

MEANING: Metropolitan Europeans in Active Network, Inducing Novelties in Governance

EU FUNDS: A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC AUTHORITIES TO ENHANCE CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Milan, 1st and 8th June 2018

Context/localization of the intervention
The local activity "EU Funds: A great opportunity for public authorities to enhance citizens' participation to local development" took place on 1 st and 8 th June 2018 at the Faculty of Political Science, Economics and Social Studies of the University of Milan. The activity consisted of two laboratories with students of various universities on the topic of EU funds as a way to foster citizens' participation in decision making at local and European level.
Objectives of the action implemented
The objectives of the action implemented were the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange of knowledge with University students on the topic of citizens' participation in the EU and local decision-making processes. • Collect opinions and ideas of the students on the topic of civic participation and, more in general, on their vision of the EU. • Provide a framework for the opportunities offered by EU funds in fostering citizens' participation and involvement. Specific attention was devoted to the program Europe for Citizens and the actions implemented within the MEANING project.
Activities carried out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of concrete examples of citizens' participation in the political debate at local and European level. • Discussion with students on the challenges and opportunities of the participation of citizens and youth in the EU decision making processes. • Interactive laboratories presenting to students and discussing with them the opportunities and critical aspects of EU funds and EU programming. • Presentation of past Application forms of EU projects completed by the Metropolitan City of Milan on the participation of citizens such as MEANING.
Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who were given blank application forms on Europe for Citizens, ERASMUS+, ESPON, and other EU programs focused on citizens' participation were able to successfully complete them during the interactive workshop, contributing with many ideas and suggestions. • A comprehensive Q&A session gave the opportunity to clarify different sections of the application forms. • Collection of opinions and suggestions by students on the topic of citizens' participation and how it could improve also using EU funds. • Students received the questionnaires and were asked to fill them.
Good lessons learned*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students seemed very interested in the topic of participation to public decision-making processes, were proactive in filling in the application forms during the workshop and provided useful suggestions and opinions. They also manifested their interest by asking

for internship opportunities at the European Policies and Programming Office of the Metropolitan City.

- The involvement of the faculty of the University was fundamental to reach a significant number of students and also setting up the rooms for the laboratories.
- The topic of EU funds and how to use them to improve civic participation is of great interest to the target audience, although they lack technical knowledge on the topic.

Bad lessons learned*

- Even though the target audience was composed of master's students in the areas of International Relations and Public Administration, the specific knowledge of the usage of EU funds and even of certain processes of the European Union were limited. Knowledge and skills acquired through university courses are often limited to the topic of EU Law.
- It might be difficult to scale this or similar activities to a bigger or less specialised audience, thus another type of event may be better to increase awareness.

**considering not only the results achieved vs objectives, but also the process which led to the definition of the activity and its implementation, i.e.: involvement (or lack of involvement) of local population in the identification of issues to tackle; involvement (or lack of involvement) of other key stakeholders in the definition/implementation of the activity; factors which facilitated/hindered planning and implementation*

