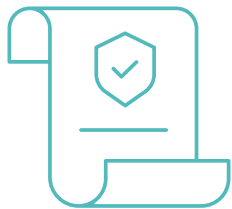




COronavirus Vulnerabilities and INFOrmation  
dynamics Research and Modelling



**Participatory  
practices during  
COVID-19: Research  
findings and policy  
recommendations**

Policy Brief: 10  
October 2023

# Authors

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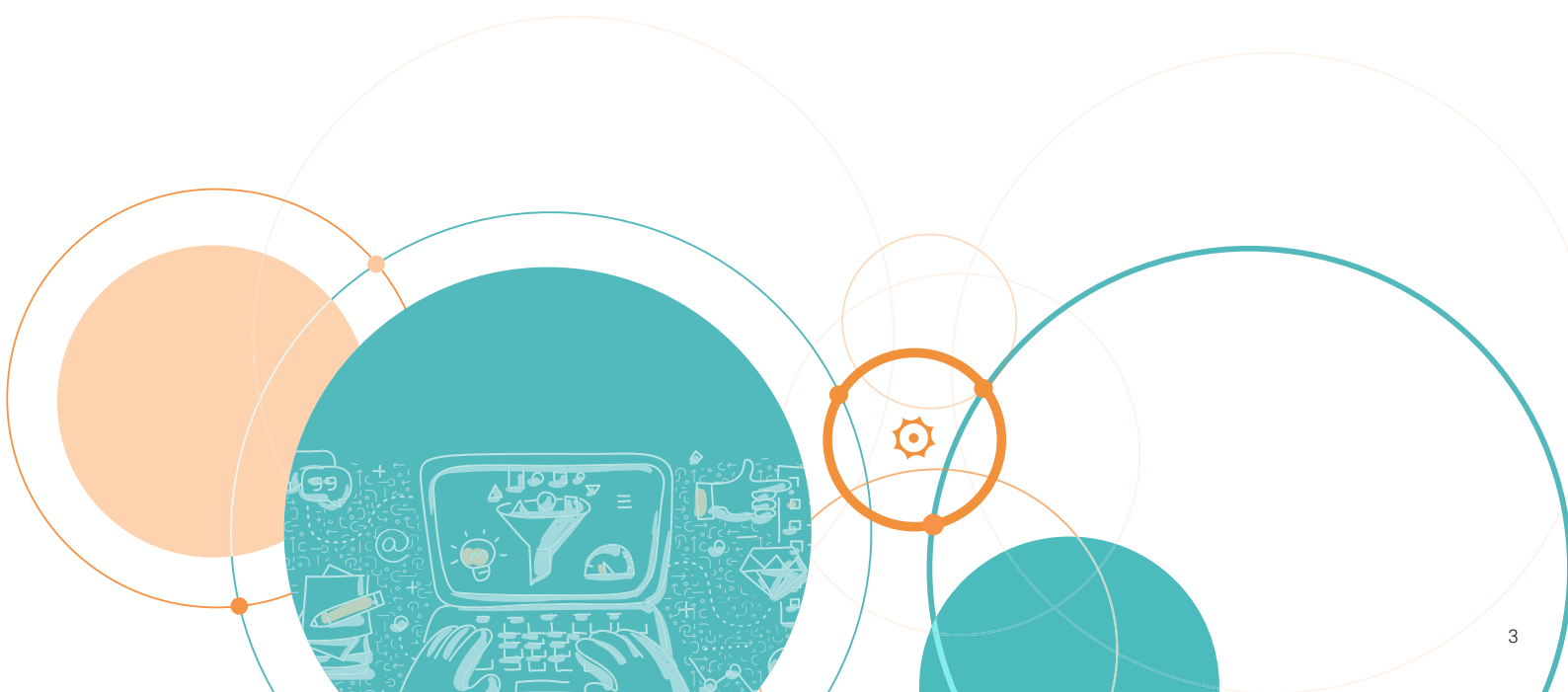
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## Introduction & context

Since its emergence in December 2019, COVID-19 has had far-reaching consequences for societies around the globe. These consequences go beyond physical health, and include economic distress, mental health issues, domestic violence, and disruptions of family and community systems and relationships. Throughout the pandemic, non-governmental actors played key roles in addressing these consequences. This includes not only established non-governmental organisations, but also self-organised groups working on the grassroots level, as well as millions of ordinary people willing to volunteer their time and resources. Drawing on the COVINFORM project's research on civil society responses to the pandemic, this white paper offers insight into participatory practices, defined broadly as practices that , i.e., practices in which 'ordinary people' played an active and substantial role. It concludes with recommendations for policymakers on the local level on:

- 1) Supporting self-organised groups and CSOs that are motivated to help respond to a crisis
- 2) Aligning participatory practices with governmental responses, and nudging them to fill gaps
- 3) Leveraging participatory practices to strengthen communities

The white paper concludes with suggested directions for future research and cooperation between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in crisis management.

