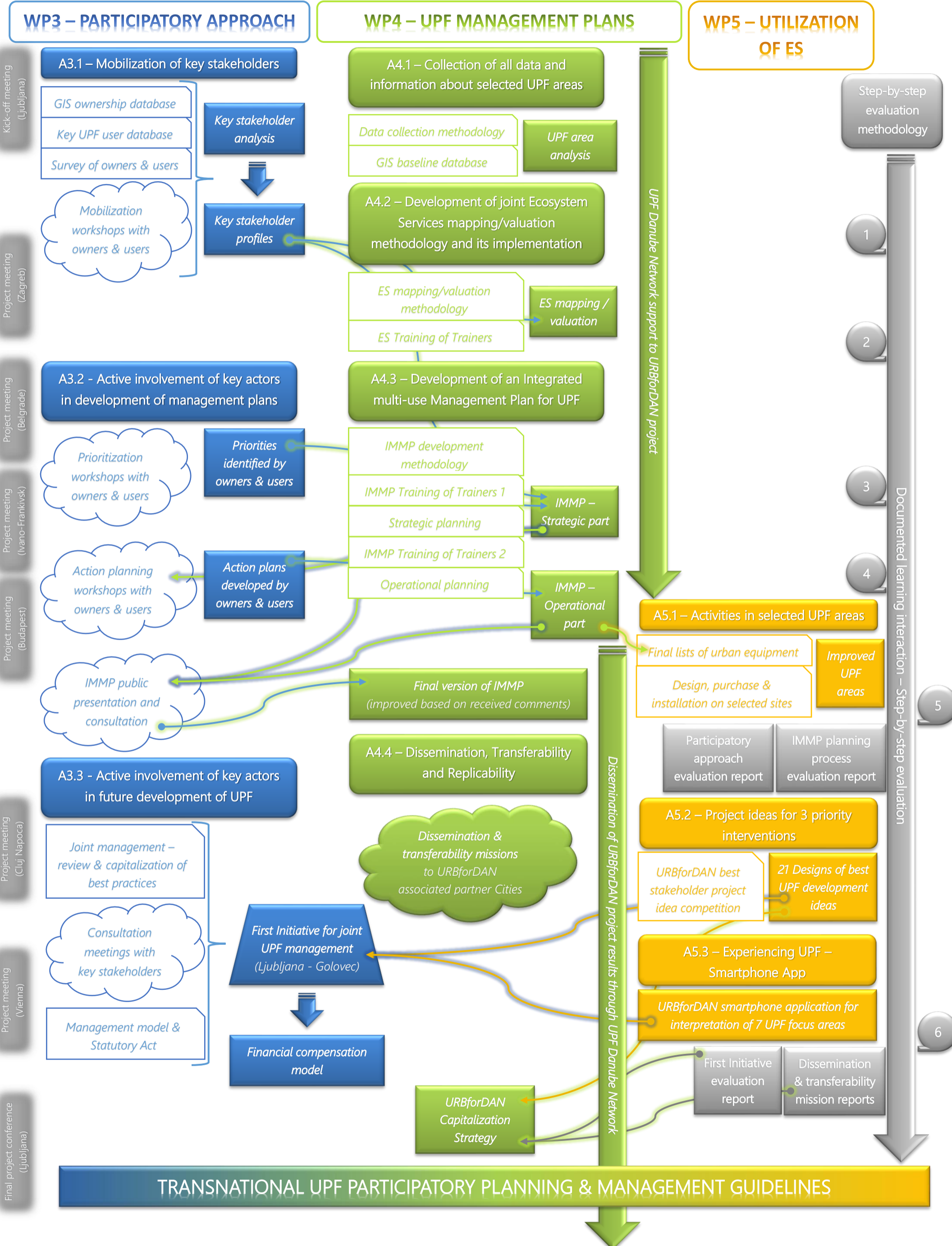
All results were presented on a special workshop to all key stakeholders organized on Golovec hill, to ensure that all interested parties can join this initiative. As soon as all interested will join the initiative the Association could be formally established.

Step 3.5 – Designing the Financial Compensation Model

To ensure long term sustainability a Financial Compensation Model for owners supporting multi-use of their land on Golovec hill in Ljubljana was developed, as the management tool to motivate all involved actors for active, constructive and sustainable UPF management.

URBforDAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS MODEL

(as implemented by an individual URBforDAN partner City)



4. Evaluation of the Participatory Approach and its implementation

Evaluation of the implemented Participatory Approach was performed as a documented learning interaction – a continuous process that took place in parallel to other URBforDAN activities. It was especially strongly interlinked with the development process of the Integrated multi-use Management Plans (IMMPs).

After any implemented key step in the Participatory Approach and/or IMMP development process, project partners were provided with a structured questionnaire in order to evaluate provided guidance and training, methodology, tools, as well as its operational execution and the level of success. Questionnaires not only documented the learning process, but also provided an important feedback of each implemented step of the Participatory Approach and/or IMMP development process.

The main benefit of such approach was that the Core Management Team was able to monitor and evaluate effectiveness and efficiency after each key step and receive high quality feedback from project partners. In this way, the team was able to react and resolve identified problems almost immediately, thus actively supporting project partners. At the same time, we were collecting important feedback on applicability of the proposed methodology in various environments, as well as the need for its modification to specific circumstances. On the other hand, it also provides an important feedback to project partners, as now they can benefit from a comprehensive overview that critically reflects their involvement, as well as provides them with an opportunity to adopt changes to their well-established operational mechanisms, methods and approaches in the future – thus, improving their capacities, capabilities and performance.

All in all, this proved to be a high-quality piloting and learning process for all involved. As such, its key benefit lies in “lessons-learned” that other cities and institutions entering the process of Participatory Approach or UPF IMMP development may benefit. All such lessons learned will be used in the methodological up-grade process and used for development of Transnational UPF Participatory Planning & Management Guidelines.

4.1. Internal training of trainers

In the framework of Participatory Approach training, the following tools and support were offered by The City of Ljubljana and their external partners to the project partners:

- Participatory Approach Guidelines;
- Unified PPT presentation for mobilization workshops;
- Questionnaires for key stakeholders;
- Operational support by WP leaders;
- Participatory Approach Training.

