

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Bradford		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C17 Business and Management Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Socio-Economic Impact of Increasing Citizens Participation and Engagement in Local Government Decision Making: The Case of Participatory Budgeting (EMPATIA)		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> March 2017 – December 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g., job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Prof Vishanth Weerakkody	Dean of Faculty and Professor of Digital Governance	March 2017 - current
Prof Uthayasankar Sivarajah	Head of School of Management & Professor in Technology Management and Circular Economy	December 2017 - current
Prof Zahir Irani	Deputy-Vice-Chancellor (Academic, Innovation and Quality)	December 2016 – current
Dr Amizan Omar	Assistant Professor	March 2018 – current
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> March 2017 - Dec 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Research in behavioural, socio-economic and policy evaluation led to the development of a novel digital platform to facilitate and increase citizens engagement in the local government policy decision making process through Participatory Budgeting. The research was part of a GBP1,300,000 EU H2020 funded project (EMPATIA) involving collaboration with LGs, NGOs, academics, and community groups across multiple cities in the above countries. The research increased civic engagement, promoted the co-design of projects focused on local needs, and improved transparency and accountability of LG spending since 2017 in Portugal, Germany, Italy and the Czech Republic.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The objective of EMPATIA research was to increase citizen participation and engagement in Local Government (LG) decision making in the context of Participatory Budgeting (PB) (1). PB is a process of democratic deliberation and decision-making where citizens engage to decide allocation of LG budget to undertake projects addressing community needs. Simple examples include improving library facilities, parks and roads in a municipality or developing facilities for children or elderly in the community. The research conducted by Weerakkody, Sivarajah, Irani and Omar at University of Bradford (UoB) from March 2017 to December 2018 involved the development of the project's requirements gathering methodology, development of key performance indicators (KPIs), and evaluation of the digital platform's adoption and diffusion against the KPIs (2). This research was done through a multi-stakeholder engagement approach involving several LG, third sector organisations and community groups across Europe from March 2017 to December 2019 (3, 5).</p>		

The research identified a range of methods to represent inter-relationships between government and citizens in the decision-making process (1). This has contributed to the digital transformation agenda of governments in Portugal (PT), Italy (IT), Germany (DE) and the Czech Republic (CZ) specifically by developing and providing KPIs for digital-PB evaluation. This focused on user centric, process based and technical criteria, and examined the broader political, social, economic, legal, and political issues around the use of digital led transformation within government (2, 5).

Through this research, we have evaluated the impact that digital technologies have on improving citizens' participation in democratic process using various decision-making scenarios in the context of PB (5). The methodological framework developed and applied by UoB involved a series of technical and non-technical evaluation workshops and focus groups facilitated by UoB with a range of participants (citizens, LG authorities, NGOs, community groups and practitioners) in PT, DE, IT and CZ (3). These focused on exploring scenarios relating to decision making in LG projects and allocation of budget for these through a PB process. The workshops involved collaboration between UoB researchers and these stakeholders to shape the multi-channel PB approach advocated in EMPATIA (3). The research identified the public value of PB to the local community and public administrations (PAs) in the four countries through the evaluation of the implementation of the EMPATIA platform and changes it introduced to existing practices in how public budgets can be allocated to local projects (2, 3).

Through the systematic approach taken to develop the KPIs, the UoB researchers were able to advance the current state of knowledge on the implementation, adoption, and diffusion of PB and contribute to both the literature and practice within the field of PB and more widely in the field of participatory democracy (2,5). The KPIs were underpinned by synthesising several established theoretical models drawn from the disciplines of computer science, management, social science, and law together with grey literature and stakeholder consultation. Similarly, the methodology underpinning the development of KPIs together with the EMPATIA platform and its implementation and evaluation, is novel and drew from the same disciplines. Techniques such as role-playing, simulation and feedback-loops were incorporated to the methodology to ensure stakeholder involvement from initial design to implementation and adoption, which is rare in digital government systems (3, 5).