## Context and objectives

Research conducted within the COVINFORM project has made it clear that public perceptions of and reactions to COVID-19 response measures are critical to their success or failure. This applies across domains, to measures taken by governmental and civil society organisations alike. The baseline reaction required of the public is compliance with regulations and recommended protective behaviours; however, throughout the pandemic, instances can be found of ordinary residents going well beyond this baseline. Residents have not only actively supported

governmental and civil society responses through advocacy and volunteering, but also organised new initiatives on a grassroots level. This white paper explores the role of resident participation in COVID-19 response measures. Specifically, it examines participatory practices initiated by governmental organisations (GOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and residents themselves, drawing conclusions and making recommendations for how such practices can be leveraged in the management of future crises.

## Methodology

This whitepaper draws on **desk research and interviews** conducted by the COVINFORM consortium in 2022. Its aim is to provide detailed insights into participatory practices, i.e., practices in which ‘ordinary people’ played an active and substantial role. This broad category includes both ‘formal’ or ‘informal’ practices initiated by self-organised groups of residents, established or new CSOs, local or national authorities, or any combination of these and/or other actors. Partners were asked to search for such practices in their countries in general and their target municipalities in specific. Partners were provided with a selection of examples for inspiration, as well as websites on which to search; they were also provided with suggested search terms to use on Google, social media platforms, the websites of local media outlets, etc. The search process was discussed in regular COVINFORM consortium calls.

