



Final Learning Exercise Summary Report

City of Zagreb, Croatia – Action Plan 2024-2025

Mendeš, obrt za usluge – Ivona Mendeš Levak

Section I. Local context

The City of Zagreb implemented its OGP Local Action Plan 2024–2025 in a dynamic and evolving local context, marked by both strong opportunities and notable challenges. As Croatia’s capital and largest city, Zagreb is the country’s administrative, economic, and innovation center, with a population of nearly 800,000 and a leading role in high-value-added sectors such as technology, finance, and education. The city’s strategic vision, set out in its 2021–2027 Development Plan, emphasizes a green, innovative, and inclusive urban future, with priorities on digital transformation, transparent governance, and participatory decision-making. Over the past several years, Zagreb has launched a series of reforms to increase transparency and citizen engagement, including digitalizing city finances, establishing an e-platform for public consultations, and developing open data and anti-corruption tools.

The implementation of the OGP Action Plan was positively influenced by a committed city administration, active civil society partners, and a favorable investment climate, with rising domestic and foreign investments. The city’s institutional arrangements enabled cross-departmental collaboration, while dedicated budget allocations ensured the feasibility of the two main commitments: launching an online catalogue of city services and piloting e-participatory budgeting. However, several external and internal factors presented challenges. The action plan’s timeline was closely tied to the current administration’s term – ending in May 2025 – creating a sense of urgency and limiting the scope for long-term reforms. Fragmented service delivery, an inherited and outdated website, and other IT systems, as well as the need for greater inclusivity in public participation, were identified as



existing issues. While the city made efforts to address these by prioritizing feasible actions and expanding outreach – using both online and offline forums – some barriers, such as limited resources and the complexity of coordinating multiple stakeholders, remained only partially resolved.

Overall, Zagreb's OGP Local Action Plan was implemented in a context of ambitious modernization and civic engagement, but also within the constraints of administrative cycles and ongoing structural reforms. The lessons from this period highlight the importance of sustained political commitment, inclusive co-creation processes, and adaptive strategies to overcome both technical and participatory challenges, which were reiterated by both the local government and non-governmental stakeholders included in the process.

Section 2. Action Plan Co-creation Process

2.1 Review of the co-creation process

The co-creation process of Zagreb's OGP Action Plan 2024–2025 was marked by a strong commitment to inclusivity, iterative dialogue, and partnership between city authorities and a diverse range of non-governmental stakeholders. The process was anchored in an informal multi-stakeholder forum that brought together representatives from city offices, civil society organizations, academic institutions, professional networks, and public associations. Over the course of the co-creation period, a total of ten meetings were held – two in-person and eight individual meetings online – ensuring broad participation and flexibility. Additionally, individual online consultations (primarily via e-mail) were conducted with six key stakeholders, all of whom ultimately endorsed the final Action Plan.

One of the main strengths of the process was its structured and transparent approach to stakeholder engagement. The city provided advanced information and documentation to all participants, allowing for informed and meaningful contributions. Stakeholders received draft versions of the Action Plan and were able to provide feedback at multiple stages, with the government proactively offering written responses detailing how their input was considered. This iterative, two-way communication fostered a genuine sense of shared ownership and agenda-setting among government and non-governmental actors. The process also included targeted outreach to ensure the diversity of representation, including efforts to engage other interested participants through transparent communication, public forums, and media outreach.

The process met all but one minimum OGP co-creation requirement and adopted several recommended practices. The forum was multi-stakeholder, inclusive, and included regular meetings with civil society. Stakeholders were provided with timely information, and the government reported back on how contributions were integrated. There was clear evidence of iterative dialogue and shared decision-making, particularly in the selection and design of



commitments and milestones. The involvement of organizations like GONG and the Association of Cities in Croatia as presenters and active contributors further enhanced the quality of deliberation and the legitimacy of the process.

However, some weaknesses and challenges were also identified. At the time of the assessment, the City of Zagreb did not maintain a dedicated OGP Local webpage on its official website, relying instead on the OGP Local platform for publishing the Action Plan and related materials. This limited the visibility and accessibility of information for the wider public, although plans were underway to improve this with a redesigned city website. While the process was generally inclusive, there is room for further broadening participation, especially among underrepresented groups and the general public. Additionally, while written feedback was provided to stakeholders, the process could benefit from more systematic public reporting and real-time updates on the progress of co-creation and implementation. Also, there is room for joint online meetings of the forum in which commitments could be discussed more organically, with comments and suggestions building upon each other, in which stakeholders cooperate more closely.

In summary, Zagreb's co-creation process for the OGP Action Plan 2024–2025 demonstrated strong compliance with OGP standards and good practices in stakeholder engagement, iterative dialogue, and inclusivity. The main strengths were the structured, transparent, and participatory approach, while the main challenges related to the need for better public visibility and ongoing efforts to engage a broader cross-section of the community.

2.2 Co-creation process recommendations

The following steps align with OGP's Participation and Co-Creation Standards and are proven to strengthen the quality, inclusiveness, and ambition of local open government action plans:

- **Organize regular joint meetings (online and in-person):** Move beyond primarily individual or email-based consultations by scheduling regular, structured joint meetings that bring together government, civil society, and other non-governmental stakeholders. These meetings – at least one per quarter during co-creation – should be open to all relevant actors and alternate between online and in-person formats to maximize inclusion and engagement.
- **Establish and publicize a dedicated OGP Local webpage:** Create and maintain a comprehensive OGP Local section on the City of Zagreb's official website. This page should proactively publish all relevant documents, meeting schedules, minutes, implementation progress, and opportunities for participation, following OGP's recommended practice for transparency and accessibility.
- **Enhance inclusive outreach and participation:** Implement targeted outreach activities (e.g., public forums, partnerships with community organizations, media campaigns) to ensure participation from underrepresented and marginalized groups. Draw on good practices such as using both digital and physical spaces and utilizing existing community networks to broaden input and awareness.



