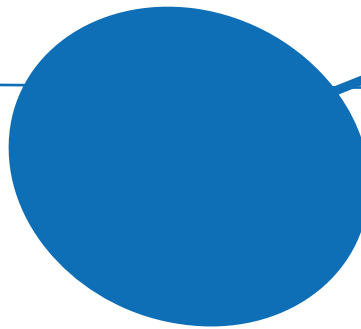


GEtCoheSive 2023-2026

WP3 Activity 3.2

DELIVERABLE 3.2.2

Transnational Strategies for the implementation of participatory governance



Introduction

The cases of the GEtCoheSive partners in **Berlin**, Technical University Berlin (TUB) and Initiative for Self-Employment of Immigrant Women (ISleV), **Parma/Bologna** in the Emilia-Romagna region, Centre for Immigration, Asylum and International Cooperation of Parma (CIAC), the Municipality of Parma (CdP) and the Public Company for Personal care and welfare in of the City of Bologna (ASP Bologna), **Idrija/Ljubljana**, Gmajna Cultural Association (KD Gmajna) and Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia (SOS), and **Vienna**, Caritas, are situated within diverse political, institutional, and social contexts. Despite these differences, the pilot activities and their results indicate that common governance challenges persist across these locations: exclusion of underrepresented groups; consultation mechanisms disconnected from decision-making; a lack of sustained public-civil society collaboration; and project-based participation undermining long-term governance innovation.

In response, each project partner has developed local strategies that converge around shared goals and approaches to make governance more accessible, inclusive, sustained, and mainstreamed. Collectively, these strategies aim to enhance accessibility through multilingual and inclusive communication, strengthen participation by building capacity and fostering public-civil society partnerships, ensure continuity via recurring processes and structured feedback, and embed participatory practices within formal institutional frameworks.

Given these converging local challenges and demands, transnational cooperation offers a unique opportunity to reinforce participatory governance. Through knowledge networks, peer learning platforms, and collaborative initiatives, transnational strategies have potential to pool skills and resources for upscaling local innovations as well as foster an interconnected framework for participatory governance across European cities.

In this light, this deliverable synthesizes the local experiences among the partner cities into a strategic framework for cross-border learning and action, setting out concrete pathways for transnational collaboration in participatory governance through knowledge sharing, collaborative experimentation, and mutual support. It identifies necessary resources, partnerships, and institutional commitments required to collectively address prevailing governance challenges, while up-scaling innovations and reinforcing legitimacy.

1) Shared Governance Challenges

The local strategies from most partner cities reveal persistent barriers to inclusive participatory governance along the following interrelated dimensions - accessibility, inclusion, continuity, and scalability (see Table 1).

1.1 Accessibility Barriers

“Is political engagement even possible in such precarious life situations?”

- A focus group participant (social worker), discussing the political participation of homeless people in Vienna

In most cases, accessibility barriers create multi-layered exclusion from participatory processes, with linguistic obstacles constituting a primary challenge. Vienna’s stakeholder survey identified residents with limited German proficiency as a hardest-to-reach group, while Emilia-Romagna’s municipalities struggle with monolingual, highly technical institutional communication and insufficient linguistic sensitivity in frontline services. Slovenia pilots similarly show that even where integration programmes exist, limited access to interpretation and language support prevents systematic inclusion of migrants and linguistic minorities.

Bureaucratic complexity, digital gaps, and time and resource constraints further restrict accessible participation. Highly technical administrative procedures in Emilia-Romagna and Vienna alienate those unfamiliar with institutional culture, while translation alone proves insufficient without culturally sensitive communication and tailored outreach. Vienna and Slovenia identify limited digital competences, digital competence gaps, and insufficient use of digital tools as obstacles affecting underrepresented and older populations. Across Emilia-Romagna, Vienna, and Slovenia, participation also presumes time, mobility, trust, and safety. Such resources are often unavailable to people facing precarious work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, transport barriers, or socio-economic insecurity. Berlin offers a special case that has formally institutionalized participatory structures in its migration and refugee policy since 2003. The most important materials for new immigrants, including refugees, are offered in many languages of origin, in addition to counselling centres for integration.