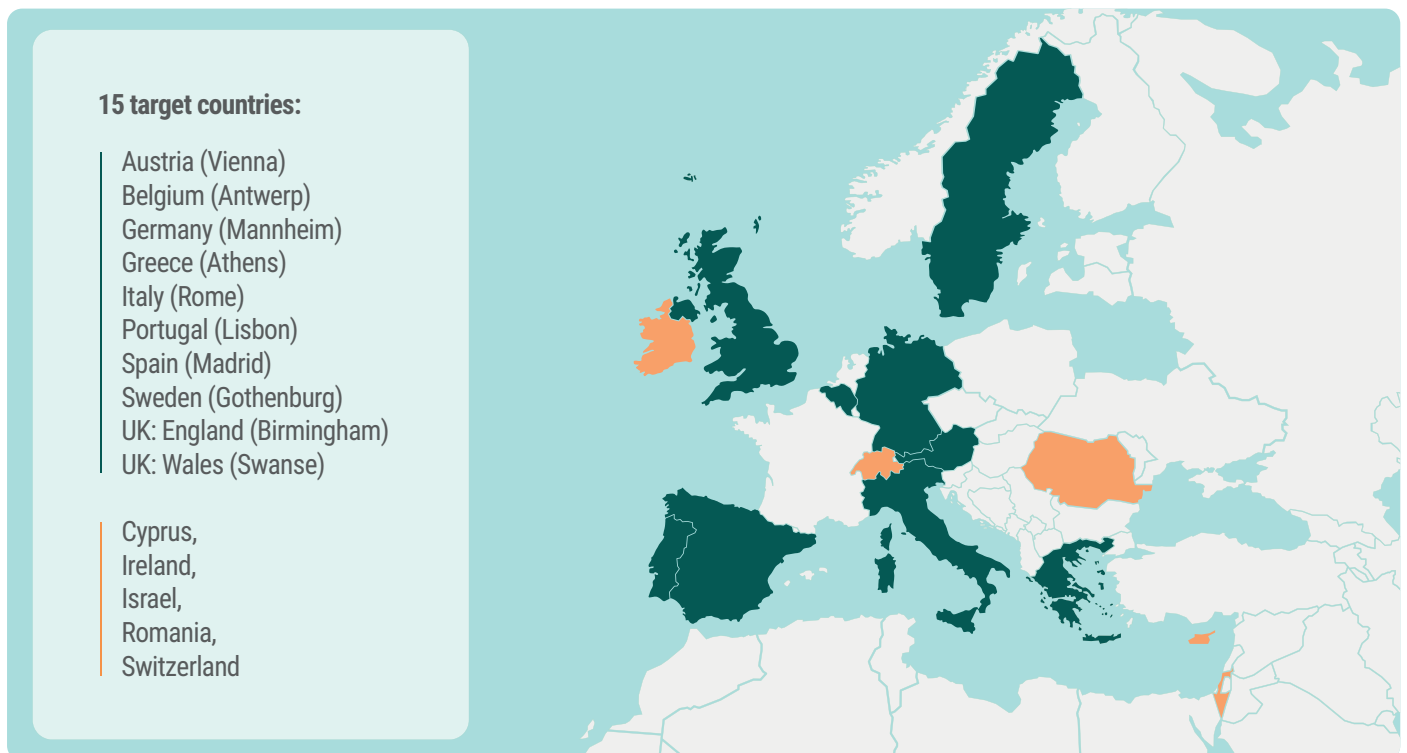


Figure 1. The COVINFORM research sites (empirical research: green; desk research only: orange)

The identified participatory practices were then systematised and analysed, building on Falanga’s (2020) previous review of participatory practices related to COVID-19 (in which N=58 practices in the same number of European cities were identified). The search and analysis strategy utilised during the COVINFORM project differed in several ways from the strategy used by Falanga: e.g., it was limited to the COVINFORM target countries and cities, but more than one practice was collected per site; it was not limited to the English language; and it was not limited to practices that had been registered on particular websites/platforms, but rather, took into account practices written about in local media, suggested by governmental and civil society organisation representatives interviewed during the project, discovered through Google and social media platform searches, etc.

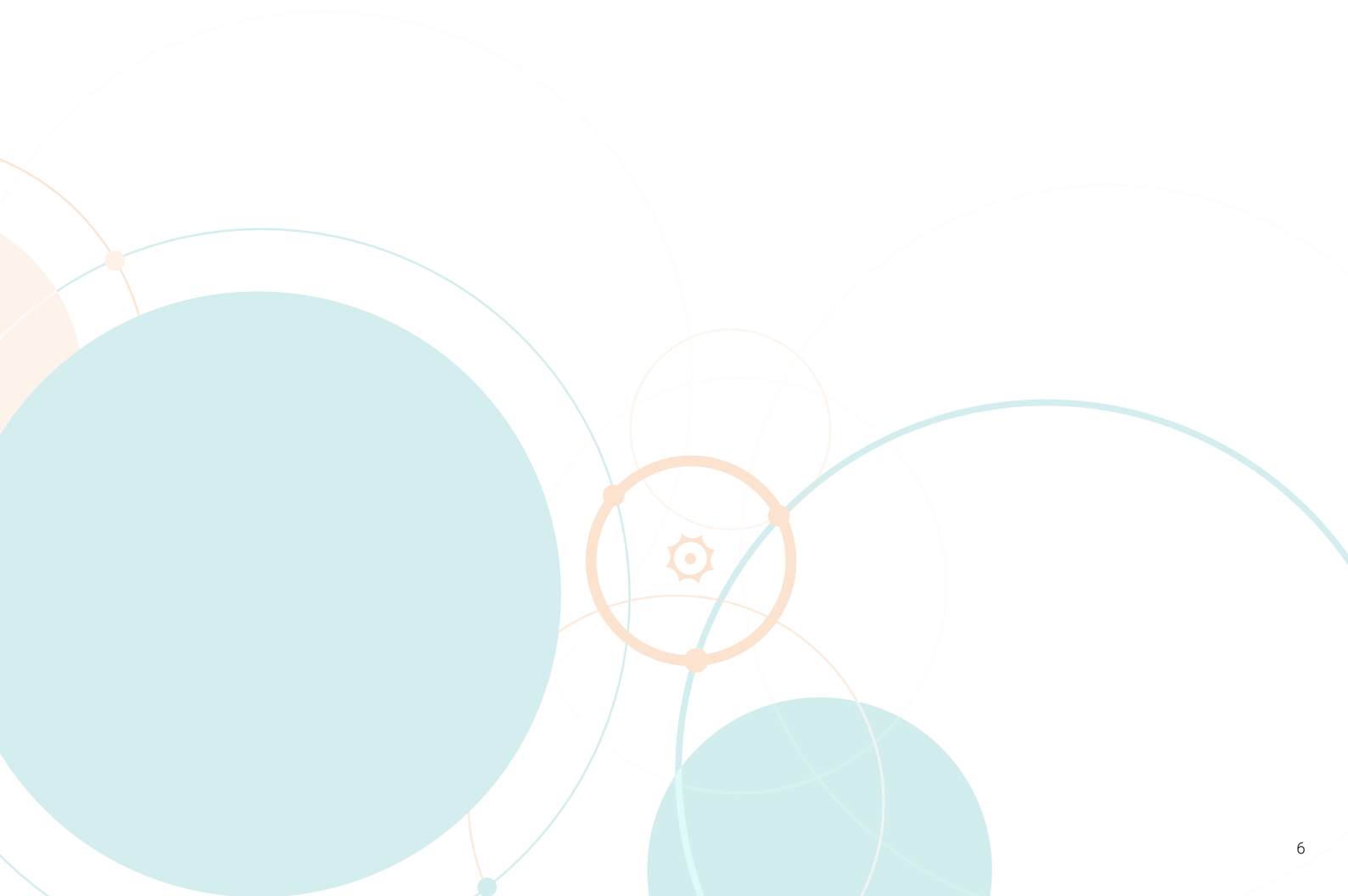
# Key message (Research and Analysis)