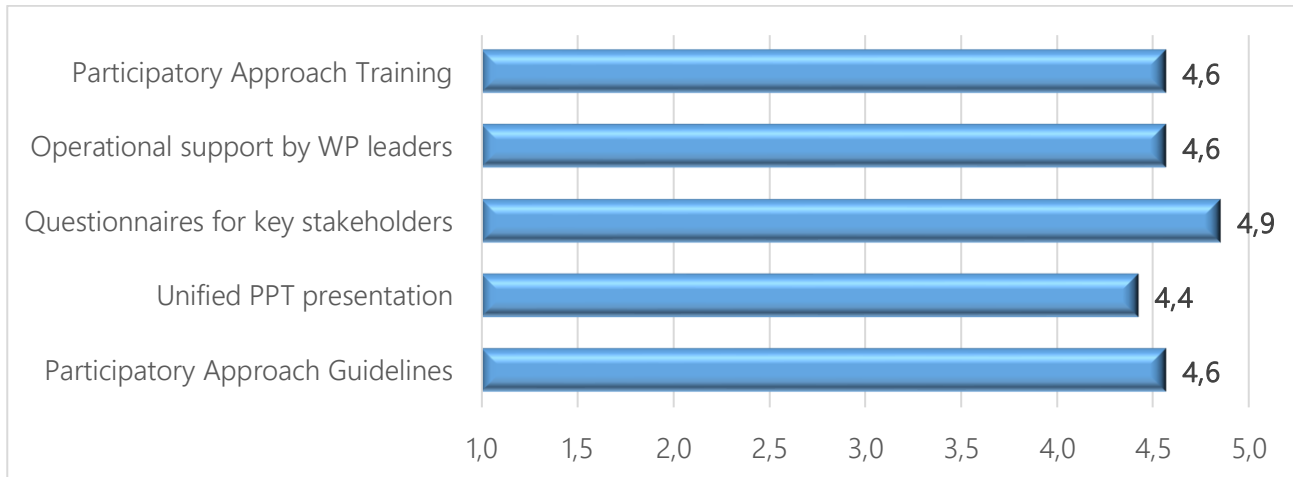
In general, most of the partners were either “*more than satisfied*” or “*very satisfied*”.

As indicated in the figure below, Questionnaires for key stakeholders were given the highest score (4.9), followed immediately by the Participatory Approach Training, Guidelines and Operational support by WP leaders (all 4.6). Two partners gave score 3 to the Unified PPT presentation for mobilization workshops, which is understandable, as such tools always need to be modified to local needs. This slightly lowered the score for this support tool, although it is still quite high (4.3).

Some project partners stated that an important problem was a delayed start of the project, which prevented the training of trainers to be carried out more in advance of Mobilization workshops, as it proved to be highly useful. However, due to time pressure project partners were not fully able to exploit

it in practice. Also, some of them noticed that their staff would need more training, as their initial capacities were not as high as anticipated in the project design phase.

Figure 1: Level of satisfaction of the project partners with provided material and support for Participatory Approach (Source: Survey among project partners)



As expected, the majority of partners need to modify the content of the Unified PPT presentation for mobilization workshops and Questionnaires for key stakeholders to fit their local conditions, while other tools were useful as designed.

4.2. Mobilization of key stakeholders – a continuous process

After the internal training of trainers (Stage 0), which ensured common understanding of the participatory approach, as well as its proper implementation from project partner staff working on the project, URBforDAN project partnership focused on mobilization of key stakeholders.

To reach out to key stakeholders, the majority of project partners relied on e-mail and personal invitations (e.g. by telephone, in-person meetings, etc.), regular post, printed materials, own websites and social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) were also often used, while local media were only used by few partners.

In total project partners organized 9 mobilization workshops (2 cities decided to organize 2 workshops) and attracted over 250 participants– predominantly UPF users, but also over 30 UPF owners. The number of attracted owners is lower as only Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade have private owners within their UPF.

5 out of 7 project partners stated that they were in general successful in mobilizing their key stakeholders. They also reported high number of present key stakeholders, positive and active participation, as well as high quality of held discussions. The two partners stating that they were not successful in mobilizing key stakeholder listed the following key reasons:

- Mobilization workshop participants were not from mapped key stakeholder groups – either due to low level of interest for participation or wrong communication channels used to mobilize key stakeholders.
- Inconvenient time for organization of workshops – one partner organized them during working hours, thus losing many potential participants due to their other responsibilities.

Both partners adopted corrective measures – primarily the use of other communication channels and change of workshop organization timeframe. However, even other partners stated that they plan to

extend the list of invited participants, as well as put-in additional effort to mobilize them.

After the implementation of the introductory workshops, 3 out of 7 partner cities raised the importance of the quality of the workshop implementation. This can be enhanced:

- With the involvement of external moderators and facilitators, if the in-house knowledge or capacities are not adequate or available. Only 2 partner cities used the help of external experts in facilitation of workshops. Among remaining five, 4 partner cities stated that would consider hiring external experts for the next workshop.
- With more interactive workshop design, ensuring active and fruitful involvement of participating stakeholders. This might be achieved by various icebreakers, communication games and interactive sessions.
- With mobilization of missing key stakeholders. In many cases it occurred that participating stakeholders, alongside their comments, problems and suggestions (previously unidentified), also identified missing stakeholders and provided their contacts.

Therefore, we can conclude that all project partners agreed that the mobilization of key stakeholders is not only an initial phase of the Participatory Approach, but also a continuous process, which needs encouragement, support and lots of communication.

4.3. Understanding the key stakeholders – a cornerstone of in-depth understanding

Just as important as mobilization of key stakeholders is understanding their habits, needs and expectations. In order to achieve that, the URBforDAN partnership decided to conduct a survey amongst key stakeholders in all 7 cities. A special survey was also prepared for UPF owners.

Project cities were free to decide amongst various approaches how to implement the survey – for example on-site questioners, on-line survey, questioners sent by mail, questioners filed out by workshop participants, etc. Almost all cities decided to conduct a combination of at least 2 methods in order to get better response. Two combinations were most common – on-site & on-workshop questioners and on-line survey & on-workshop questioners.

While on-workshop questionnaires were usually well responded to, other two methods were conducted with mixed results. As surveys were carried out from October 2018 to January 2019 – not an ideal time to carry out on-site surveys, as many of stakeholders were no-longer present in urban forest. This resulted in a rather low number of respondents in those cities which opted for on-site survey approach. On the other hand, on-line surveys proved to be a much more successful approach, in case of Ljubljana leading to an unexpectedly high response.

Regardless, all project partners ensured statistically relevant survey results with minimum numerus around 100. Subsequently we consider results relevant not only on the transnational level, but also on local city level. The table below shows the number of respondents linked to individual stakeholder group.

CITY / Key SH group	Hikers	Cyclists	Downhill cyclist	Joggers	Pet walkers	Families with children	Teachers with pupils	TOTAL per city
Belgrade	59	11		13	X	28	/	75
Budapest	97	26		40	13	X	/	176
Cluj-Napoca	132	103	X	70	X	44	19	146
Ivano-Frankivsk	33	28	24	26	26	56	13	109
Ljubljana	171	108	256	117	85	140	11	1.134
Vienna	10	40	X	21	11	25	8	102

Zagreb	X	27	23	29	35	/	96
TOTAL per Key SH group	502	343*	280	310	164	51	1.838

LEGEND: X – not detected or not analyzed due to too-low no. of respondents. / - not included in the survey.

Based on survey results and their analysis, each URBforDAN city prepared its own Key Stakeholder Profiles report. In it each city selected most relevant stakeholder groups and developed stakeholder profiles – generalized descriptions of key stakeholders based on their answers (with exception of Vienna and Ivano-Frankivsk – they opted to do full analysis of all detected stakeholder groups). These were used as a tool in development of Integrated Multi-use Management Plans (IMMPs) for each city.