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Omar, A., , & Sivarajah, U. Weerakkody, V. (2018), Participatory budgeting: the case for engaging citizens in local government decision making, In Proceedings of the 19th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research: Governance in the Data Age, May 2018, Article No.: 47 Pages 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3209281.3209387>
2. Omar, A., Weerakkody, V., & Sivarajah, U. (2017). Developing criteria for evaluating a multi-channel digitally enabled participatory budgeting platform. In Proceedings of the International Conference on Electronic Participation, Pages 3-11, Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64322-9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64322-9_1)
3. EMPATIA: Evaluation and Pilots Impact Assessment, Available at: <https://empatia-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/D4.2-Evaluation-and-Pilots-Impact-Assessment-final.pdf>
4. Weerakkody, V. (2019), The Transformative Influence of Smart Cities: Examples from EU projects, Smart City Expo World Congress, Barcelona, Spain (17-18 November 2019), presentation.
5. Luis, C., Fonseca, V., Sousa, B., Weerakkody, V., Sivarajah, U., Omar, A., Allegretti, G., Spada, P. and Secchi, M. (2018) EMPATIA Evaluation and Pilots Impact Assessment, <https://empatia-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/D4.2-Evaluation-and-Pilots-Impact-Assessment-final.pdf>

### Grants

EMPATIA: *Enabling Multichannel Participation Through ICT Adaptations*. European Commission H2020 Programme. Grant Agreement ID: 687920, Grant Total: EUR1,483,625; Institutional Share: EUR148,000.

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

LG authorities, NGOs, and SMEs across the four EU countries (PT, IT, DE and CZ) have used the novel methodology, evaluation techniques and KPIs developed by UoB researchers during the life of the project and beyond (A-D). The research delivered multiple socio-economic and policy impacts across several cities in Europe (A, B). Impacts resulted due to the application of a multi-channel PB process using the EMPATIA platform (including integrations of open-source components into existing public administration systems) in 30 city level implementations across PT, IT, DE and CZ in: Milan, Pavia, Cormano, Monza, Lisbon, Cascais, Condeixa, Lagoa, Ricany, Wuppertal (A-D).

#### Social Impacts for Communities

One of the longitudinal and most impactful societal impacts of the EMPATIA platform is its implementation enabling the National Portuguese Youth PB cycle from 2017 – to present (A, D).

The concepts and platform components have been used outside the official partner countries in the project, including Cananea, Mexico and Casares and Torredonjimeno, Spain (F). In this context, a key impact of EMPATIA, led by UoB, has been the promotion of knowledge exchange of KPI development and evaluation techniques among technology providers of participatory platforms (A-D). Before EMPATIA, no platform offered an advanced monitoring system that allowed to analyse both the ideation and implementation phase of a participatory process; now such platform has become a standard through EMPATIA (B).

The novel research led by UoB ensured that LG authorities fully engaged in the PB process using the EMPATIA digital platform and its variation of multi-channels leading to additional investments into community projects through PB (A, F). As outlined by Lisbon Municipality, “...since 2017 participatory processes supported by the EMPATIA project experts including UoB... have resulted in 7.5M€ budget for more than 50 winning projects/ideas, that resulted from more than 120.000 citizen votes from a total of more than 2.000 proposals and ideas” (A). As such, EMPATIA has transformed the PB process from a traditional face-to-face only ‘townhall’ approach to a truly multi-channel and inclusive digital approach. A few examples of projects funded through EMPATIA led PB include: the transformation of the Bairro do Condado Children's Park and other recreational facilities in several primary schools, and a project to fund entrepreneurship and training courses for people with disabilities in Lisbon, Portugal; Creation of a car free zone and financial support to a ‘pocket money exchange project’, connecting youth and elderly in Wuppertal, Germany; and creating natural green spaces in urban areas in Milan, Italy (G).