1.2 Shallow Inclusion

Meaningful inclusion remains limited in most cases, with participation frequently confined to consultative formats rather than shared decision-making. Vienna’s pilots highlight that input from underrepresented groups rarely shape decisions. Emilia-Romagna similarly describes participation as symbolic and consultative, undermining trust and perceived legitimacy. Underrepresentation persists despite targeted efforts, as illustrated by low participation of public housing tenants and migrant representatives in Parma’s Climate Assembly, and the difficulties engaging residents with limited German-language skills in Vienna.

Cultural insensitivity and uneven power relations reinforce such one-way participation dynamics. Partners in Emilia-Romagna note that participation without additional support and incentives privileges those with resources, positioning underrepresented groups as respondents rather than partners. Partners in Vienna and Slovenia identify participation formats that limitedly accommodate mobility and cultural needs, while distrust toward institutions and perceptions that participatory spaces “are for others”

deter engagement. Underrepresented groups often doubt that their contributions will be valued or acted upon, further weakening active engagement.

1.3 Undermined Continuity

Participatory initiatives across all cases are undermined by limited sustainability and a project-based logic. Partners in Emilia-Romagna and Vienna point out that participation is typically tied to specific projects or funding cycles, leading to one-off engagement and weak institutional learning. Slovenian partners similarly report that cooperation between municipalities and civil society organizations is often ad hoc, person-dependent, and confined to project timelines, preventing systematic use of civil society expertise in long-term policy design.

Priority shifts after elections, weak partnerships, and absent feedback loops further erode continuity. Partners in Emilia-Romagna highlight that participation often depends on individual goodwill rather than political mandates, while Slovenia notes the lack of formal procedures, dedicated budgets, or internal rules to standardize public involvement. Across partners Vienna, Emilia-Romagna, and Slovenia, insufficient feedback and non-transparent communication reduce trust, as participants rarely see how their input influences outcomes, discouraging future engagement. In Berlin, there are advisory councils with the mandate for ensuring the participation of migrants at the state level and in the districts, which are institutionalised and regulated by law.

1.4 Limited Scalability

Despite growing in number, participatory practices remain insufficiently embedded in formal institutional structures, with participation frequently treated as an add-on rather than a core function in the policy process. Partners in Emilia-Romagna note that processes are activated late in policy cycles and departments operate in silos. Slovenian partners highlight disparities in administrative capacity across municipalities, and Vienna observes that reliance on limited networks or intermediaries can fragment participation and exclude certain groups.

Weak mandates, coordination gaps, and capacity deficits constrain institutionalization. Despite existing legal frameworks in Emilia-Romagna, implementation remains inconsistent and politically sensitive, leaving technical offices without clear directives. Partners in Emilia-Romagna, Slovenia, and Vienna found that participation is often perceived as an additional burden, with limited staff time, training, and expertise in intercultural mediation, facilitation, and inclusive communication. These constraints limit the ability of administrations to move from isolated participatory initiatives toward durable participatory governance. In Berlin, a Participation and Migration Law has been in place since 2010, obliging all administrations to implement measures for the participation of refugees under their own responsibility and to participate in the supervisory body set up for this purpose.

Table 1. Local Factors in Current Governance Practices

Case	Accessibility	Inclusion	Continuity	Scalability
Berlin	Information in relevant languages and a support structure for newly arriving refugees exist.	Migrants' and refugees' participation is encouraged	Institutionalized mechanisms for sustained participation exist.	According to the Participation and Migration Law Migrant needs and perspectives shall be observed across policy areas
Emilia-Romagna	Linguistic and cultural barriers hinder outreach to underrepresented groups	Participation demands time and skills without adequate recognition or compensation	Participation remains project-based and one-off, with limited CSO involvement	Weak political mandate and limited intersectoral coordination for up-scaling participation
Slovenia	Time and resource constraints reduce perceived relevance of participation	Insufficient language support and tailored formats limit migrants' roles in the process	Lack of stable funding and formal CSO-municipality cooperation	Limited political commitment, technical capacity, and resources beyond consultative practices
Vienna	Insufficient multilingual support and complex administrative language	Limited use of inclusive spaces and culturally sensitive participation formats	Short-term engagement and weak feedback loops disconnect participation from decisions	One-off participation undermines trust and inhibits institutional up-scaling

2) Synthesising Local Action Strategies

In response to the shared governance challenges identified across the four cases, the partners articulate a set of common strategic orientations aimed at strengthening participatory governance (see Table 2).