Later on, URBforDAN LP joined all above described documents, joined all results together, analyzed them and prepared even more generalized Key Stakeholder Profiles relevant for the Danube Region. A detailed report titled [URBforDAN Key Stakeholder Profiles](#) with key lessons learned from this exercise is available for more information.

4.4. Involving key stakeholders in IMMP planning process – improving on lessons learned

Based on gained experiences from step one, 3 out of 7 partner cities used different method to approach and invite stakeholders to participate in the project workshops. In this step, personal invitations (e.g. by telephone, in-person meetings, etc.) and letter invitations were used to a wider extent in order to engage key stakeholders more directly.

All partner cities changed the methods for the implementation of the workshop in comparison with the first round. Almost all (6 out of 7) invited new target groups, thus successfully mobilizing additional stakeholders. One additional partner city engaged external moderators and half of the partner cities changed the day of the week, time and venue of the workshops.

These changes were adopted because the partnership took valuable time to carefully reflect the lessons learned from the first series of workshops. Identifying what did not go as planned, what could be done better or what can we learn from others is not a sign of failure, but a learning process. This learning experience resulted in satisfaction of all partners with the second round of workshops.

This time 10 workshops were organized as 3 project cities decided to organize 2 workshops. Although the participant turn-out was this time lower (in total over 200 participants), all partner cities reported that actually attracted more key stakeholders. This discrepancy occurred, as in many cases key stakeholder groups officially or unofficially named their representatives, resulting in lower numeric participation, but higher number of presented key stakeholders.

From the content point of view, partner cities reported that they received sound input for the development of IMMPs, expanded knowledge about UPF among the stakeholders and received different opinions and good ideas for resolutions of challenges and open issues in the focus area. This clearly states that the level of the participatory approach was elevated to a higher level. On the other hand, project partners clearly learned that a sound and bilaterally successful participatory approach is based on mutual respect and a two-way communication. After each interaction with stakeholders, both sides should benefit from newly gained knowledge and in-depth understanding of individual point of view, as this is crucial for development of any realistic and solution orientated action plan.

We can conclude that 6 out of 7 project cities found results of the Participatory Approach very useful or next steps of the URBforDAN project, while the remaining project city found them partially useful.

4.5. Involving key stakeholders in IMMP planning process – Interaction with stakeholders takes time and other resources, but also delivers results

Understanding the actual involvement of stakeholders in preparation of Strategic parts of IMMPs was an important focus of the survey after the implemented step 3. All partner cities with the exception of one (6 out of 7) involved previously identified stakeholders in order to contribute in preparation of Strategic parts of IMMPs. The sole partner city which opted not to involve key stakeholder in this step listed the following reasons:

- They understand and execute all strategic planning as their own internal procedure. Subsequently, it is not a step where they were willing to involve key stakeholders.
- From their point of view, all necessary information from key stakeholders was already obtained in the previous steps.
- In previous steps they also experienced the lack of responsiveness from key stakeholders and were skeptical about the added of such efforts.

The partner cities that did involve stakeholders involved both UPF owners (where relevant), as well as UPF users. They have been involved via workshops or more tailored bilateral meetings, which focused on specific topics needed of more attention in IMMPs. In this phase, interactions were more topic-specific and thematically orientated, targeting specific problems and needs.

Partner cities which opted to involve stakeholders in this step reported that they benefited from new (previously unknown) issues and practical solutions.

Based on all described differences between two groups of partner cities, it is interesting to conclude that partner cities which opted to involve key stakeholders in preparation of Strategic parts of IMMP were satisfied with end results. On the other hand, the one partner city which opted not to involve key stakeholders reported, that they were not satisfied with the Strategic part of their IMMP. Although the key reported reason for lower than expected satisfaction was stated as “missing some data”, we can conclude from other parts of the step 3 survey, that involvement of key stakeholders could fill at least some of those knowledge gaps.

This indicates that using the Participatory Approach automatically requires means more interaction with key stakeholders, which takes time and other resources, but clearly enables a broad and fruitful discussion, thus delivering satisfying results.

4.6. Involving key stakeholders in IMMP planning process – in search of the elusive feasible solutions

Based on lessons learned in step 3, in step 4 devoted to preparation of Operational parts of IMMPs, all partner cities actively involved key stakeholders in preparation of Operational parts. In this step however, partner cities used different approaches, tailored to the specific problems, stakeholders and needs of their focus areas. Here are some of used approaches:

- Representatives of interest associations that represent general public were brought together with the experts (e.g. environment protection, local government administration, etc.). The goal of the workshop was to identify and discuss the best solutions for previously identified challenges.
- Specific interaction with pupils from local schools in order to jointly design educational paths - resulting in a bottom-up approach, used to make sure stakeholders identify with proposed solutions and use them in practice.

- Cooperation and result orientated consultations with marginalized groups (i.e. homeless, drug addicts, etc.) in order to find solutions for better and safer environment and coexistence.
- Face to face meetings with land owners, listening to their problems and finding joint solutions.

As Participatory Approach was designed as a documented learning interaction and integral part of the URBforDAN project, it affected its implementation timeline. Although, this additional time was accounted for, the Participatory Approach was identified as one of the key reasons that the preparation of Operational parts of IMMPS was running behind schedule. More specifically, project partners identified that the phase taking most additional time was linked to finding the feasible option.

When developing the operational part of any plan, feasible and widely accepted solutions for previously identified problems and challenges should be identified. However, as we found out in many cases, solutions from key stakeholders may not be fully acceptable or implementable, once you face them with legal, operational and other boundaries and limits. Thus, making this phase a challenging and time consuming one.

However, in the end we can report that additionally invested time and effort payed-off, as a vast majority of participating cities (6 out of 7) stated that the Operational parts of their IMMPS reflect the needs of the stakeholders to the full (1 out of 7) or at least to the feasible extent (5 out of 7). Thus, finding the operational and namely feasible balance between the desires of stakeholders and financial, operational and legal reality.

On the other hand, in one case, partner city believes that the Operational part of its IMMPS does not reflect the need of the stakeholders, namely due to lack of time and dialogue with private ownership. Nonetheless, all 7 partner cities found the end results very useful or the next steps of the URBforDAN project.