Following captures the main societal impacts created through the EMPATIA platform and associated research (2018-2020): (B,F)

- Number of Users Engaged with PB: 55,000
- Number of Ideas / proposals for PB: 3000+
- Number of Votes received for ideas/proposals: 55,000+
- Number of SMS received for ideas/proposals: 10,000+
- Number of PB visitors to the EMPATIA website:200,000+
- Number of PB page views in the EMPATIA website: 1,200,000+

#### Policy Impacts for Public Administration

Research conducted by UoB in EMPATIA have resulted in the following policy impacts for PAs since 2017 across cities in PT, DE, IT and CZ:

- Continuous Improvements in the design and implementation of the EMPATIA platform from 2017 to 2020 resulting in changes to LG policy decision making processes and leading to improved public participation in government decision making (A, B, D).
- Influence on LG public engagement policies, guidelines, and training (A).
- Promoting social inclusivity through co-creation of community facing local solutions and projects via an inclusive multi-channel (Kiosk, Mobile phone, computer based, F2F) PB process that allowed LG, NGOs, private organisations, and citizens to work together (A-D).
- Improving the understanding of and developing and adopting alternative public engagement models by government (B, E).
- Influencing change in public awareness and behaviours relevant to the process of budget allocation by government for civic projects (A-D).
- Development of resources and guidelines to enhance LG professional practice (A, E).
- Influence private (SME)-public partnership and working relationship through the novel research approach applied to design and develop citizen-centric ICT solutions for democratic government (B,C).

### Administrative Burden Reduction for Public Administration

The Lisbon Municipality states that, “...from a Public Administration perspective, the EMPATIA system has helped us to transform the participatory processes through use of innovative technology and significantly reduced the administrative burden and costs associated with managing these processes manually. ...The systematic approach taken by the UoB team in the EMPATIA research..., was instrumental in the success and impact created by the system... and... has contributed to the long-term sustainability of the system” (A). “...I am pleased to state that the work done by members of the EMPATIA project team have been crucial in helping us integrate the system into our existing public administration systems” (A). The systematic approach taken by the UoB team in the EMPATIA research... and their continued engagement with users of the system through implementation and evaluation, both from the public administration and citizens side, was instrumental in the success and impact created by the system” (A).

### Knowledge Transfer and Economic Benefits for Small Business and Third Sector

OneSource states, “...the research activities carried out by the UoB team has had a significant impact on raising awareness of PB across several European countries who were part of the EMPATIA project consortium including in Portugal, Italy, Czech Republic, Germany and the UK” (B). The UoB research has contributed to generating approximately EUR2,000,000 income to OneSource, an SME. This was achieved through extending the EMPATIA system components, concepts, methods, and tools beyond the project which led to growth of OneSource with 14 new staff hires (B). Oficina states, “...the novel methodology used by University of Bradford for stakeholder engagement has helped my organisation’s efforts to develop and expand our work on PB both locally and nationally” (D). The same impact is corroborated by BiPart who state that “...the novel methods and approach introduced by the UoB team in EMPATIA has been adapted by my team at BiPart allowing my company to create real social engagement and impact on participatory processes in line with our mission as a social enterprise” (C).

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. Testimonial letter from the Head of Division, Department of Relations with the Citizen and Participation, Camara Municipal de Lisboa (Lisbon Municipality), Lisbon
- B. Testimonial letter from the Chief Technology Officer, OneSource, Coimbra, Portugal
- C. Testimonial letter from the Chief Executive Officer and Founder, BiPart, Milan, Italy
- D. Testimonial letter from the Project Coordinator, Oficina, Faro, Portugal.
- E. Luis, C., Fonseca, V., Sousa, B Luis, C., Fonseca, V., Sousa, B., Weerakkody, V., Sivarajah, U., Omar, A., Allegretti, G., Spada, P. and Secchi, M. (2018) EMPATIA Evaluation and Pilots Impact Assessment, Report Section 1, 4 and 5, Available Online: <https://empatia->

[project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/D4.2-Evaluation-and-Pilots-Impact-Assessment-final.pdf](https://empatia-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/D4.2-Evaluation-and-Pilots-Impact-Assessment-final.pdf)

F. Spada, P. Copello, K., Allegretti, G., Secchi, M., Cordeiro, L. and Fonseca, V. (2018) Enabling Multichannel Participation Through ICT Adaptations Final Progress Report, Report Section 1 and 3, Available Online: [https://empatia-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EMPATIA\\_Final\\_Progress\\_Report\\_D6.2-6July2018.pdf](https://empatia-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EMPATIA_Final_Progress_Report_D6.2-6July2018.pdf)

G. [EMPATIA: Pilots](#)

The EMPATIA website lists a number of participatory budgeting pilots and the projects that were funded as part of the project.