

GEtCoheSive 2023-2025

WP3 Activity 3.3

Deliverables 3.3.1

Local Action Plan for the implementation of
participatory governance in Emilia-Romagna

February 2026



1. Purpose of the local action plan

This Local Action Plan translates the results of the GEtCohESive project into concrete measures to strengthen inclusive and participatory governance in the Emilia-Romagna Region (Italy), with a specific focus on both the regional level and the municipal levels of Bologna and Parma. While participatory instruments are already in place, experience shows that participation does not automatically ensure inclusive engagement, particularly for underrepresented groups such as migrants, young people, and socially vulnerable residents.

The Plan aims to embed inclusion mechanisms, strengthen institutional capacity, improve internal coordination and establish structured cooperation with civil society organisations. By linking policy measures with operational tools, training and partnership models, the Action Plan supports the institutionalisation of inclusive participation and contributes to more responsive and socially cohesive local decision-making.

2. Context and links to the Local strategy for the implementation of participatory governance in Emilia-Romagna

In the Emilia-Romagna Region, participatory governance is increasingly recognised as a key lever for inclusive social policies and community development. The Region has a strong tradition of participation, supported by regional legislation and established municipal practices. However, several challenges remain in ensuring accessibility, institutional continuity and structured cooperation between public bodies and civil society. Participatory initiatives are often project-based, with limited institutional embedding, uneven staff capacities and fragmented partnerships.

Emilia-Romagna has a well-established policy framework supporting participatory governance, grounded in Regional Law No. 15/2018 on the promotion of citizen participation in the development of regional and local policies. The Region has developed a range of instruments to support participatory processes, including dedicated funding schemes (Bando Partecipazione), methodological guidance, capacity-building initiatives for public administrations and civil society, and the involvement of the regional Authority for Participation (Tecnico di garanzia della

partecipazione). Within this framework, participatory practices are increasingly integrated into sectoral policies and local planning processes.

The Local Strategy (Deliverable D.3.2.1) builds on this strong institutional foundation and identifies key priorities to further strengthen the inclusiveness, accessibility and effectiveness of participation, with particular attention to underrepresented groups. The present Action Plan translates this strategic vision into operational measures by introducing practical tools, pilot actions and capacity-building activities that support public authorities and partner organisations in embedding inclusive participation approaches within their existing programmes, procedures and governance practices.

At the local level, actions will take place in Bologna and Parma, where three partner organisations are based: ASP Città di Bologna, the Municipality of Parma and the Centre for Immigration, Asylum and International Cooperation (CIAC).

In Bologna, the Local Strategy for participatory governance highlights the need to strengthen institutional capacities, formalise partnerships with community actors and embed inclusive participation as a standard practice within public services and territorial infrastructures. It emphasises training, knowledge transfer and structured collaboration between regional institutions, municipalities and third-sector organisations. This Action Plan - thanks to the active role of ASP Città di Bologna - translates these priorities into practical measures, with a strong focus on consolidating and institutionalising training on inclusive participation in partnership with the Emilia-Romagna Region. Building on the training programmes delivered in 2025-2026, the planned actions aim to ensure continuous knowledge transfer, strengthen regional and local institutional capacities and embed inclusive participatory approaches within policies and administrative practices. In parallel, the Action Plan will support Civil Service volunteers as facilitators of participatory processes and formalise partnerships with Community Hubs and neighbourhood networks. Through these measures, ASP Città di Bologna seeks to institutionalise inclusive participatory practices, strengthen multi-level governance cooperation between regional and local actors and enhance the accessibility and sustainability of participatory governance mechanisms.

The Municipality of Parma has progressively developed participatory practices, including Neighbourhood Laboratories and community-based initiatives. However, several challenges remain: participation often reaches the same groups, communication is complex and predominantly monolingual, and coordination across departments is uneven. Frontline staff report difficulties in engaging diverse groups without intermediaries, while operational standards for participatory processes are not yet fully harmonised. Cooperation with civil society organisations is active but often project-

based rather than structured and long-term. The Local Strategy identifies the need to embed inclusion and accessibility at the design stage, strengthen institutional ownership and staff competences, develop operational standards and reinforce structured cooperation with third-sector actors. This Action Plan operationalises these priorities through concrete tools, training and governance mechanisms, including the strategic involvement of CIAC.

2.1 Main goals identified in the Local Strategy

SG1 - Embed inclusion and accessibility in participatory processes and public communication.

SG2 - Strengthen institutional capacity, coordination and operational standards.

SG3 - Develop structured cooperation between the Municipality and civil society organisations.