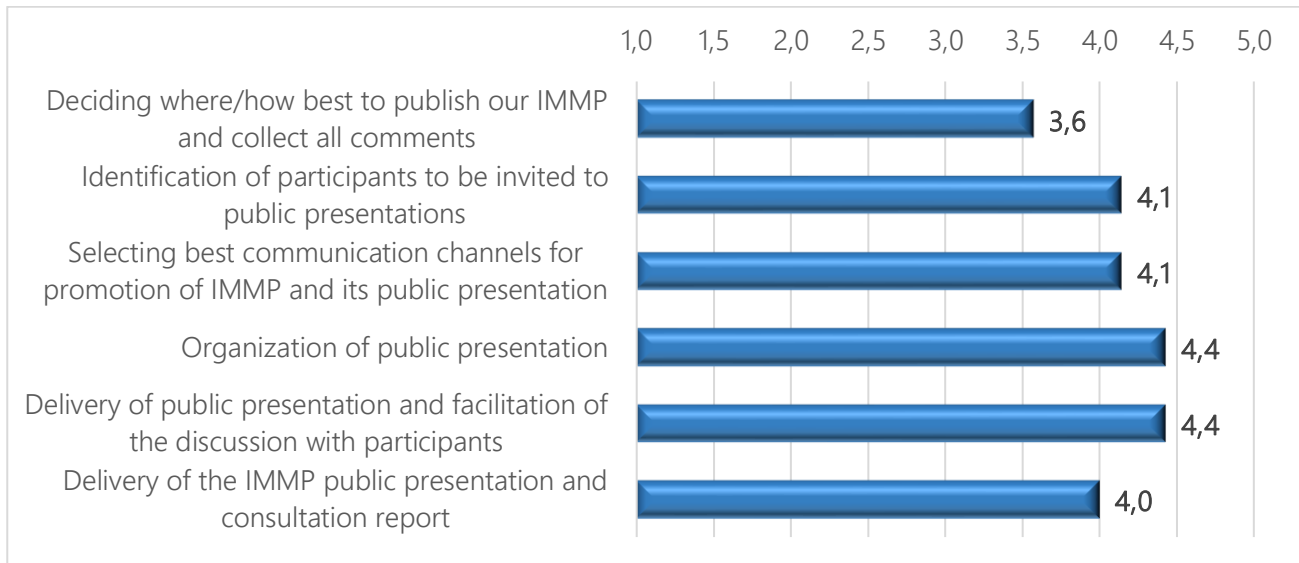
4.7. Involving key stakeholders in IMMPS planning process – end results and their public presnetations

As the final step, developed IMMPS needed to be presented to the general public through organized public presentation process. As a final test of lessons learned in the previous Participatory Approach steps, this process was only directed by the Lead Partners and its external experts, while partner cities were left on their own to execute it as they saw fit.

It has to be stated that this phase was heavily impacted by the COVID 19 related restrictions, forcing partner cities to heavily modify the proposed approach of public presentation events with widely invited general audience.

However, as evident from the figure below, we are glad to report that although partner cities seemed to be unsure how to carry out this process in light of all restrictions, in the end they felt quite confident in its execution. If, due to COVID 19 situation and subsequent loss of “the usual approaches”, the level of confidence linked to “Deciding where/how best to publish our IMMPS and collect all comments” was lower than expected (3,6), partner cities felt quite confident in other tasks, especially those linked to organization of the public presentation and presentation of their IMMPS (both 4,4) – thus exposing gained experiences and the knowledge growth.

Figure 2: Level of confidence of the project partners with execution of the IMMP public presentation and consultation process (Source: Survey among project partners)



Partner cities reported the following types of modifications due to COVID 19 situation:

- Postponing the public consultation process until the lift of most heavy restrictions – usually until summer (in case of Zagreb due to the earthquake even until September 2020).
- Organization of on-line public presentation and consultation process and its heavy promotion through various communication channels.
- Prolonged collection of comments on on-line documentation made available on official city-websites and heavily publicized.
- Recording on-line public presentation and making it available for review during the public consultation process.

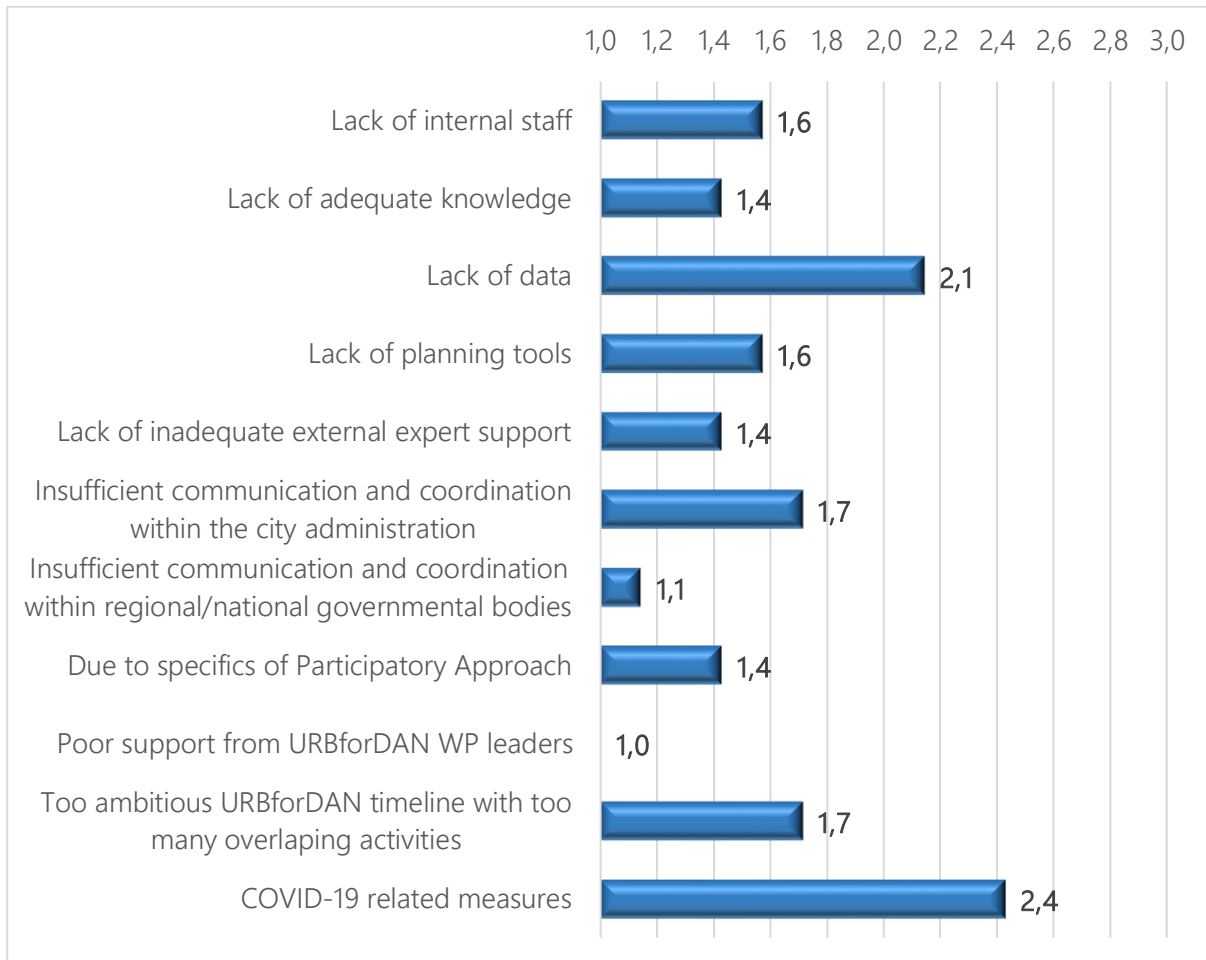
All 7 partner cities reported that used modifications worked fine and were satisfied with executed consultation processes. Just as importantly, all 7 partner cities reported that they actively involved key stakeholders based on their public consultation comments, in order to contribute to the preparation of the final version of your IMMP – in 4 cases comments also came from newly identified and so-far not involved stakeholders.