2.1 Enhancing Accessibility through Multilingual Communication

The local strategies across all four cases prioritize the systematic reduction of linguistic and communication barriers that limit access to participatory processes with a shared objective to establish multilingual communication as standard practice. Caritas, a partner in Vienna, urges the municipal authorities to institutionalize multilingual and easy-language communication across participation projects, prioritizing the languages of major migrant communities. In Berlin, TUB and ISleV suggest expanding multilingual participatory formats such as citizens' assemblies, building on experiences, such as New Berliners' Council. CIAC, CdP, and ASP Bologna in Emilia-Romagna set the objective of strengthening accessible, clear, and multilingual public communication as

a core component of participatory governance, while Slovenian partners, KD Gmajna and SOS, identify the need to systematically address language barriers and insufficient interpretation within integration and participation programmes.

Beyond translation, the local strategies emphasize simplifying institutional language and diversifying communication formats to ensure broader accessibility. Caritas encourages applying easy-language principles across communication tools and to train staff in intercultural and multilingual facilitation. Partners in Emilia-Romagna promote reinforcing the role of communication experts within participatory processes, while TUB and ISleV in Berlin recognize the need for improving support to newly arriving refugees in their own languages. All partners stress the need to expand the use of visual, non-verbal, and hands-on communication methods, such as participatory mapping and co-creative tools, and to strengthen culturally sensitive outreach through community networks, intercultural mediators, and trusted intermediaries.

2.2 Strengthening Inclusion through Sustained Partnerships

To move beyond consultative participation, the partners define inclusion as a strategic objective requiring stronger, more formalized partnerships between public authorities and civil society organizations. KD Gmajna and SOS prioritize the transition from ad-hoc, person-dependent collaboration toward structured and durable cooperation frameworks with CSOs. CIAC, ASP Bologna and CdP urge public authorities to involve civil society organizations more systematically from the co-design phase onward, rather than limiting their role to implementation. Caritas prioritizes institutionalizing long-term collaboration with civil society organizations, migrant organizations, and community networks, while TUB and ISleV stress strengthening the role of civil society actors as intermediaries between public institutions and diverse communities.

Furthermore, the local strategies lay strong emphasis on rebalancing power relations through recognition of locally embedded knowledge and targeted capacity-building. TUB and ISleV explicitly emphasize the need to recognize refugees as experts of their social conditions and to integrate them into policy development processes. Caritas prioritizes the use of peer facilitators and social workers as key intermediaries, bridging institutional processes with everyday lived experiences, while partners in Emilia-Romagna seeks to foster community involvement in monitoring and evaluation activities. Across all partner locations, the local strategies call for systematic capacity-building for public officials in facilitation, intercultural mediation, and inclusive engagement, alongside concrete measures to remove material barriers to participation, including childcare, accessible venues, flexible scheduling, transport support, and safe participation spaces.

2.3 Ensuring Continuity through Recurring Participation

To address the prevalence of project-based participation, the local strategies define continuity as a strategic priority requiring long-term planning and stable engagement structures. CIAC, ASP Bologna and CdP call for introducing annual participation plans within municipal departments to anticipate targeted, local needs and ensure regular

engagement. KD Gmajna and SOS seek to shift from isolated examples of good practice toward a coordinated and sustainable participation framework with a long-term perspective. Caritas emphasizes long-term commitment to participation processes by the public administration as a condition for trust-building, while TUB and ISI_eV call for systematic integration of participatory procedures beyond individual projects and funding cycles.

Strengthening feedback, learning, and accountability mechanisms constitutes a complementary objective. Caritas advocates reinforcing regular, ongoing feedback loops between municipal authorities, intermediaries, and participants to ensure transparency and follow-up. CIAC, ASP Bologna and CdP seek to facilitate more accessible communication of outcomes and to institutionalize cross-departmental monitoring of how participatory inputs influence decisions. KD Gmajna and SOS prioritize joint learning events and structured knowledge exchange between municipalities and civil society, while TUB and ISleV emphasize monitoring participation through legal and policy frameworks. In all cases, community involvement in evaluation endorsed as a means to increase accountability and sustain motivation over time.

