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## **CIVIL PARTICIPATION AS A NECESSITY OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

### **Abstract**

Civic participation is a very important aspect of democratic governance. In general terms, civic participation means the effort of citizens to take into account their concerns, needs, values and expectations in decision-making processes. Citizen participation in policy development and development programs is really feasible to achieve a two-way communication between citizens and offices and state employees at the central and local level.

In order for a citizen's participation to be healthy and effective, it is always required that the government process be open to participation of citizens, state offices, central and local government bodies as well as transparent, and persistent citizens. Citizens should be well informed about the role they can play, their rights and obligations in the quality of their partner with governing institutions.

This paper aims to address the need for a democratic system for citizen participation in policy-making and non-visa policy processes.

**Key words:** *civic participation, electoral system, political representation, political party.*

### **Citizens' participation as a demand for democratic governance**

In a democratic governance system, civic participation in decision-making, their involvement in the work for the development of policies and programs of economic and social development at the central and local level, the creation of opportunities and the practical and effective implementation of their monitoring of the bodies' work elected and other public institutions are among the main factors

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that are conducive to the well-functioning of a democratic regime. Increasing participation and the ever-greater, non-formal but effective involvement of citizens in policy-making and the work of the country's governance are factors that make a democratic society the best:

making decisions about how to handle the problem solving at the central or local level, which best responds to the needs of citizens and brings the best for their livelihoods.<sup>2</sup>

- Increasing opportunities and creating a supportive and inclusive environment for accountability by government and state officials.<sup>3</sup>

In Albania, since the beginning of the reform processes for the achievement of democratic standards, the work is being carried out to carry out an effective reform of the society, which aims to achieve the standards that will enable the country to rank and stay alongside other democratic countries. Among the paths that are pursued to enable the realization of this major objective are the efforts to build and develop permanent relationships and relationships between democracy and social mentalities, which include, as the most important, the relationship between the governing bodies and the basic structures of the civic communities. In order to realize this society, it is necessary to invest and work to promote, create and develop the necessary culture that must be at the core of the behavior of public institutions, elected and state employees, policy makers, decision-makers and policy makers, and programs for the economic and social development of the country, on the one hand and the community of citizens, on the other. Collaboration and mutual trust must be at the forefront of work for the realization of this very important dimension that has a democratic society. Differences between the features, characteristics, interests, instruments and paths that can be followed, the needs and opportunities of public institutions and citizens to engage in mutual-based cooperation, are subject to the need to identify as precisely as possible in the scope of each of them and the objectives they can accomplish.

Citizens' interest in taking part in the governance processes is closely related to the interest and objectives that the society must achieve through this participation. These objectives may be related to democracy itself and its development as a culture of behavior and governance bases, as they should or may aim at realizing the effective implementation of policies for the country's social and economic development. Such a connection stems from the fact that

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<sup>2</sup> R.A. Irvin dhe J. Stansbury, 'Citizen Participation in Decision-Making: Is it Worth the Effort?', [http://c.y.mcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/Journal\\_Issue1\\_Irving.pdf](http://c.y.mcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/Journal_Issue1_Irving.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, 'Citizens Participation Handbook: People's Voice Project International Centre for Policy Studies', 2002, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTBELARUS/Resources/eng.pdf>

the development of democracy and democratic culture, as the basis of behavior in society, requires the participation of citizens because:

- More participation means a higher democratic level.
- High participation leads to the development of an active civil society.
- Citizenship increases democratic legitimacy in central and local decision-making.
- Civic participation contributes to the building of models and experiences that serve the society to build the bridges of effective cooperation between citizens and state institutions and offices.

Citizens' participation is the way to make it possible:

- Designing policies or making acceptable, realistic and sustainable decisions.
- Setting the balance between what is required by the community and what is offered by selected institutions and by public service providers.
- Increasing support, legitimacy, transparency and accountability at work for drafting development policies and programs for their implementation.