## Participatory practices in European COVID-19 responses

As a result of the broad search scope, a large number of participatory practices were identified (N=150). Based in part on Falanga, the collected practices were coded using the following dimensions:

- **Actors involved:** authorities, CSOs, IGOs, private sector, self-organised groups of residents, individual residents
- **Channel:** in the field, online
- **Timeframe:** short, medium, long
- **Scope:** economic/material support, health support, information/communication support, psychological support, social/other kinds of support, multiple kinds of support
- **Topical keywords:** arts & culture, co-creation & innovation, donation, environmental issues, gamification, gender issues, hashtag campaigns, hotlines, language/integration, multimedia, platforms & networks, policy work, solidarity, volunteering, vulnerable groups

Practices observed in the target countries varied widely on all of these dimensions, reflecting local contexts, the priorities of the actors involved, and the needs of groups addressed. Some examples follow, which establish a foundation for learnings and recommendations. Quotes from interviews conducted with low-socioeconomic-status women in the COVINFORM target cities are also included – while the interviewees did not necessarily participate in the example practices themselves, they did benefit from similar types of activities.



## Actors involved

The majority of practices identified by Falanga were sponsored by public authorities, with only a few under the direction of civil society stakeholders (2020, p. 6). In this regard, the present sample is significantly more diverse: 65 practices involved CSOs, 51 involved GOs, 4 involved IGOs, 14 involved the private sector, 62 were initiated by self-organised groups, and 51 prominently featured individual volunteers. As per the definition, all practices collected involved ordinary residents in some capacity or another, either as initiators or participants. Notably, nearly all of the practices involved multiple stakeholder groups, which interacted in a range of different configurations:

Lead	Characteristics	Examples
GOs	<b>Participation</b> by individual residents	<a href="#">Sensi ambassadeurs</a> , Belgium: The City of Antwerp recruited and promoted community ambassadors to fight misinformation about COVID-19.
GOs	<b>Participation</b> by CSOs/private sector organisations, and individual residents	<a href="#">The Community Call</a> , Ireland: Initiated by national-level bodies established to manage the pandemic; reached and mobilised individuals and groups of residents with the help of local GOs and CSOs.
IGOs	<b>Participation</b> by individual volunteers	<a href="#">UNHCR</a> initiative to engage refugee volunteers, Cyprus: An initiative to recruit refugees to provide accurate COVID-19 information to their communities and support them in facing the new challenges brought on by the pandemic.
CSOs/ private sector organisations	<b>Participation</b> by individual residents	<a href="#">Nebenan.de</a> , Germany: A mutual aid portal by the private company Good Hood GmbH that connects residents seeking and offering mutual aid.
Self-organised groups of residents	<b>Formal support</b> from GOs and/or CSOs/private sector organisations	<a href="#">Antwerpen helpt</a> , Belgium: Initiated by a network of self-organised groups but supported by the City of Antwerp. (GO-supported residents' initiative).
Self-organised groups of residents	<b>Informal support</b> from GOs and/or CSOs/private sector organisations	<a href="#">#YoTeAyudoConLaBasura</a> , Spain: Initiated by university students and promoted – but not financially supported – by the City of Madrid.
Self-organised groups of residents	Positioned as a <b>supplement</b> to GO/CSO responses	<a href="#">@caixa.solidaria</a> , Portugal, or <a href="#">Rețeaua 2.0</a> , Romania: Examples are the numerous resident-led Facebook support groups found in most target countries.
Self-organised groups of residents	Positioned as a <b>critical alternative</b> to GO/CSO responses	<a href="#">Kropotkin-19</a> , Greece: Aggregated a range of mutual aid activities organised by left-wing/anti-authoritarian collectives in Athens.