2.4 Embedding Participation in Formal Institutional Frameworks

Another shared strategic objective is to embed participatory governance within formal institutional structures rather than treating it as a parallel or supplementary activity. CIAC, ASP Bologna and CdP call for institutionalizing participation as a formal interdepartmental governance tool that is activated early in the policy cycle and sustained beyond individual political terms. Caritas seeks to ensure participation throughout the entire policy process, from agenda-setting to implementation. KD Gmajna and SOS define the integration of participatory practices into standard local governance as a medium-term objective, while TUB and ISleV call for the systematic consideration of participation across policy areas and publicly funded initiatives.

To support institutionalization, the local strategies prioritize dedicated coordination mechanisms, formal procedures, and organizational capacity. CIAC, ASP Bologna and CdP push strengthening interdepartmental coordination and developing a manual that defines minimum standards for participatory processes and evaluation. KD Gmajna and SOS underlined the need for clear procedural guidelines and standards to reduce discretion and fragmentation. Caritas recommended strengthening feedback loops between municipal authorities and project staff to ensure transparency and continuity. Across all cases, the local strategies call for dedicated staff, targeted training, and stable budget allocations, as well as funding for civil society capacity, to ensure participation becomes a resourced, accountable, and routine function of governance practice. Table 2 provides an overview of the objectives proposed by the partners.

Table 2. Local Strategies for Future Governance Practices

Case	Accessibility	Inclusion	Continuity	Scalability
Berlin	Improve support in refugees' languages	Pilot multilingual participation formats and systematically collect participant feedback	Monitor influence of the existing advisory bodies	Mainstream group-specific barriers across policy areas in policy design and implementation
Emilia-Romagna	Ensure public information is clear, multilingual, and usable for diverse groups	Adapt participation formats and support measures to under-represented groups	Establish continuous monitoring & evaluation to sustain long-term engagement	Embed participatory methods and group-specific considerations into governance processes
Slovenia	Reduce language and information barriers through multilingual materials and digital tools	Strengthen resident engagement through training practitioners and CSO involvement	Enable recurring participatory cycles with monitoring, feedback loops, and peer learning	Formalize public-CSO partnerships and embed participatory governance in cross-municipal practices
Vienna	Use multilingual, easy-language, and visual communication to reach diverse participants	Foster co-creation, peer facilitation, and collaboration with CSOs and community networks	Establish recurring participatory cycles with feedback loops and sustained public-CSO partnerships	Embed inclusive participation design into governance processes through formalized CSO collaboration

3) Toward a Transnational Strategy for Participatory Governance

3.1 Why Transnational Knowledge Matters

A comparative review of the local strategies from partners indicates that challenges in participatory governance are not isolated local conditions but reflect shared structural constraints. Across the four cases, similar limitations persist in terms of accessibility, inclusion, continuity, and scalability, and shared local strategies emerge regarding multilingual communication, partnership with civil society organizations, sustained feedback mechanisms, and the integration of participation into formal governance processes. This convergence provides the following basis for transnational cooperation.

3.1.1 Addressing Shared Structural Challenges

Language barriers, consultative participation without decision-making influence, and project-based engagement appear across all four contexts. These challenges are linked to broader governance logics, institutional incentives, and capacity constraints that

exceed the scope of local experimentation alone. Transnational cooperation enables cities to exchange experiences, identify transferable solutions, and develop coordinated responses to challenges that are structurally similar across European urban contexts.

3.1.2 Strengthening Innovation through Collective Learning

Connecting local strategies across cities can strengthen their effectiveness. The local strategies have broader relevance for participatory governance beyond their own context. Yet, when they remain locally bounded, their further development and uptake depend heavily on local political priorities and institutional capacities. Transnational cooperation may allow these approaches to be compared, adapted, and refined across contexts, supporting their wider application and reducing the need for repeated experimentation.