3. Local Actions

Local Action 1 (connected to SG1)

Action Title	Consolidate training and knowledge transfer on accessible participation
Type of action	☐ Policy-oriented ☐ Practice-oriented x Mixed
Objective	To ensure the continuity of targeted and practice-oriented training, strengthening institutional capacities on inclusive participation and enabling long-term institutional impact and sustainability.
Description / Key Activities	ASP Città di Bologna has delivered intensive training programmes to the Emilia-Romagna Region throughout 2025 and 2026 on accessible participation. The organisation commits to continuing this partnership in the coming years, ensuring ongoing knowledge transfer, institutional learning, and integration of inclusive participatory approaches into regional policies and practices.
Responsible actors	ASP Città di Bologna, Regione Emilia-Romagna
Supporting partners / stakeholders	ActionAid Italia/ civil society organizations/participatory process professionals

Costs / Resources & funding	☐ Low x ☐ Middle ☐ High costs Resources include staff time, training materials, and possible co-funding from regional budgets and EU programmes.
Timeline	☐ Short-term ☐ Mid-term x ☐ Long-term
Expected results & outputs	• Delivery of regular training sessions on inclusive participatory practices; • strengthened institutional capacity; • integration of inclusive participation principles into regional policies and programmes.
Risks/Challenges/ barriers	Potential reduction of funding; political or administrative changes affecting institutional priorities.
Indicators	Number of participants; adopted policy changes; number of participation-related projects funded.
Scalability / potential follow-up	☐ Low scalability ☐ Middle scalability x ☐ High scalability Training modules and methodologies can be replicated in other regional administrations and municipalities.

Local Action 2 (connected to SG2)

Action Title	Empower Civil Service volunteers for inclusive participatory practices
Type of action	☐ Policy-oriented ☐ Practice-oriented x ☐ Mixed
Objective	To strengthen inclusive participation and community-based work by providing Civil Service volunteers with adequate training, mentoring and structured integration into participatory processes.
Description / Key Activities	Civil Service volunteers based at ASP Città di Bologna will receive dedicated training on accessible participation, building on lessons learned from GEtCohESive, and their activities will

	focus on supporting participatory processes and reinforcing community-based initiatives.
Responsible actors	ASP Città di Bologna, Universal Civil Service Association Bologna - SCUBO
Supporting partners / stakeholders	Local project partners
Costs / Resources & funding	x Low ☐ Middle ☐ High costs Mainly covered by Civil Service programme funding and staff supervision time.
Timeline	☐ Short-term ☐ Mid-term x Long-term
Expected results & outputs	Trained volunteers with competencies in inclusive participation; strengthened participatory programmes and community projects.
Risks/Challenges/ barriers	Civil Service project delays, discontinuity in volunteer cohorts.
Indicators	Number of volunteers trained; number of trainings delivered; number of partnerships with other organisations.
Scalability / potential follow-up	☐ Low scalability ☐ Middle scalability x High scalability The model can be transferred to other Civil Service hosting organisations and municipalities.

Local Action 3 (connected to SG3)

Action Title	Formalise community-based participatory partnerships
Type of action	☐ Policy-oriented ☐ Practice-oriented x Mixed
Objective	To institutionalise participatory practices through the formalisation of collaborations between ASP Città di Bologna, the Municipality of Bologna and associations, community

	organisations, neighbourhood networks (Uffici Reti di Quartiere) and Community Hubs (Case di Quartiere).
Description / Key Activities	Building on the foundation created through the GEtCohESive initiatives, ASP Città di Bologna will formalise collaborations through a framework agreement embedding shared principles, standards, and procedures for participatory practices within the Community Hubs.
Responsible actors	ASP Città di Bologna, Municipality of Bologna, Community Hubs
Supporting partners / stakeholders	Civil society organizations, associations
Costs / Resources & funding	☒ Low ☐ Middle ☐ High costs
Timeline	☐ Short-term ☐ Mid-term ☒ Long-term
Expected results & outputs	Signed framework agreements; joint participatory activities and projects implemented in Community Hubs.
Risks/Challenges/ barriers	Heterogeneity of governance and organisational models across Community Hubs may require tailored negotiation and context-specific adaptation.
Indicators	Number of agreements signed; number of activities implemented by or in collaboration with ASP within Community Hubs.
Scalability / potential follow-up	☐ Low scalability ☒ Middle scalability ☐ High scalability The framework can be adapted and transferred to other municipalities and community infrastructures.

Local Action 4 (connected to SG1)

Action Title	Inclusion-by-design in participatory processes (SG1)
Type of action	☐ Policy-oriented ☐ Practice-oriented ☒ Mixed

Objective	Ensure participatory processes effectively involve underrepresented groups.
Description / Key Activities	• Develop and implement an Inclusion Readiness Checklist based on GEtCoheSive toolkits. • Introduce plain language and multilingual communication guidelines. • Redesign materials using icons, simplified language and QR codes. • Pilot implementation in Community Houses and social services.
Responsible actors	Municipality of Parma - Participation Office and Social Services.
Supporting partners / stakeholders	CIAC, Emilia-Romagna Region, user groups.
Costs / Resources & funding	☐ Low ☒ Middle ☐ High costs Partners will allocate internal human resources to implement the planned activities. The production of communication materials by the Municipality of Parma will be financed through existing municipal budget resources.
Timeline	☐ Short-term ☒ Mid-term ☐ Long-term
Expected results & outputs	Inclusion checklist adopted; accessible communication materials; improved access.
Risks/Challenges/ barriers	The introduction of checklists to improve participatory processes and new methods of engaging underrepresented groups constitutes a cultural shift for stakeholders and, as such, requires time to assimilate. Furthermore, the introduction of new tools in administrative sectors other than the Social/Participation Sector, which were already involved in the project, will be challenging.
Indicators	Number of processes using the checklist; number of materials redesigned.