In several cases, the stakeholder configuration of a given practice evolved over time. [QuanranTeen](#) in Germany and [Antwerpen helpt](#) in Belgium, for instance, were initiated at a grassroots level, but were then ‘picked up’ and institutionalised by established civil society and/or governmental organisations. Institutionalisation can support the sustainability of a given initiative by providing access to dependable funding and the capacity to pivot and/or scale in response to changing circumstances.

## Channel

Numerous online, face-to-face, and mixed-mode practices were identified: of the N=150 practices, 28 were conducted exclusively face-to-face, 65 exclusively online, 1 exclusively by telephone, and 56 over multiple channels. Here, the phase of the pandemic and corresponding regulatory measures had a decisive impact. Under heavy social contact restrictions, most practices were exclusively online (e.g., numerous mutual aid platforms and Facebook groups), with only a few taking place exclusively in the field (e.g., the [Gabenzaun](#) initiative in Germany). As social contact restrictions were relaxed, mixed-mode activities became the norm.

## Timeframe

The majority of practices collected by Falanga in Q4 2020 focused on short-term goals, i.e., “immediate responses aimed at curbing contagion, scaling medical treatments and care, and providing safety nets to the most vulnerable” (2020, p.4). As our collection of practices extended nearly throughout the pandemic, we adopted the following timeframe definitions:

- **Short-term:** designed to have an impact during a particular time period within the pandemic, but not necessarily until its end. Examples are hashtag campaigns encouraging compliance with specific regulations (e.g., [#IoRestoACasa](#) in Italy), initiatives to assist with everyday tasks during lockdowns, such as grocery shopping or walking the dog (e.g., [Solidarité 1080 Solidariteit](#) in Belgium), and mobile testing or vaccination centres. Many of these initiatives appear to have been set up very rapidly to respond to urgent needs, and then allowed to phase out on their own rather than sustained once the need became less relevant.

*“[Nonna Roma](#) used to bring the groceries home [for me while I was in quarantine].” (Resident\_Interview\_4\_IT)*

*“[There was] a vaccination bus. And that was no problem at all. No waiting times, no hours of waiting. And so I did the whole three vaccinations.” (Resident\_Interview\_3\_DE)*

- **Medium-term:** designed to have an impact throughout the pandemic. Examples are community pantries, umbrella campaigns to support and fund numerous small projects and interventions (e.g. [Community Call](#) in Ireland), and practices to boost sociotechnical innovation in response to the crisis (e.g. [Hack the Crisis](#) worldwide).

*“There was a neighbourhood association that came and brought packages three times [throughout the pandemic].” (Resident\_Interview\_1\_IT)*

*“I was helped by City Hall, and by people here at the dispensary. They gave us hygiene products, food, everything they could.” (Resident\_Interview\_11\_RO)*