3.1.3 Pooling capacity and resources

Transnational cooperation further responds to shared capacity constraints. All four cases report limited staff resources, insufficient expertise in inclusive facilitation and intercultural mediation, and constrained budgets for sustained participatory engagement. As well, smaller municipalities and under-resourced civil society organizations face difficulties in developing comprehensive participation infrastructures independently. In response, collaborative approaches allow for pooling resources for joint training, shared methodological development, peer-learning formats, and access to specialized expertise, reducing costs while expanding local capacity for sustained, long-term participation.

3.1.4 Building Political Momentum through Collective Action

Finally, transnational cooperation can facilitate the collective capacity of cities and civil society actors to advocate for supportive institutional and funding frameworks. Acting collectively may enable cities to demonstrate that governance challenges are systematic rather than isolated local issues. Coordinated action therefore can increase visibility, support the development of shared standards and expectations, and strengthen the position of participatory governance within national and European policy debates.

3.2 Coordinated Transnational Strategy

Building on the shared governance challenges and converging local strategies identified across the four cases, this section outlines a set of phased transnational strategic pillars to translate local practices into coordinated frameworks for cross-border learning and action (see Table 3).

Strategic Pillar 1: Multilingual and Multi-Modal Communication Infrastructure

This short-term strategic pillar focuses on jointly creating core participation materials, such as invitation templates, process guides, and feedback forms, in multiple European languages with cultural adaptation, stored in a shared digital repository accessible to all cities. It provides a visual communication toolkit with participatory mapping templates, pictogram libraries, and facilitation guides, e.g., Vienna's non-verbal communication methods. Cities coordinate interpretation and translation services to develop quality standards for participatory settings. Plain language and easy-read formats are designed collaboratively, complemented by joint training programs for officials and facilitators, while shared digital platforms support multilingual participation with built-in translation and user interfaces adapted to diverse digital literacy levels.

Strategic Pillar 2: Co-Design and Community-Based Participation Formats

This mid-term strategic pillar promotes collaborative development of co-design methodologies ensuring civil society and community involvement from problem definition through implementation and evaluation. Cities establish facilitator exchange programs enabling practitioners to learn diverse approaches and adapt methods across contexts. Peer learning networks connect civil society organizations across cities to share organizing strategies, advocacy approaches, and methodological innovations. It includes development of shared evaluation frameworks assessing participation quality, inclusivity, and influence on decision-making, with participatory methods enabling communities to assess processes. Cities jointly develop and test culturally sensitive participation formats accommodating diverse communication styles, cultural norms, and community preferences, with formats reaching underrepresented groups including migrants, refugees, economically disadvantaged residents, and youth.

Strategic Pillar 3: Stable Funding and Formalized Public-CSO Partnerships

This long-term strategic pillar involves collaborative development of a partnership framework defining the roles and responsibilities of non-institutional actors in the decision-making process. It also formulates accountability mechanisms, adaptable to different legal contexts while establishing core principles of co-design, multi-year commitments, and civil society expertise recognition. Cities exchange strategies for sustainable civil society funding including core funding models and capacity-building grants, identifying which models work under what conditions. Transnational monitoring frameworks track partnership quality, civil society capacity, and impact on the participatory process, providing evidence for collective action. Cities coordinate advocacy toward national and EU institutions for supportive funding frameworks recognizing civil society's intermediary role and enabling long-term partnership development. It includes development of feedback mechanisms ensuring participants see how input influenced decisions, with transparent tracking systems and reporting standards for visibility.

Strategic Pillar 4: Embedding Participation in Governance Structures

This strategic pillar embeds participation as a lasting element of governance structures, through collectively developed procedures that integrate participatory practices into policy development, project management, budget preparation, and evaluation, adaptable to diverse institutional contexts. Cities develop cross-departmental coordination mechanisms including interdepartmental working groups, participation focal points in each department, and senior-level oversight ensuring political commitment. Capacity assessment and development frameworks enable cities to identify strengths and gaps, with shared training curricula for officials at various levels and peer review processes facilitating mutual learning. Comparative review of legal frameworks identifies effective provisions and implementation challenges, informing development of a consolidated model and coordinated advocacy for supportive national and EU legal frameworks. It includes guidance on adequate resource allocation with staffing, budget benchmarks, and cost-benefit analyses demonstrating participation's value for policy quality.

