City of Timișoara
September 30, 2020

Dear Open Government Partnership Co-Chairs:

As governmental and non-governmental representatives of the city of Timișoara, we are proud to participate in the OGP Local program 2020!
Timișoara, a city of over 300.000 people, operates under a City Council-Mayor system of governance.
Our concerted efforts to increase transparency, accountability, and civic participation has yielded results: Neighborhood Consultative Councils, a Seniors' Consultative Council, a Youth Consultative Council; a comprehensive strategic plan co-created with the citizens; a local data portal; ECoC[1] title for 2021, annual hackathons with community focus and many more.

Our work can be accelerated by this opportunity to work with the OGP Local Program to intertwine these efforts into a newer and greater outcome for our community. Timișoara, among others, is a city of innovation, technology, multiculturalism. And it is the starting point of the revolution[2] against communism in Romania. So, the principles of participatory governance are at home in our city! Through the OGP Local program 2020, we aim to evolve and contribute to the global culture of open government that empowers and delivers for citizens

It should be mentioned from the very beginning the fact that the content of this letter was co-created during a participatory process, a public debate involving political parties, civil society, academic, business and other cities representatives. And the Romanian OGP Point of Contact.
In the following chapters we have captured some of the experience, priorities, motivation and objectives of the city in terms of open governance. These will be approached with a view to increasing citizens' trust in government through responsive, reliable and open communications, while integrating these principles to an open and inclusive response to the current pandemic crisis.

Priorities

The city's main priorities, identified and prioritized through a participatory process, are: 1) Citizen participation, 2) Transparency and open data, 3) Digital governance, 4) Education and 5) Communication. Four of them are horizontal and one is vertical (Education). For each of these 5 priorities, there are several expected results, captured in the following chapters.

Involvement

In order to encourage citizen participation in our local community, we used, with small and successful steps, the following instruments: participatory leadership, open budgeting, open repository for documents, thematic working groups, smart tech interactions in the public area.
On the other hand, we intend to use wisely the opportunity of the very recent local elections. The mayor to be in our city just won the elections with a program built upon the slogan "The revolution of the good governance!", an approach which includes the principles of open government.
Of course, we are, also, learning from the experience of other cities in order to increase the involvement of citizens in city governance and civic activities.

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[1] https://www.themayor.eu/en/timisoara-is-the-european-capital-of-culture-2021-for-romania
[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanian_Revolution

Previous experience

In the recent years, the city of Timisoara has carried out several major projects which used the principles, tools or OGP methodology. For instance, in 2016, Timisoara won the title of European Capital of Culture with a participatory designed program. The main objective of this program is to transform the local community into an open, participatory, responsible, connected and innovative city.

Other implemented participatory practices with good results are neighborhood advisory councils, youth participatory budgeting, different community thematic working groups (on education, health, open data, mobility, innovative entrepreneurship). Among the most visible community oriented projects, with a strong participatory dimension, are Timotion, a philanthropic running event which aims to raise funds for NGOs' projects, UpgradeMyCity, an initiative aiming to incubate community oriented projects and AntiCovidTM, a civic platform aiming to promote entrepreneurial initiatives locally developed to support people affected by the pandemic.

We would, also, like to share the experience of the last 7 years with the national POC and OGP team, with whom we organized debates, hackathon events, webinars and advocacy caravans related to participatory governance.

Aspiration

The objectives pursued by this local OGP program are grouped below based on priority directions.

1) Citizen participation: to develop a local budget participatory process and to double the number of citizens involved în the process in the next 3 years, setting up thematic working groups: open data, digitalization of public services, communication, education, sustainable mobility and citizen participation in the local governance;

2) Open Data: a person in charge with open data within the mayor's office, finalization of the local data portal, prioritisation and standardisation of 10 high value data sets and their continuous publication in the portal for community reuse and impact;

3) Digital Governance: most public services of the mayor's office should be available online;

4) Education: actions of the working group focusing on stakeholder ecosystem mapping, strategic development plan, digitization of school management, educational processes and communication between stakeholders;

5) Communication: at least 3 digital displays in public places, "translating" the draft of the city's budget în a citizens' accessible language, promoting the OGP methodology as a participatory approach for different policy initiatives, creating a web site to to facilitate better citizen participation in the decision making process;

6) Management: establishing a POC on OGP at local level, creating a local OGP repository, adopting a LAP that synchronizes with the NAP, implementing a self-assessment mechanism with the participation of all stakeholders.

Track record

Some examples of projects and programs co-created with the non-governmental sector include the application file for the title of European Capital of Culture 2021, implementation of the city's data portal starting from a standard CKAN version, youth participatory budgeting, implementation of the Upgrade My City projects and the AntiCovidTM Platform actions, which are, all of them, addressing community challenges in a participatory way.

Last but not least, the content of this letter was generated, also, as a participatory process, through a public debate attended by city hall representatives, political parties, NGOs and universities representatives, OGP experts from other cities (Cluj, Iasi and Bucharest) and national POC.

At least 10 other OGP initiatives can be identified in the national track record. We can and we want to do better in the following years.

Capacity & resources

During the above mentioned public debate aiming to define the content of this letter, we ranked the capacity and resources that our city has in the field of open governance. This list includes non-governmental

expertise in the field of OGP, the support of the academic, civic, creative and business sectors for participatory public policies processes and the support from the national OGP coordinating team.

Under the current administration, the City Hall is allocating an important budget (eight figures) for the implementation of the European Capital of Culture program, an initiative based on OGP principles and methodology.

The Mayor to be, elected on September 27, 2020, publicly stated many times during the electoral campaign a high interest in using the OGP principles and methodology in the governance of the city.

The non-governmental expertise in the field of OGP is confirmed by the signatures of several leaders of community oriented participatory projects developed in the recent years.

Motivation

We are participating in the OGP Local competition 2020 because we believe that implementing the OGP principles and methodology will improve the quality of citizens' life in our community. The value of a participatory approach is underlined by the well-known urbanist Jean Jacobs: "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.".

It would be a great opportunity for Timisoara to get the national and international OGP guidance for the successful implementation of some specific actions with the help of OGP framework and tools: creation and coordination of thematic working groups, a local MSF, a local action plan (LAP), a local POC on open data and OGP methodology, an open repository and a self-assessment mechanism. In addition, we would like to learn from the other cities involved in the process, while we hope to be able to help other cities based on our own experience.

Contribution

While our non-guvernamental OGP experts are participating in advocating the OGP at the national level starting with 2013, we know that "Sharing is caring". In this respect, we hope that OGP Local 2020 will give us the opportunity to exercise both roles, as a mentee and a mentor as we hope that this journey will give us the opportunity to later share the OGP knowledge with other cities and become a member of the larger OGP network.

Looking forward for a fruitful participation in the OGP Local program 2020!

Nicolae Robu
Mayor

Supporters

Dominic Fritz Mayor to be		Silviu Vert Open Data Expert, Politehnica University of Timișoara	
Larisa Barac OGP POC Romania Secretariat-General of the Government		Costin Bleotu Data Portal Tech Lead, Code for Romania	
Simona Neumann CEO, TM ECoC 2021 Association		Mihai Lisetchi OGP Expert, AID-ONG	
Radu Ticiu STEM education facilitator, CoderDojo		Dan Bugariu President, Smart City Association	