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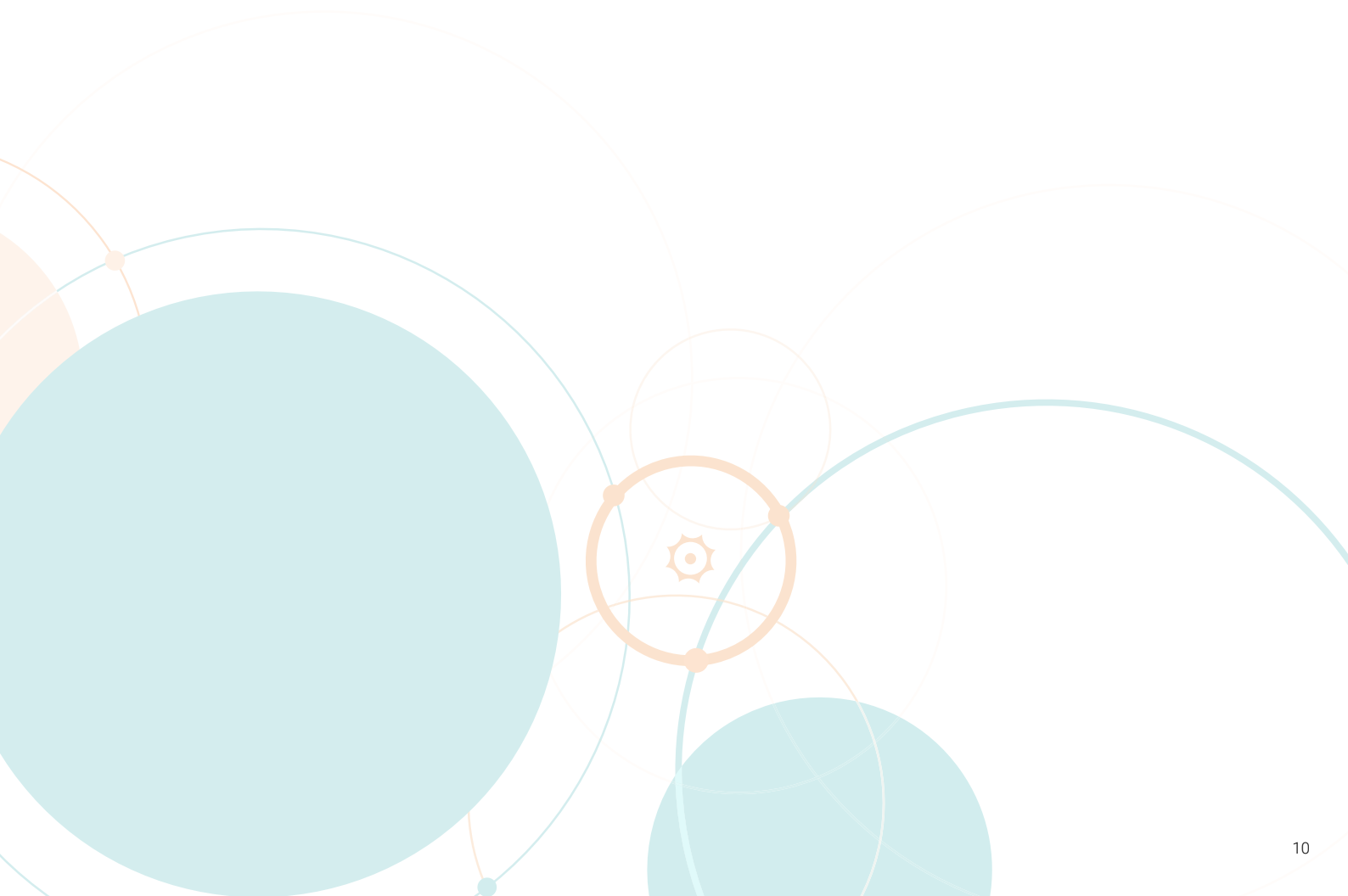
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## Recommendations on leveraging participatory practices

Many of the participatory practices described above can be identified as promising, insofar as they:

- Addressed critical needs that may otherwise have gone unmet;
- Offered supplements and/or alternatives to governmental services;
- Reduced barriers to material and informational support; and
- Mitigated unintended consequences and trade-offs of disruptive policy responses.

The exceptional character of the COVID-19 pandemic as a global crisis that impacted nearly every aspect of life for all members of society made it fertile ground for the emergence of participatory practices – as well as a unique opportunity to study the dynamics of such practices. Based on a careful review of the practices identified by the consortium, the following recommendations can be given to local governments to better support resident participation in responses to future crises.



# Recommendation 1



## Establish infrastructures that expedite participatory crisis responses

While many of the participatory practices observed in our research were fast to emerge, they did rely on existing infrastructures and resources. Three key domains here are digital, fiscal, and institutional infrastructure. Examples follow of ways in which local policymakers can work in these areas to improve the conditions for the creation of participatory practices.