Enabler: Transnational Learning and Knowledge Diffusion

For their effective implementation, the transnational strategies can benefit from a permanent transnational network with digital platforms for knowledge sharing and regular in-person exchanges bringing together municipal officials, civil society organizations, and community members. The network facilitates peer learning through structured exchanges, study visits, and collaborative problem-solving sessions addressing shared challenges. It coordinates joint research documenting effective practices, evaluating innovations across contexts, and producing evidence for advocacy. The network pools resources for training program development, methodological tool creation, and facilitator capacity-building, reducing individual city costs while ensuring quality. It creates spaces for civil society organizations to connect transnationally, strengthening their collective voice and capacity. It maintains a shared digital repository of participation resources, evaluation findings, and case studies accessible to all members and continuously updated based on implementation experience.

<i>Dimension</i>	Shared Local Deficiencies	Transnational Strategic Pillars	Key Innovation
Accessibility	Language barriers; bureaucratic communication; limited time and resources	Use multilingual, plain-language, and provide a multi-modal communication infrastructure	Shared translation resources; common visual language; open-source multilingual platforms
Inclusion	Tokenistic participation; lack of cultural recognition; weak community links	Apply co-design and culturally sensitive, community-based participation formats; foster	Cross-city experimentation; facilitator exchange; shared evaluation frameworks

CSO partnerships and peer facilitation			
Continuity	Project-based, one-off initiatives; government change; absent feedback loops	Implement recurring cycles; formalize stable funding, CSO partnerships, and monitoring & evaluation	Shared partnership models; transnational monitoring; coordinated action for funding
Scalability	Parallel structures; weak coordination; lack of mandate; limited capacity	Embed participation into formal governance and policy processes; strengthen coordination and staff training	Collective EU advocacy; shared advocacy for legal frameworks; transnational training
<i>Enabler</i>			
Knowledge Diffusion	Small-scale, localized participation, limited cross-border, intersectoral learning	Support peer-learning platforms and CSO-mediated knowledge exchange and establish a permanent peer-learning and knowledge network	Mutual validation of local experiments; pooled resources for research, training, and tool development

3.3 Implementation Pathways

This section translates the transnational strategic pillars into actionable pathways, outlining the necessary resources and commitments needed for their effective implantation (see Table 4).

Pathway 1: Communication Infrastructure

Implementing multilingual and multi-modal communication requires coordinated investment in financial, human, and technical resources. Cities must provide funding for professional translation and interpretation services, multilingual digital platforms, plain language and easy-read standards, and staff training in accessible communication and visual facilitation. Partnerships with translation professionals, community organizations, and communication specialists ensure materials are technically sound and culturally appropriate. Political commitment is essential to make accessible communication standard practice. It facilitates increased participation among linguistically diverse residents with culturally relevant materials and multilingual communication normalized across institutional processes.

Pathway 2: Inclusive Formats

Developing inclusive participation formats demands resources for professional facilitators, participant incentives, training programs, and piloting new methods. Partnerships with civil society organizations, peer facilitators, community representatives, and participatory researchers ensure co-developed, culturally sensitive approaches. Institutional flexibility and leadership support are required to allow experimentation and share decision-making power with communities. As a result, engagement rises among historically underrepresented groups, participation formats adapt to diverse needs, quality of input improves, and relationships between

institutions and communities are strengthened, making inclusive formats a routine part of governance processes.

Pathway 3: Sustained Partnerships

Establishing stable public-civil society partnerships needs long-term, multi-level funding, municipal capacity to formalize agreements, and skills and resources for monitoring and continuous improvement. Partnerships with committed civil society organizations, supportive national and EU actors, and reform-oriented policymakers can ensure mutual understanding, shared goals, and acknowledgement of local expertise. Political commitment to multi-year agreements and shared decision-making is critical. Successful implementation results in continuity across political cycles, increased trust, enhanced civil society capacity, stronger influence of marginalized communities, and improved policy quality, institutionalizing partnerships as the core basis of governance.