- **Provide timely, written feedback on stakeholder input:** Systematically report back to all contributors with clear, reasoned responses explaining how their suggestions were considered or incorporated into the action plan. This feedback loop should be public and accessible, building trust and demonstrating accountability.
- **Foster iterative, collaborative agenda-setting:** Use participatory tools (e.g., collaborative online platforms, joint agenda-setting workshops) to ensure that both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders own the process from problem identification to commitment drafting. This approach, recommended in OGP toolkits, helps mitigate power imbalances and build genuine shared ownership of outcomes.

Section 3. Action Plan Commitments

3.1 Commitments implementation review

The implementation of Zagreb's OGP Local Action Plan 2024–2025 centered on two flagship commitments: (1) increasing transparency in service delivery through the publication of an online catalogue, and (2) developing an e-service for participatory budgeting. Both commitments were designed to address long-standing challenges in local governance – fragmented service information and limited citizen engagement in budgetary decisions – and to advance the city's strategic vision of transparency, digital transformation, and participatory governance.

Commitment 1: Increasing transparency in service delivery through the publication of an online catalogue (HRZAG0001)

The city made substantial progress in developing a comprehensive online catalogue of municipal services. By March 2025, the catalogue included 347 services, a significant increase from the previously identified 186, and was fully documented and integrated into the city's internal ARIS platform. The process involved extensive internal coordination, workshops, and system upgrades. However, the full public benefit was delayed due to the pending launch of Zagreb's new official website, which will serve as the main public access point for the catalogue. While the technical and organizational milestones were largely met, the lack of immediate public access limited the short-term impact on transparency and citizen experience. The commitment addressed the core policy problem (fragmented and inaccessible service information), but its full potential will only be realized once the catalogue is publicly available and actively promoted.

Commitment 2: Implementation of an e-service for participatory budgeting (HRZAG0002)

The city successfully piloted an electronic platform for participatory budgeting in four city districts, enabling citizens to propose and vote on local budget priorities. This initiative marked a major step forward in civic participation, transparency, and trust in municipal budgeting. The platform was developed, tested, and launched on schedule, and included targeted outreach to encourage engagement. Key challenges included initial low awareness



among citizens, particularly youth and marginalized groups, and the need for ongoing technical support and process improvements. Despite these hurdles, the commitment created new channels for public input and increased the visibility of participatory budgeting as a tool for inclusive governance.

When it comes to their design and implementation adequacy, both commitments were well-aligned with OGP values and Zagreb's strategic priorities. They were designed to be verifiable, ambitious, and achievable within the action plan's timeframe, with secured budgets and clear milestones. The implementation process benefited from strong institutional support, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and dedicated resources. However, the experience highlighted the importance of synchronizing internal technical work with external, public-facing rollouts and of investing in sustained outreach and user support to maximize impact.

Regarding its contribution to the city's strategic vision, overall, the action plan made significant strides toward Zagreb's strategic vision of a transparent, innovative, and participatory city administration. The online catalogue initiative laid the groundwork for more streamlined and accessible services, while participatory budgeting empowered citizens and strengthened democratic engagement. The main lessons point to the need for better alignment between technical and public-facing milestones, stronger and broader communication strategies, and continuous improvement based on user feedback. With these adjustments, future action plans can further enhance the city's open-government achievements and deliver greater value to its residents.

3.2 Commitments recommendations

These recommendations may help Zagreb deepen the impact of its open government reforms and ensure that future commitments are more ambitious, sustainable, and responsive to local needs:

- **Ensure public launch and continuous update of the online catalogue:** To maximize the impact of the online catalogue of city services, its public launch on the city's new website should be prioritized and a procedure for regular updates and user feedback collection should be established. This will not only fulfill the original commitment but also enable iterative improvements, as seen in OGP examples from cities like [Buenos Aires](#), where opening information to citizens and instating reliable feedback loops have enhanced service usability and transparency.
- **Expand and institutionalize participatory budgeting:** Carry over and scale up the participatory budgeting initiative, expanding it to more city districts and embedding it as a permanent practice. Strengthen outreach, especially to youth and other less-represented groups, and introduce regular feedback mechanisms so that citizens can see how their input shapes budget decisions. Good practices from OGP cities



such as [Madrid](#) and [Paris](#) show that institutionalizing participatory budgeting increases legitimacy and sustained engagement.

- **Integrate follow-up mechanisms for all commitments:** For each implemented commitment, design clear follow-up actions – such as annual reviews, user satisfaction surveys, or public progress reports – to ensure sustained results and identify areas for further improvement. This aligns with [OGP's](#) emphasis on accountability and learning, and helps commitments evolve beyond one-off activities.
- **Increase ambition and scope in future commitments:** Build on the current foundations by introducing more ambitious, transformative commitments in the next action plan cycle – such as open data initiatives, digital citizen feedback tools, or transparency dashboards for city contracts. Draw on [OGP's commitment database](#) for inspiration and adapt successful models to Zagreb's context.
- **Strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration and communication:** Formalize regular joint meetings (in-person and online) between government, civil society, and other stakeholders throughout commitment design and implementation. Use these meetings for co-creation, monitoring, and troubleshooting, ensuring all voices are heard and fostering shared ownership – mirroring successful OGP Local models in cities like [El Kef](#) and [Madrid](#).