### BROADEN DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURES

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, with reoccurring lockdowns and social contact restrictions, digital access within a local population was decisive for many initiatives' success. A large number of campaigns existed purely online, such as the numerous hashtag campaigns that aimed to increase compliance with regulations, (e.g., [#IoRestoACasa](#) in Italy), online communities connecting people with a specific purpose (e.g., the [Sky over Corona](#) in Switzerland), or campaigns offering virtual spaces for socialisation under contact restrictions (e.g., the virtual [Plaudertischerl](#) in Austria). Other initiatives used the internet, and social media in particular, as the best available channel to recruit volunteers to help with day-to-day chores (e.g., [Solidarité 1080 Solidariteit](#) in Belgium) or collect funds or goods for people in need (e.g., [@caixa.solidaria](#) in Portugal). In order to improve digital access, three points are particularly important:

- 1) **Broadband internet** needs to be available, even in rural areas, and affordable to people in vulnerable communities. Other than investments into the digital infrastructure in a region or municipality, local governments could offer subsidies during times of crises such as COVID-19, to help people afford mobile internet. A practical example could be cheap or free phone credits.

*"I mean, everything now goes online and yet here we don't even have internet, just the wifi that there is or the phone coverage, which is not everywhere. They put up an antenna that no longer works."* (Resident\_Interview\_5\_ESP)

- 2) People require **hardware to access the internet**. While most Europeans already own smart phones or computers, this might not be the case among vulnerable groups. Offering free access to computers, in geographical proximity to underserved communities, would be an important first step – though this may not suffice during crises that call for social distancing or the closure of public spaces like libraries.

*"I was also a little bit lost because I don't drive, I don't have a computer, I don't use the internet very much. So, well, I was scared but I didn't know very well what possibilities I had."* (Resident\_Interview\_2\_ESP)

- 3) People require the **skills to navigate the internet**, which is not always the case among vulnerable groups. Courses on basic digital literacy could be offered in collective accommodations serving vulnerable groups, such as long-term care facilities, refugee camps, or homeless shelters.

*"No, no, my mother, I always have contact with my mother, yes. I always call her in the morning ... because she's an old woman, she's not so with internet, doesn't work well. She doesn't know how to do it."* (Resident\_Interview\_7\_DE)

Finally, not only residents but also self-organised initiatives and newly-established CSOs can also often benefit from subsidised internet, hardware, digital capacity building, and technical assistance.

## DEEPEN FISCAL INFRASTRUCTURES

A number of participatory practices benefitted from access to financial resources, either through government funding or networking initiatives. Access to financial resources can significantly improve the impact of a campaign: e.g., [Antwerpen helpt](#) in Belgium, which was initiated by a network of self-organised groups but supported by the City of Antwerp. Providing matching grants can encourage self-organised groups and civil society organisations to raise their own funds in parallel, thus helping ensure that they remain sustainable. Additional strategies that local governments can consider when planning such support include:

- 1) Creating **extraordinary funding frameworks** that address specific societal crises and/or vulnerable populations or sectors, with reduced bureaucratic barriers to submission.  
*“OCMW paid extra and gave financial support during Corona for me and my son.” (Resident\_Interview\_8\_BLG)*
- 2) Using **participatory budgeting processes** – either via town hall meetings or dedicated online tools (e.g., <https://pbstanford.org/>) – to give CSOs and residents a say in how grants are allocated, and a sense of ownership in the impacts.  
*“I would say, if something like that happens again, definitely the honesty of our politicians, and also really tell us what can happen, what does it look like, what do you think, what measures can we take, that give the people themselves a chance to say.” (Resident\_Interview\_8\_DE)*

By thinking of extraordinary funding frameworks in a strategic way, governments can spin specific crises as windows of opportunity to foster the emergence of good practices within civil society, which can then continue to serve community needs after the original crisis has passed. Another Antwerp-based initiative that exemplifies this is a neighbourhood restaurant founded by the cultural centre ['t Werkhuys](#), which was funded by the municipality to offer take-away meals for three euros during the period of lockdown; this initiative made such an impact that the municipality eventually decided to award it longer-term funding.