Pathway 4: Governance Embedding

Embedding participation into governance structures necessitates resources for organizational restructuring, dedicated staff, cross-departmental coordination, training, and institutional development. Partnerships with reform-oriented policymakers, oversight actors, and organizational experts provide political support, accountability, and technical guidance. Commitment through clear mandates, procedural adaptation, and long-term leadership engagement ensures participation becomes integral to decision-making. When achieved, participation is embedded into routine policy, project management, and evaluation processes, institutional capacity and influence increase, policy quality improves, and participation is recognized as a standard governance practice rather than an optional add-on.

Enabler: Permanent Transnational Learning and Knowledge Network

Creating a sustainable transnational knowledge network requires core coordination funding, digital platforms for resource sharing, and budgets for travel and events. Partnerships among municipal administrations, CSOs, research institutions, and EU/national actors ensure diverse perspectives, evaluation capacity, and legitimacy. Commitment to open, collaborative, and long-term engagement allows knowledge to flow equitably across cities. When implemented, cities accelerate problem-solving through shared experience, practitioner capacity grows through transnational training, participatory practices gain legitimacy, innovation is faster, and advocacy toward national and EU institutions is amplified, establishing self-sustaining infrastructure for continuous cross-city learning.

Table 4. Transnational Strategy Implementation Pathways

Pathway	Resources	Partnerships	Commitment	Local Outcomes
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Communication Infrastructure	Funding for translation, multilingual communication tools; digital platforms; staff training	Translation services; community organizations; communication and participation specialists	Political priority and organizational rules for accessible communication; accountability mechanisms	Improved awareness and reduced language barriers among underrepresented groups
Inclusive Formats	Funding for facilitation, co-design, participant incentives; facilitator training	Trusted CSOs; peer facilitators; community representatives; participatory action researchers	Flexibility to test diverse formats; willingness to share decision-making with communities	Participation formats meeting diverse needs; higher engagement from underrepresented groups
Sustained Partnerships	Long-term, multi-level funding; capacity for formal agreements; monitoring resources	CSOs and municipal actors committed to long-term cooperation; national and EU-level supporters	Political will to formalize partnerships; shift from project-based to continuous participation	Greater continuity across political cycles; stronger trust between CSOs and public authorities
Governance Uptake	Political and financial support for organizational change and coordination training	Reform-oriented policymakers; external oversight actors; organizational development experts	Clear political mandate; institutional readiness; long-term commitment	Participation embedded as routine practice; increased influence on policy decisions
<i>Enabler</i>				
Knowledge Network	Core funding for coordination; online platform; travel and event budgets	Founding municipal administrations; CSOs as co-leads; research institutions; EU and national institutions	Commitment to open knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and long-term engagement	Enhanced peer learning; strengthened practitioner capacity; greater legitimacy for local participatory practices

4) Conclusion

The local experiences of the GEtCoheSive partners demonstrate that, despite differing political, institutional, and social contexts, they face common structural challenges in participatory governance. These challenges, ranging from limited accessibility, shallow inclusion, and project-based continuity to constrained scalability, affect the active engagement of underrepresented groups and reduce the effectiveness and legitimacy of participatory processes.

Across the four cases, the local strategies converge around four shared objectives: enhancing accessibility through multilingual and culturally sensitive communication; strengthening inclusion via sustained public-civil society partnerships; ensuring continuity through recurring engagement and feedback mechanisms; and embedding participation within formal institutional frameworks. Together, these strategies provide a foundation for cross-border learning toward systematic, durable, and equitable governance practices.

Transnational cooperation amplifies this potential by enabling knowledge exchange, resource pooling, methodological innovation, and collective advocacy. Coordinated strategies, such as multilingual communication infrastructures, co-designed participation formats, stable partnerships, and governance embedding, can be reinforced through a permanent knowledge network, supporting ongoing learning, joint evaluation, and the wider dissemination of effective practices.

Successful implementation of this transnational strategy will require alignment of financial, technical, and human resources with sustained political and institutional commitment. When fully applied, these approaches can transform participatory governance from isolated, project-based initiatives into institutionalized, inclusive, and continuous practices, thereby enhancing the legitimacy, responsiveness and overall quality of governance across European urban contexts.