In the end we can conclude that all 7 partner cities were satisfied with final versions of their IMMPs – 2 out of 7 even report that that they were able to ensure *“full reflection of stakeholder needs”* in their IMMPs, while 5 tended to be more cautious and report that their IMMPs reflect the needs of stakeholders *“to the feasible extent”*.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the IMMP development process was prolonged for various reasons. When questioned on key reasons, partner cities noted the following. As key reasons partner cities identified – COVID 19 related measures and Lack of data. As partial reasons several of them also listed:

- Too ambitious URBforDAN timeline with too many overlapping activities;
- Insufficient communication and coordination within the city administration;
- Lack of internal staff and
- Lack of planning tools.

Figure 3: Key reasons for running behind schedule with finalization of IMMPS (Source: Survey among project partners)



Legend: 1 = Not a reason / 2 = Partial reason / 3 = Key reason

Based on above comments one of the partners provided the following suggestion for improvement of the used URBforDAN methodology and approach – *“Provide more generous time-schedule for planned activities!”*

4.8. Active involvement of key actors in future development of UPF

Firstly, it has to be noted that this activity was a pilot activity performed only in the City of Ljubljana on its selected UPF area – Golovec hill.

As any other in-person activity, active involvement of key actors in future development was considerably hampered by COVID-19 epidemic related restrictions. Implementation of this part of the project requested a lot of flexibility and compromises from the URBforDAN team, and the project extension proved to absolutely crucial for successful completion of this part of the project.

Through the [review and capitalization on best joint management practices](#) the URBforDAN team successfully capitalized on existing models and approaches for cooperation between stakeholders – in this case forest owners. In the end one of such solutions was used to develop a [draft Statutory Act for potential establishment of the First Initiative for joint UPF management](#). At the moment of delivery of this evaluation report, the URBforDAN team circulated the draft Statutory Act amongst [143 forest owners \(out of 550 forest owners\)](#), which expressed interest for joining this initiative. That [represents](#)

26% of all forest owners, which is more than doubled expected result (over 10% indicated in the application form), clearly proving high quality results of the participatory approach and good work of all involved actors.

Furthermore, improved level of cooperation between all relevant actors was clearly expressed by 4 jointly implemented UPF management activities on Golovec hill. Namely, 1 joint activity in 2019, 1 in 2020 and 2 such activities in 2021 – all together carried out on over 15 ha of UPF – show an encouraging trend, further supporting above conclusions about evoked interest of forest owners for cooperation.

Of course, all above-described results only indicate successful implementation of all other key steps in this segment of the URBforDAN project. A lot of energy was invested in communication with forest owners, attracting them to workshops even under COVID-19 related restrictions, informing them about key proposed solutions, explaining IMMP for Golovec hill and the proposed Financial Compensation Model, but most importantly identifying key persons willing to assume active roles in the proposed First Initiative for joint UPF management. At this point, it is still not clear if the Initiative for joint UPF management will actually be established. However, already presented results clearly prove successful achievement of set goals.

5. Lessons learned and suggestions for improvement

5.1. Internal training of trainers

The URBforDAN team can expose the following lessons learned after 5 steps of self-evaluation:

- 1) Although Participatory Approach is well known as a methodological approach in strategic and operational decision-making processes (at least within EU and IPA territory), it is still not used on regular basis. Subsequently, several URBforDAN partner cities faced its first real practical implementation during our project.
- 2) Initial delay in project start substantially reduced the amount of time available for the initial training of trainers. Also, initial statements of project partners about their pre-existing capacities and capabilities to execute the participatory approach in practice proved to be exaggerated. This misled the Core Management Team to underestimate the needed level of initial training of trainers, as well as time needed for its delivery.

When this was realized, the Core Management Team organized an on-line help desk, introduced a role-play game exercise to further improve the training and expose partner staff to key principles of the participatory approach and advised less prepared partner cities to hire external support for next steps – as planned in the application form, where involvement of external experts was already pre-planned – just in case something went wrong.

- 3) More time was lost for some partners on late public tender procedures for hiring external experts to support them and late involvement of external experts was less than optimal. However, once set-up, the quality of workshops, discussions and results significantly improved. Thus, proving all previous lessons learned, as well as confirming good reaction from URBforDAN partnership.
- 4) Although ideally, more time and depth should be devoted to the initial training of trainers, it proved to be highly beneficial and managed to raise capacities and experiences of all involved staff – as proved by the internal self-evaluation.

However, as in any methodology development and testing process, there is still room for improvement. This is why we are listing the following recommendations:

- 1) In line with above presented lessons learned, we must recommend that actual pre-existing capacities and capabilities to execute the participatory approach in practice should be realistically pre-assessed.
- 2) If capacities or capabilities prove to be lacking, it is highly advisable to plan additional external support – as it was done in case of the URBforDAN project, where involvement of external experts was pre-planned – just in case something went wrong.
- 3) Regardless of the level of existing pre-knowledge, adequate initial capacity building for the practical implementation of the participatory approach is necessary. According to our experiences, the initial training of should go even more in depth about core participatory approach principles, tools and methods. The participatory approach role-play game exercise proved to be a step in the right direction, which exposed partner staff to key participatory approach principles and should be used in similar situations.

5.2. Mobilization of key stakeholders

This was one of the most critical stages of the URBforDAN project. Although successfully implemented, the following lessons were learned during its implementation:

- 1) Mobilization of key stakeholders for active and constructive participation starts with their mapping, continues with understanding their drivers and communication channels they use and then turns into a never-ending communication process. If the stakeholders are not properly mapped, mobilized, understood and motivated, the benefit of their involvement can not reach its full potentials. Just as importantly, no level of participation can substitute proper expert support to guide and exploit its potentials.
- 2) Mobilizing key stakeholders is one thing, but gaining their trust is an even bigger challenge. Gaining trust is the key issues for all participatory decision-making processes in all our societies. Detachment between the government and the people and the subsequent mistrust is still an important challenge – further proving the initial conclusion that participatory approach is not very commonly used.
- 3) By achieving active and constructive participation, we can utilize key stakeholders' unique knowledge, skills, capacities and understanding of UPF to reveal the demands towards forests, issues regarding forest use, collect ideas on how to resolve issues etc. It is important to identify and involve the whole set of users and, in the case of private ownership, a diverse set of private owners as well. If done properly key stakeholders don't only become our "discussion group" but rather partners in future development, able and willing to support practical implementation of selected activities – thus not only building trust between all parties, but also establishing ownership.
- 4) One could mobilize key stakeholders through various activities – in our case workshops, individual meetings, on-line and on-site surveys, active on-line and social media campaigns, etc.

In URBforDAN projects on-line surveys proved to be a very successful tool, but it is imperative that they are well publicized and announced/promoted on several channels (for example through workshops, official web-page, local media and social media as key communication channels). However, questioners must be always translated in local languages and one should not underestimate the time and effort needed to carry out and analyze such a survey.

