Engaging Citizens in Cross-Border Cooperation

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A “democratic deficit”? 

- European Union
- Central Government/s
- Regional/Sub-national Government/s
- Local Government/s
- Civil Society/societies
“activities will inform communication strategies at the EU, Member State and regional levels regarding the European regional policies and specific projects. They will provide insights on how to adapt these communication efforts to local and regional realities in order to maximise their impact. At the same time the research will consider how to increase the civic appreciation of these policies” (Horizon 2020).
The principle of subsidiarity:

- “to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen” – by the citizen?
- “at national, regional or local level” – operating at the cross-border level?
The policy and practice of citizen engagement

- The partnership principle
  - “close cooperation between the Commission and public authorities at national, regional and local levels in the Member States, social partners and organisations representing civil society” – how successful has this been in the cross-border context?
The policy and practice of citizen engagement

- Community Led Local Development
  - “mobilise and involve local communities and organisations to contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 Strategy goals” – how equipped are local authorities to involve communities at a cross-border level?
“Community planning partners and neighbouring councils should assist each other in providing relevant information to inform the community planning process. Neighbouring councils can also choose to work together to share resources, and where relevant, establish protocols for working together e.g. Memorandums of Understanding”.
“Since both processes [of local government reform in Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland] are in the early stages of development there is an opportunity for border councils to consider how they can achieve some alignment and establish mutually beneficial working structures and processes”.

Local Authorities at the “cutting” edge
Central Government not “cutting it”?  

North/South dimension

8.13 It is also prudent to consider if a proposed policy, and any supporting legislation, has implications for the North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC). The areas of co-operation are highlighted in Annex A and it would be good practice to make early contact with the NSMC Secretariat to discuss any possible areas of duplication or policy conflict.

Northern Ireland and the European Union

8.14 Centrally, the European Policy and Co-ordination Unit of OFMDFM undertakes liaison with the Cabinet Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on EU matters, and develops and co-ordinates a strategy on the EU for the Executive as a whole. DFP European Division has the lead role on Structural Funds issues. Familiarity with the EU institutions and the way they operate is also of value for other departments. Direct relationships with appropriate sections of EU institutions can be facilitated through the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels. The Office can assist departments to keep abreast of EU issues and provide early warning of new developments which might affect them. This will
The Policy of Concentration

- “Scattergun approach”
- “Targeted approach”
Does concentration lead to under-participation?

- Reduction in number of CBC projects?
- Reduction in CBC actors?
- Dominance of larger players?
- Citizens increasing seen as passive beneficiaries?
The missing links?

North South Ministerial Council

Central Gov

Central Gov

NWRDG

ICBAN

EBR

Local Gov

Local Gov

Civil Society?

Civil Society?
Engaging “hard to reach” groups on both sides of the border

Issues-based?

Cross-border citizen identification of needs, co-design of intervention, monitoring and evaluation
No matter how good the impact/result/outcome, without citizen engagement on both sides of the border, will it be recognised?
Citizens as participants, not beneficiaries

- Cross-border cooperation between central, regional and local governments is vital, but without citizens its future cannot be assured.