Participation of citizens in governance can be their direct or indirect involvement in formulating or evaluating the objectives for social and economic development of the country or local government unit concerned. To do this, it is necessary for the society to work to make citizens aware of the values of this participation. Citizens need to understand the skills they have and the opportunities they are given to become an active part of decision-making and governance. They need to understand this process and need to be supported to develop in their community the right capacities for practical realization. Citizens should think that participation is always in their favor, participation does not weaken does not formalize, but it makes it possible to find the best solution to their problems. It is important for people to understand but also to feel that participation brings added value to their endeavors and to society to reach goals as a community (Xiao Hu & Wan Wart, 2007).

As a rule, citizen participation in governance, public decision-making and monitoring of the implementation of policies and programs for economic and social development is influenced by two motives:

(i) personal motives that are related to the personal demand of the individual to how to solve a particular problem, the solution of which affects his or her concerns

(ii) motives related to the public interest

The following table summarizes the different types of participation and the objectives that citizens can achieve through them.

**Table 1. Objectives and types of civic participation<sup>4</sup>**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Objectives of civic participation</b>	<b>Types of participation</b>
Walters et al. (2000)	Help in seeking definition, alternatives, or criteria (discovery)	Consultation
	Public Education on a Proposed Issue and Alternative (Education)	Information
	Public opinion assessment about a set of options (measurements)	Consultation
	Persuading the public towards a recommended alternative(conviction)	Information
	Fulfillment of public norms and legal requirements (legitimization)	Information / Consultation / Active Participation
O E C D (2001)	Strengthening democracy	Active participation
	Increase transparency and accountability	Information
	Achieving better services	Active consultation / participation
	Reaction to the pressure of similar groups (social pressure) at the international level through the application of superficial measures to improve interaction with citizens without substantial changes in traditional decision-making processes	Information
	The division of responsibilities (or blame) for a difficult or unpopular political decision	Information / Consultation
	Deferring difficult decisions through debates and extended discussions	Active consultation / participation
Removal / avoidance of protests	Information	

<sup>4</sup> A. Yetano, 'Citizen Participation in German and Spanish Local Governments: A comparative Study', International Journal of Public Administration, 2011, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254352157\\_Citizen\\_Participation\\_in\\_German\\_and\\_Spanish\\_Local\\_Governments\\_A\\_Comparative\\_Study](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254352157_Citizen_Participation_in_German_and_Spanish_Local_Governments_A_Comparative_Study)

Involve (2005)	Governance - ie, strengthening democratic legitimacy, increasing interest and engagement in politics, accountability, promoting active citizenship	Information / Consultation / Active participation
	Social co-ordination and social justice - eg building relationships, community cohesion, ownership, social capital, justice and equity	Active consultation / participation
	More efficient and better quality that meets real needs and reflects community values	Active Consultation / Participation
	Capacity building and learning - enhancing the skills, confidence and empowerment of individuals and organizations to provide the basis for upgrading and developing in the future, particularly in order to highlight the building of powerful powers	Information / Consultation / Active participation
Pindado et al. (2002)	“Participation to legitimize”; to strengthen the government’s position, objectives, and interse, without changing them	Information / Consultation
	“Participation to Transform”; what is required is not to maintain the status quo, but also to promote change, or transformation where citizen participation is considered fundamental	Active consultation / participation

Participation of citizens in decision making and governance processes should be treated as a process of continuous communication of elected representatives, government, public institutions and citizens, which should always aim to find ways and solutions to enable the continued growth of welfare than the population. To accomplish this dual process of cooperation it is necessary that:

- Governance to be realized as an open process that should create real opportunities for citizens to become active and direct in it.
- The citizen should be constantly informed and have full information on the policies and decisions the government receives and the government needs to have up-to-date information on the needs and demands of the citizens.
- The society should be committed to forming the right civic culture in relation to the rights, duties and the role that the citizen should have as a participant in decision making, policy making and implementation of programs for the

economic and social development of the country.<sup>5</sup>

According to Dahl. R. (1961) democratic society should provide equal and adequate opportunities for citizen participation. These opportunities should guarantee the rightful citizens to:

- set for priority issues to be addressed and resolved by central and local government institutions and bodies;
- expressed their views on these issues;
- exercising their authority, through voting or otherwise, to prioritize the policies for the country's social economic development.