Workshops also proved to be extremely successful communication and mobilization tool, especially if they are announced and implemented as an interconnected series. They also enabled us to test and verify conclusions from the survey analysis, significantly improving the relevance of provided answers.

Another successfully implemented tool was the "best UPF development idea competition". A public tender, open to all citizens, was launched in all 7 partner cities in order to attract more UPF development ideas from UPF users not involved in URBforDAN activities – thus widening the outreach of the URBforDAN project. Best 3 ideas per city will be given to graphic designers to turn them into actual "project ideas", ready for implementation in any follow-up projects.

- 5) Once mobilized, one should devote enough staff, energy and time to regular communication with key stakeholders. Otherwise they easily lose interest and even resent your lack of effort for communication. In any case, if you lose them, they are really hard to attract back.

Based on above provided lessons learned, we can list the following recommendations:

- 1) Communication with key stakeholders is really important, thus it is wise to develop a city-level communication strategy, as well as devote enough staff, time and energy for this intensive and never-ending process. Hiring external support might be a good idea for those less experienced or lacking adequate staff.
- 2) Just as importantly, such a communication and public participation strategy should become a part

of any IMMP, as its execution depends on continuous work with key stakeholders. UPF managers should therefore consider devoting enough staff, time and energy for this intensive and never-ending process during the whole IMMP lifetime.

- 3) Tools and methods for mobilization of key stakeholders should be modified to local conditions, while communication channels must be adapted to preferences of key stakeholders.

5.3. Involving key stakeholders in IMMP planning process

After we successfully mobilized key stakeholders, we involved them in the IMMP planning process and learned that:

- 1) **Involvement of stakeholders in the preparation of both the strategic and operational part of IMMP is very important.** They help to reveal the demands towards forests, issues regarding forest use, collect ideas on how to resolve issues etc. It is important to identify and involve the whole set of users and, in the case of private ownership, a diverse set of private owners as well.
- 2) **However, the participatory approach takes its time, especially when involving large and diverse groups of stakeholders.** If we try to rush it or put too much pressure on stakeholders, they will refuse to participate or will not deliver expected quality of results. This is one of the hardest lessons learned in URBforDAN projects, which is also evident from above presented analysis and documented by project partners. During URBforDAN application phase, the team underestimated the timeframe needed to implement the participatory approach. It was also one of key reasons why the partnership in the end requested a prolongation of the project – 4 additional months were approved, which enabled us to finalize the IMMP planning process. This underestimation happened in-part due to overestimation of **capacities and capabilities of project partners to implement the participatory approach in an efficient and effective way.** Subsequently, more training, external support, communication efforts and time was needed.
- 3) Not only project partners, their **key stakeholders** also proved that participatory approach is not used on regular basis, as many of them **needed quite some time to gain trust and start actively participating and contributing to the process.** Thus, prolonging the time needed to finalize IMMPs.
- 4) **Involving other experts in the preparation of the strategic and operational part of IMMPs is just as important.** These are for example 1) Experts from regional forest planning offices who can verify that the plan is in accordance with existing planning documents and can suggest guidelines and measures to manage UPF based on their long-term planning experiences in the area; 2) Experts from city council who can assure that the elaborated plan will be adopted, embedded into the strategic and operational framework in the future city administration planning, as well as properly funded and executed; 3) Experts from different disciplines with relevant experiences for specific topics (e.g. for forest education, nature protection, visitor management, communication, etc.). Although considered experts, if they are not a part of your team, they are another group of key stakeholders. Thus, proper communication and their appropriate involvement is just as crucial as for any other group.
- 5) **Involving external experts in the IMMP planning process greatly increases the quality of the participatory process, as well as the plan.** Especially, if the project staff is lacking competences. However, in case of poor cooperation and communication, even the best experts struggle – resulting in a difficult and prolonged planning phase. Thus, **the right balance between enthusiasm, knowledge, experience and action is needed.**

- 6) Short term goals and “victories” are just as important as the long-term vision, as they create an atmosphere of “success”, create a positive image, in turn attracting more people to the cause.
- 7) On-line communication is significantly different to in-person communication and in all our cities, in-person communication is still the golden standard. On short term, on-line communication also seems to work fine. However, since switching to on-line communication, we can see how the enthusiasm, will-power and ownership slowly dissolved. And this also applies to the URBforDAN project partnership.
- 8) A participatory decision-making process is in the end still a decision-making process, so sometimes hard decisions must still be taken. So, at some point, you have to stop discussing and make a decision. Otherwise, you are just wasting time and energy. However, this still needs to be done transparently and with argued explanation to all involved key stakeholders.
- 9) Regardless of so-far lessons learned, some partners faced the biggest challenge in the end of the IMMP planning process, as in some cases partners did not ensure proper internal communication within their city administrations and/or institutions. This led to a specific situation, where we ended up with well understood and widely accepted IMMPs by stakeholders, while they were being challenged internally, by project partner management structures. In all such cases URBforDAN city-level teams were able to resolve all open issues and ensure also internal support to IMMPs. However, this was an unexpected challenge, which could, in case of poorer response, sabotage all efforts. This is why we have to emphasize the importance of internal and external communication and participation in UPF planning and management processes.

Based on above provided lessons learned, we can list the following recommendations for further improvement of the URBforDAN approach:

- 1) Ample time should be intended for the participatory process (e.g., at least two years – one for operational and one for strategic part of the IMMP), as data collection, consultations, workshops, revisions etc. take a lot of time and often unplanned circumstances occur. For example -in our case, COVID19 related restrictions seriously delayed the public consultation process.
- 2) As already explained, communication – both internal and external – is most crucial part of the process. Thus, we recommend that more emphasis is put on int and even more proactive approach undertaken. One option to improve internal communication we have already discussed is the creation of internal “task-force” groups – as an interdisciplinary consultation body on the level of city administration.
- 3) Just as important is the process of identification of the right person to act as a “contact point”, as his/her skills and capacities will reflect the image of the whole city administration, as well as dictate the type of communication you will have with stakeholders. Ideally the same person should remain on this position for a longer period of time in order to gain trust and create a stable and constructive cooperation environment. If such a person leaves this role, it is highly advisable to arrange a transfer period in which most information, contacts is passed on – in order to ensure soft transition.
- 4) Be aware that once you start communicating with key stakeholders, this will become a regular activity, which will take time and energy. However, if done properly, it will provide you with a wide network of key stakeholders, who trust you and are willing to constructively cooperate with you. So, this aspect should be taken very seriously, as any mistakes are hard to correct.

In the end, we can conclude that the Participatory Approach proved to be applicable in all partner cities – with necessary modifications to local characteristics, of course.

All project partners increased their capacities and capabilities to implement it in practice, gained practical experiences and seem to be confident that they can replicate it – either for new UPF focus areas or on other decision-making processes within their institutions and city administrations.

However, the internal key challenge for all URBforDAN partners lies in the question – what happens after URBforDAN project ends? Too often have we seen most trained and experienced staff leaving partner institutions without transferring the knowledge on their coworkers.

