Long engaged in the development of a lively and creative local democracy, the city of Mulhouse has placed citizens at the heart of public life and its strategy to construct tomorrow’s city. To improve quality of life and reinforce social inclusion, restore trust in institutions and also between local people, and invent new solutions addressing today’s challenges, Mulhouse has turned to participation, joint construction and full-scale experimentation involving all citizens and players across its territory.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, A CATALYST TO BUILD TOMORROW’S CITY TOGETHER

THE PRINCIPLES AND TARGET OBJECTIVES

In favour of a new form of power-sharing, in 2014, the City of Mulhouse launched a democratic transition process, incorporating various changes:

• residents who are seeking greater involvement and are experts when it comes to solutions for their city and their neighbourhood

• the profound conviction among elected officials that the agile and smart city they are seeking for tomorrow can only succeed with informed citizens and players, reinforced dialogue based on listening, education, trust and transparency

• the need to introduce innovative ways of operating to ensure as many people as possible can participate and encourage those who do not habitually express their opinions to do so via participative solutions that are less technical and more creative

• the gamble that real-context experimentation and joint construction deliver increased efficiency and ensure greater project ownership

KEY DATA

• Alsace’s 2nd biggest city
• 115,000 inhabitants
• 10 agents dedicated to the Citizen Participation Agency
• €4 per person/year dedicated to participation development
• 37 citizen events open to all since 2017
• 43 consultations conducted since 2015
• More than 800 participants in the 2019 Citizen Day event
• More than 2,800 voters for the participatory budget

- **A "Mulhouse c’est vous" [Mulhouse is you] citizen forum**, the first major step in the construction of the initiative (4,900 people signed up, 10 debates with national and international speakers, 20 workshops, 50 local partners involved) in October 2014.
- A partnership with the Démocratie Ouverte [Open Democracy] association to test the "Territoire Hautement Citoyen" [Resolutely Citizen-Oriented Territory] initiative and develop practices that are more open, more transparent and more collaborative.
- The introduction of the **mulhousecestvous.fr digital platform** enabling residents of Mulhouse to find and contribute information 24h/24.
- **The creation of a citizen participation agency** in June 2015, which works alongside various players throughout the area to create an ecosystem conducive to the development of collective and citizen initiatives.
- A **rich and varied training provision**, for citizens and associations.
- A **programme of consultations**, urban walks, exploratory walks, participatory stands and projects, citizen days, etc.
- **Unique experiments and formats**: legislative theatre, joint responsibility method, mechanics of happiness, participatory budget, etc.

The gathering of individual and collective ideas, their interactive examination by the technical services, the choice of winners by more than 2,800 voters, young and old alike, and the implementation of some projects on a participatory basis or via integration into a much bigger development provide platforms for mutual enrichment and ownership by users.

METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS TO REACH A MORE DIVERSE PUBLIC

By organising recreational walks in areas of interest, a traveling educational table in various public spaces across the city, citizen events, a market stand, a dedicated space on the mulhousecestvous.fr digital platform, the opportunities to reach the city’s residents and users are increasing all the time. By being able to vote, either on paper or via digital technology, people who are habitually somewhat alienated from public issues may be encouraged to contribute more to collective initiatives in the future and, indeed, play an active role within them.

LONGER-TERM TRANSFORMATION OBJECTIVES

By providing residents with information and tools relating to the project and associated issues, citizens are empowered to contribute more. By having citizens play a role in budget allocations and adopting a joint approach to the construction of projects involving citizens, elected officials, the city’s services and various partners foster a culture of trust, mutual understanding and partnership. Finally, the opportunities available to everyone to submit ideas and take part in votes may inspire some to contribute more and join action groups over the longer term.

The *Mulhouse Diagonales* Participatory budget

**AN INITIATIVE TARGETING SOCIAL INNOVATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF PRACTICES**

The *Mulhouse Diagonales* participatory budget is a mechanism enabling City of Mulhouse users to participate in the process to allocate part of the Mulhouse Diagonales project’s investment budget (5%) during the 1st phase, i.e., €300,000, on the basis of projects proposed by citizens (individually, collectively or by associations). It was launched in the spring of 2017 and rolled out gradually: urban walks to discover sites and assess the challenges, in situ stands and collective workshops to submit ideas and projects, an examination phase, followed by a vote by the city’s residents and users and the concrete implementation of the 13 projects selected under way.

**AN INITIATIVE THAT PROMOTES EXCHANGE AND THE EMERGENCE OF NEW IDEAS**

Urban walks giving residents the opportunity to discover the attractions of the routes, share their knowledge of sites and react to the issues associated with the various locations reinforced the work of town planners/landscapers as well as the specifications of the participatory budget.