These rights are also enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, which aims to make possible the development of a more democratic and transparent Europe, a Europe where citizens' voice is a key factor in decision-making, where the citizen really is involved in governmental processes, control and support of the work of central and local government institutions<sup>6</sup>.

### **Easton model for studying civic participation in decision making and contestation**

The Easton model is an approximation of the process by which it develops its activity into a society that functions on the basis of democratic principles. In the structures of the model, the institutions that form the infrastructure of a democratic society are outlined:

- (i) The system of political parties, civil society with its constituents, civic interest groups and PIOs; and
- (ii) Political, decision-making and implementing institutions of the country's economic and social development programs

This model also reflects on the way in which the function and how the governance process takes place in a democratic society. The term governance in this model implies the whole process, in which it participates:

- (i) identifying the needs of the company and formalizing them in the form of requests or requests for intervention;
- (ii) analysis of the requirements and drafting of policies, programs, laws, regulations, norms, etc .. under which and for the implementation of which the company must work to meet the requirements and articulated needs;
- (iii) implementation of policies and programs drafted by decision-making institutions
- (iv) the implementation of the implementation processes, the evaluation of the results and the formulation of proposals / recommendations for ongoing developments.

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<sup>5</sup> Dahl, R, 1961, Who Governs?, Yale University Press

<sup>6</sup> TASC0 (2011). OSHC and Participation of Citizens in Decision Making Processes

The model is built on the hypothesis that political parties, civic interest groups and NGOs are the requirements generators and formulators of the needs for interventions to be made in the way of country governance, the policies and programs to be drafted, legal, regulatory and all regulatory and procedural framework under which the institutional, political, economic and social life in the country should develop. According to this model, they are also monitors, observers and quality assessors of these documents and their implementation process. Selected Institutions and public offices of the state, the model treats them as institutions that have the task of analyzing needs and needs, and based on the results of this analysis, these institutions should develop policies, programs for their implementation and all building necessary legal and procedural. These institutions and state offices are also responsible for the implementation of policies and programs.

The basic objective and main purpose of the Easton model is to use it as an instrument to identify and analyze the process of governing the work at the central and local level, in a democratic society, considering this as a process of cooperation among all the various actors of society. In the definition and listing of these actors summarized above, the model is based on the hypothesis that all these actors are part of the reality and social, economic and political environment of society, which not only differ from but other people do not have cutouts. In fact, this is a hypothesis that pervades reality and does not reflect it in a humorous way, just as it is. For example, relying on this hypothesis, the model offers the opportunity to study the process of government by accepting that political parties and groups of citizens, political parties and civil society organizations, etc., are completely different institutions, not only in the sense that their goals and purposes, the instruments and the ways they use to accomplish them, are entirely distinct but even though in them, the model accepts hypothesis that they are not part and do not exercise the same individuals activity. The model does not take into account the fact that the same person may be a member of a particular group of civic interest or an NGO and at the same time be a member of a political party. The model has no built-in mechanisms that can be used to judge and evaluate the synergy effect. positive or negative, which may bring to the progress of the government process the fact that members of decision-making institutions, policy makers, or officials in state offices that have the task of implementing policies and programs are at the same time participant in interest groups or NGOs - and / or members of a political party.

## **Conclusions**

Civic participation is a very important dimension that influences the development of a democratic governing system and representatives.

According to the Easton model, citizens are monitors, observers and quality assessors of decisions taken by public institutions.

The more citizens are directly or indirectly involved, through political parties, civic organizations, non-profit organizations, etc., the more democratic and representative the governing system.

In a free political system that develops on the basis of the principles of democratic society, the multi-dimensional participation of citizens makes a truly democratic system.

Capacity development of civil society and other non-political institutions that function as part and constituent of it is necessary for the progress of civic participation in the governance of the country either as part of the decision-making bodies as well as monitoring of the activity of public institutions .



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