In our opinion, the best way to counter this problem is to immediately move into IMMP implementation phase (as already planned with URBforDAN project), involve more internal staff members in IMMP implementation activities and pass on the knowledge within partner institutions.

Just as importantly, URBforDAN project has proven that both methodologies work and are easily transferable to other cities within or outside EU. Thus, any follow-up projects devoted to up-scaling and/or main-streaming this good practice would ensure continuation of efforts on all levels.

In both cases, the responsibility for knowledge transfer, implementation and applicative use of the participatory approach lies with partner institutions and city administrations.

5.4. Active involvement of key actors in future development of UPF

The URBforDAN team can expose the following lessons learned:

- 1) Finding the right communication channels is key for successful communication. In case of forest owners (due to their demographics – predominantly older persons) the URBforDAN team had to resort to regular post, visiting them at home or meeting them on their forest lots.
- 2) This sort of communication, especially under COVID-19 related restrictions, took a lot of energy, time, staff and flexibility. And this has to be taken into account. Nonetheless, progress was made within the project and e-mails (in many cases from close relatives) slowly became key communication tool.
- 3) Regular communication and meetings have to become a regular on-going activity to keep stakeholders involved and to create ownership. On the long-run this means additional regular work for city officials or experts working with forest owners, so institutions responsible for this operation need to account for long term costs and personnel for such operation. However, such costs are heavily outweighed by long-term benefits.
- 4) Creating complex management tools (e.g. IMMP, Financial Compensation Model, etc.) is necessary. However, presenting and explaining them to stakeholders takes additional effort, as key messages must always be adapted to the audience.
- 5) Due to previous bad-experiences linked to cooperatives (a historic circumstance from recent history), forest owners proved to be very cautious about joining the First Initiative for joint UPF management, as it was expected. However, once clear benefits vs. costs were presented to them, the need for cooperation within the group grew – slowly, but steadily. The key to final success lies in identification of concrete key persons willing to assume active roles in the proposed First Initiative for joint UPF management. This is also very important to reduce the city-citizens powerplay within such cooperation, establish trust between stakeholders and evoke the feeling of ownership.

- 6) Just as important was the fact that the City of Ljubljana acted on the initiative and proved with concrete actions the willingness for cooperation on their side. This further proved to forest owners that the proposed First Initiative for joint UPF management is something the City of Ljubljana fully endorses and is willing to support on the long-run.

Based on above provided lessons learned, we can conclude that involvement of key actors in future development of UPF was successful within the framework of the URBforDAN project. However, actual establishment of the proposed First Initiative for joint UPF management is not yet certain at the time of development of this document. Its actual establishment and long-term survival would be the ultimate proof of success of the URBforDAN project. This leads us to only one recommendation for further improvement:

- 1) Ample time, personnel and effort should be intended for continuation of the participatory process with a clear aim – to establish and ensure operational functioning of the First Initiative for joint UPF management. Without the framework and support of a project like URBforDAN, this task will fully land on the shoulders of both Slovenian project partners – the City of Ljubljana and Slovenia Forest Service. Alternatively, follow-up projects on national (e.g. through joint management support scheme of the Rural Development programme) or transnational level could support such attempts.

6. Project Partner Progress

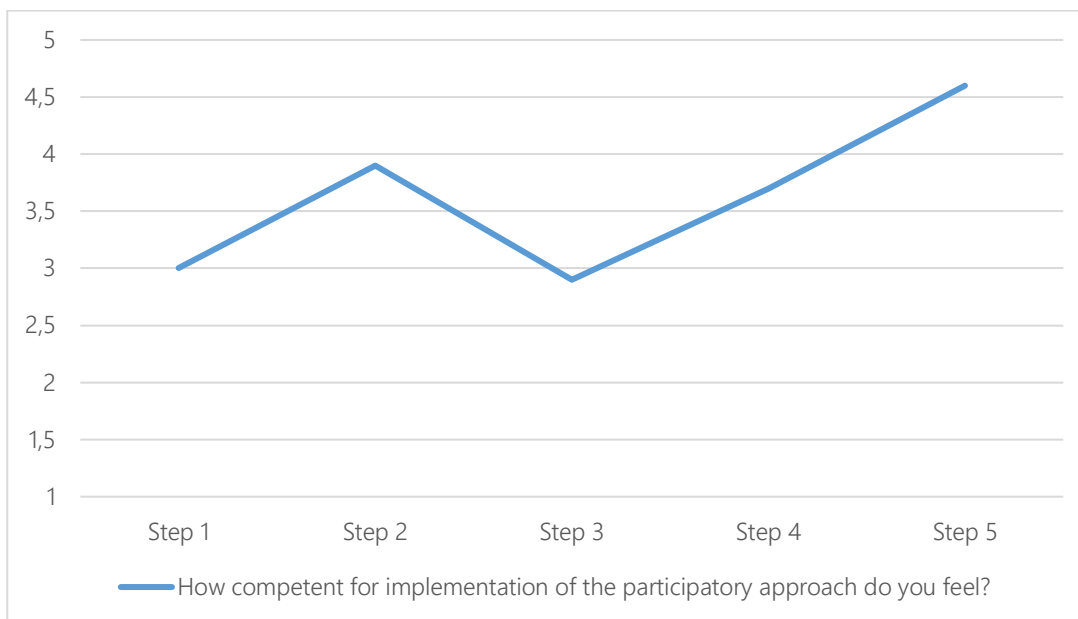
In the end, it is important to reflect the overall implementation process of the Participatory Approach and assess URBforDAN project partner progress.

Within the evaluation questionnaires for all 5 URBforDAN key steps, the expert team also monitored the project partner progress in order to see how they have “grown” with knowledge, related to the participatory approach.

This monitoring was done through a simple question “*How competent for implementation of the Participatory Approach do you feel after step...?*”, which was repeated in all five monitoring questionnaires after each concluded step. Only one of the following answers was possible:

- 1 – Not at all competent;
- 2 – Partly competent;
- 3 – Competent with limited experiences;
- 4 – Competent with some experiences;
- 5 – Very competent with adequate experiences.