Scalability / potential follow-up	Could the actions or results of this Local Action Plan be further developed, transferred, or scaled up in the future. ☐ Low scalability ☐ Middle scalability ☒ High scalability
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Local Action 5 (connected to SG2)

Action Title	Institutional capacity and coordination
Type of action	☐ Policy-oriented ☐ Practice-oriented ☒ Mixed
Objective	Improve governance, political ownership and staff competences.
Description / Key Activities	• Establish a permanent interdepartmental steering group. • Deliver training on inclusive participation and intercultural facilitation. • Develop a municipal manual defining minimum standards.
Responsible actors	Municipality of Parma - Participation Office and HR Department.
Supporting partners / stakeholders	Emilia-Romagna Region, University of Parma, CIAC.
Costs / Resources & funding	☐ Low ☒ Middle ☐ High costs Internal HR involved
Timeline	☐ Short-term ☒ Mid-term ☐ Long-term
Expected results & outputs	Steering group operational; staff trained; manual adopted.
Risks/Challenges/barriers	
Indicators	Number of meetings; number of staff trained; manual adoption.
Scalability / potential follow-up	Could the actions or results of this Local Action Plan be further developed, transferred, or scaled up in the future.

	☐ Low scalability ☐ Middle scalability X High scalability
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Local Action 6 (connected to SG2)

Action Title	Structured partnership with CIAC
Type of action	☐ Policy-oriented ☐ Practice-oriented X Mixed
Objective	Establish long-term structured collaboration for inclusive participation.
Description / Key Activities	- Involve CIAC in governance and coordination mechanisms. - Develop a three-year training programme for CIAC staff. - CIAC acts as trainer, facilitator and advisor. - Strengthen outreach to underrepresented groups.
Responsible actors	Municipality of Parma - Participation Office; CIAC.
Supporting partners / stakeholders	//
Costs / Resources & funding	☐ Low ☐ Middle ☐ High costs Internal HR involved
Timeline	☐ Short-term ☐ Mid-term X Long-term
Expected results & outputs	Structured collaboration framework; joint training; increased diversity of participants.
Risks/Challenges/barriers	
Indicators	Number of joint activities; participation of CIAC in governance bodies.
Scalability / potential follow-up	Could the actions or results of this Local Action Plan be further developed, transferred, or scaled up in the future. ☐ Low scalability ☐ Middle scalability X High scalability

4. Governance and implementation of mechanisms

The Action Plan for the Bologna area will be coordinated by ASP Città di Bologna. Strategic oversight and institutional ownership will be ensured through a coordination framework involving key institutional actors, including the Municipality of Bologna and the Emilia-Romagna Region. This multi-level governance arrangement will support policy alignment, institutional integration and the long-term sustainability of inclusive participatory practices.

The Action Plan for the Parma area will be coordinated by the Participation Office of the Municipality of Parma. Strategic oversight and cross-sectoral ownership will be ensured through an interdepartmental steering group involving the relevant municipal departments. CIAC will act as a strategic partner, contributing to capacity-building, outreach and advisory functions, and supporting the monitoring and periodic review of implementation.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring will follow a light and process-oriented approach, focused on tracking the implementation process, outputs and early outcomes of the planned actions rather than conducting a full impact evaluation. In the Bologna area, monitoring will be coordinated by ASP Città di Bologna in cooperation with relevant institutional and civil society actors. Quantitative indicators will include the number of training sessions delivered on inclusive participation; the number of institutional staff and Civil Service volunteers trained; the number of framework agreements and collaborative activities established with Community Hubs; and the number of participatory initiatives supported. Qualitative monitoring will assess institutional learning processes, the integration of inclusive participation principles into organisational practices and policies, the quality of partnerships with the Municipality, the Emilia-Romagna Region and civil society organisations, as well as improvements in community engagement and the accessibility of participatory processes. Progress will be reviewed periodically through internal coordination meetings within ASP Città di Bologna and through joint exchanges with key partners, and the results will be used to support mutual learning, inform adjustments to implementation strategies and strengthen institutional ownership and accountability.

In the Parma area, monitoring will follow a similarly light but structured approach coordinated by the Participation Office of the Municipality of Parma. Quantitative indicators will include the number of participatory processes applying inclusion tools and guidelines, the number of staff trained and the number of joint activities carried out in cooperation with CIAC. Qualitative monitoring will focus on changes in institutional practices, improvements in interdepartmental coordination, the strengthening of cooperation with civil society and the diversity of participants reached through participatory processes. Progress will be periodically reviewed within the interdepartmental steering group, and monitoring results will be used to support organisational learning, inform adjustments to implementation and ensure the gradual consolidation of inclusive participatory practices.