Figure 4: The level of competence for implementation of the Participatory Approach (Source: Survey among project partners)

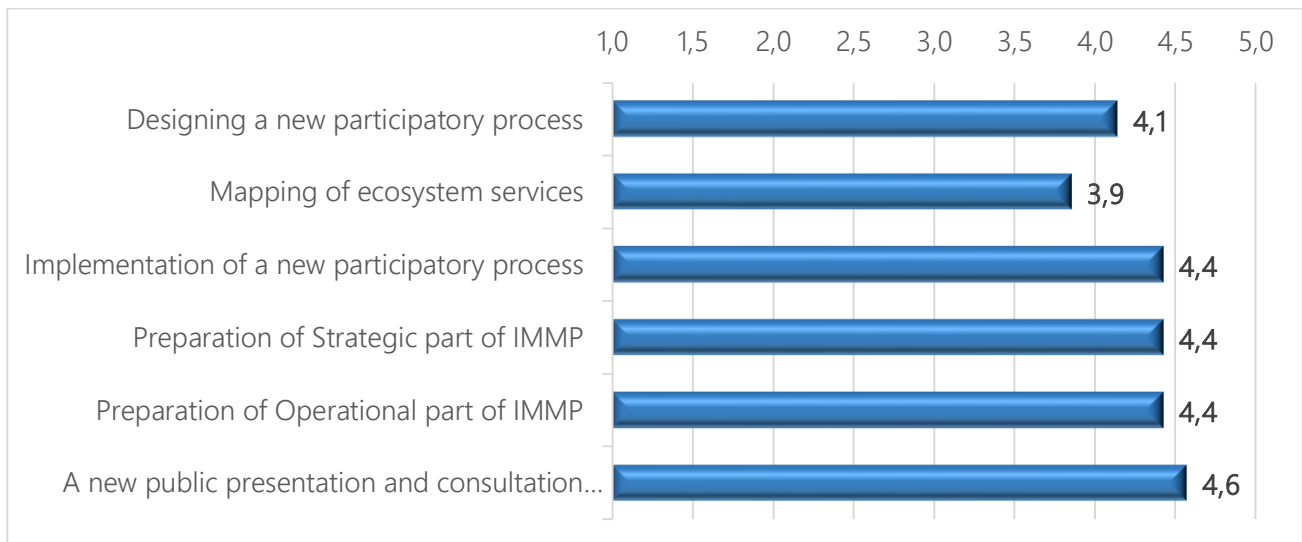


URBforDAN project partnership expressed a standard learning curve. After step 1, the partnership was “cautiously optimistic” and felt that they are “*Competent with limited experiences*”, but after receiving training of trainers, the confidence grew almost to the level “*Competent with some experiences*”. However, when faced with real and operational obstacles, the confidence level plummeted to the lowest point. After provision of additional help through the on-line help-desk and hiring additional external experts to support some partner cities, the confidence grew back and continued to grow all the way to the end of the process – finishing with the average score of 4,6 (out of five) or almost “*Very competent with adequate experiences*”.

Thus, it is no surprise that, when asked about their newly gained competences, all partner cities in average felt “*competent with some experiences*” to be able to repeat the process for preparation of

IMMPs for other UPF in their cities. If the competence is a bit lower when asked about “*mapping ecosystem services*” and “*designing a new participatory process*” (the average score of 4.1 and 3.6 is fully understandable due to the fact that this was in URBforDAN project actually done by external experts), the confidence is significantly higher for all other key steps – most notably for “*a new public presentation and consultation process*” scoring 4.6.

Figure 5: Level of competence for preparation of IMMPs for other UPF in partner cities (Source: Survey among project partners)



We are also glad to report that 2 partner cities are “*very confident*” that will replicate URBforDAN approach to deliver new IMMPs for other UPF areas in their cities, while 3 partner cities are “*confident*” and further 1 partner city “*confident with reservations*”. In fact, only 1 partner city reported that it is only “*partially confident*” about their further replication attempts.

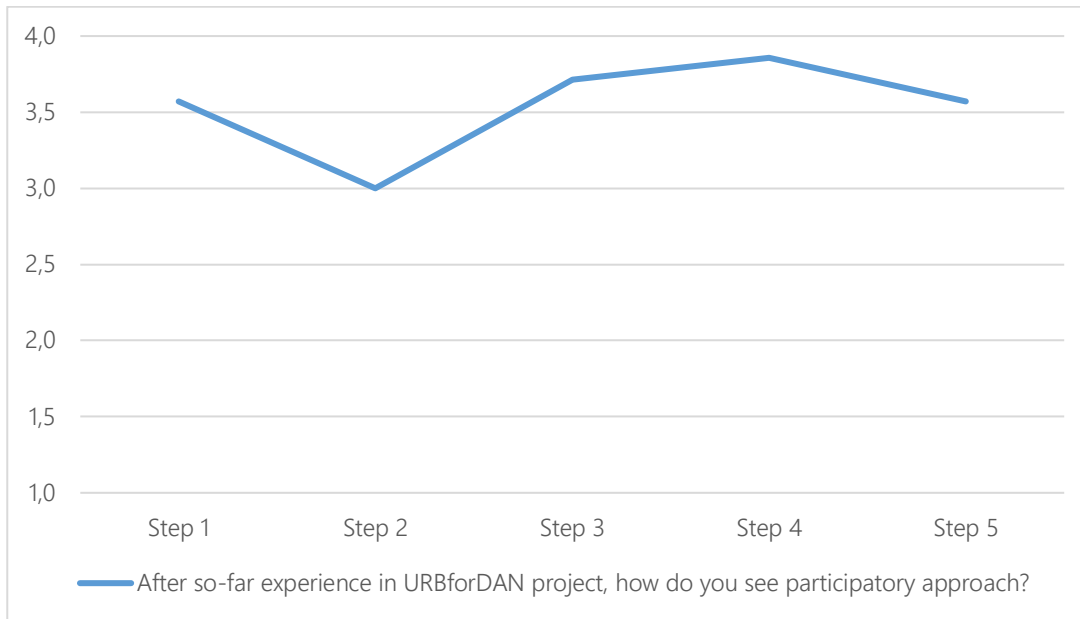
Furthermore, 4 out of 7 partner cities think that it is likely that they will actually use gained knowledge on similar or related assignments in natural resource management in their cities.

However, 8 of partner cities in the end relied on external experts to support them in development of their IMMPs and all were satisfied with their performance. The one partner city relying solely on internal capacities reported that they would consider the help of external experts as an asset in next similar participatory planning processes. This clearly identifies the need for specific and interdisciplinary knowledge and capacities in order to successfully implement such process.

For the conclusion – the URBforDAN Core Management Team also wanted to understand the level of mind-change the project achieved amongst partner cities for individual key steps. This was again monitored through a simple question “*How competent for implementation of the Participatory Approach do you feel after step...?*”, which was repeated in all five monitoring questionnaires after each concluded step. Only one of the following answers was possible:

- 1 – Unnecessary distraction or even obstacle in achieving our goals;
- 2 – Necessary evil of a typical EU project with little or no added value;
- 3 – A new approach which we should be promoting, however we are as a society not yet able to exploit its full potential;
- 4 – Integral part of a sound decision making process and substantial added value;
- 5 – Other.

Figure 6: The perception about the Participatory Approach amongst URBforDAN partner cities through the process (Source: Survey among project partners)



Similarly, to competences (see figure 4), the perception of the usefulness of the Participatory Approach as preserved by URBforDAN partner cities, varied between individual steps. However, in the end partner cities retained the original position – half way between the overall opinion that *“the Participatory Approach is still a new approach which we should be promoting, however we are as a society not yet able to exploit its full potential”* and the opinion that *“the Participatory Approach is an integral part of a sound decision making process and substantial added value”*.

It is our understanding that the final score settled on 3,6 (out of 4) mainly due to vast potential that all project partners recognized in the Participatory Approach, as well as the fact that they realized that they need external support in order to exploit its full potentials.