Consider also offering informal support, such as endorsements or promotions. A positive example is [#YoTeAyudoConLaBasura](#) in Spain, a student initiative to help neighbours deal with their rubbish during lockdowns, which was promoted but not funded by the local government. Even without making financial contributions, official recognition helped provide this campaign with credibility among its target group of primarily older residents.

## STREAMLINE INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURES

In addition to desk research on participatory practices, the COVINFORM project conducted empirical research with N=50 representatives of civil society organisations throughout Europe. A frequent finding was that although local governments did their best to cooperate with and support CSOs during the pandemic, institutional structures and bureaucratic procedures that could be burdensome even under normal conditions became crippling during the pandemic. Measures to improve the crisis-readiness of institutional infrastructures include:

- 1) Establishing (and clearly advertising) a **single contact point for CSOs** and self-organised groups that seek to assist in crisis responses. Functions of such a contact point could include providing up-to-date information on the crisis itself, current response measures, and measures planned for the near future; promoting good practices from prior crises and providing consultation on how to help; and assisting with access to funding, technical support, and other services.  
*“Yes, you know information that we got from the beginning, also with my language, I'm Persian. I got a lot of information. I know, and my children, everyone knows about it. But sometimes people don't believe it's dangerous. They don't vaccinate, they don't do anything.” (Resident\_Interview\_6\_SE)*

- 2) **Waiving bureaucratic hurdles** for projects that could help address critical needs. Under normal conditions, good reasons often exist for approval processes that can strike CSOs as complex; the same holds true for funding applications, restrictions and regulations on operations, etc. However, during societal crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, consideration should be given to streamlining processes and relaxing regulations, especially in cases where civil society actors are well-positioned to help mitigate threats to vulnerable groups.

*“I have not received any help from the government. It's all been on a private level [...] I am happy with the people I know, not with the government. The government, do you think that man is going to know how we are in every house? Well, nothing, it is impossible. They are doing their own thing, to generate the rules and we obey. And the government doesn't care if I pay for the electricity or not.”* (Resident\_Interview\_6\_ESP)

- 3) **Fostering a culture of participation**, cooperation, and trust during non-crisis periods. Regularly working with CSOs during non-“hot” phases sets a precedent for smooth cooperation during crises. Establishing a network of trust could also help authorities share information more effectively and make lower-risk decisions when it comes to relaxing bureaucratic procedures or regulations on CSO activity. With regard to the general population, a number of municipalities have integrated participatory practices into normal governance; normalizing such practices could help set the stage for smoother information-sharing and increased resident participation in crisis responses.

*“And in my job, I am not a health worker, but I work in a healthcare organization, and through the health workers, with whom I was also working throughout the pandemic, they were informing me about what they were also learning about the disease in dribs and drabs, because they were also unaware of it.”* (Resident\_Interview\_1\_DE)

Finally, it is important to allow for an environment in which opposing viewpoints are not silenced. Several of the participatory practices identified were critical of public authorities and/or policies (e.g. [#vägrasänkahygienkraven](#) in Sweden, drawing attention to hygiene deficiencies in hospitals); as long as such criticism is constructive and does not verge into the domain of mis- or disinformation, it must be respected as part of democratic governance and taken seriously as a potential corrective.





## Recommendation 2

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### Empower a spectrum of practices, from those directly sponsored by government to those that are fully autonomous

The participatory practices identified varied greatly in their positioning vis-à-vis local governments: some were co-sponsored by municipalities and/or aligned closely with governmental responses; others were fully autonomous; and still others fell somewhere in between. Depending on context, all of these modes of participatory practice could make unique contributions to a robust crisis response. The COVINFORM research suggests that trying to align all of the activities taken by various stakeholders under a single (governmental) strategic programme would be a mistake; but so would letting civil society actors fend for themselves.

A more nuanced approach would be to monitor the spectrum of participatory practices that emerge in a given locale, identifying:

- Those that could benefit from **direct sponsorship** by government;
- Those that can fill gaps in governmental measures in a **loosely aligned** way; and
- Those that work best when given **full autonomy**.

Examples identified during the COVINFORM research provide hints as to how local policymakers can play to the advantages of each of these types.

#### DIRECTLY SPONSOR DIVERSE INITIATIVES UNDER UMBRELLA PROGRAMMES

Examples of participatory practices **co-sponsored by governmental organisations** included those organised under umbrella programmes, for instance the Irish government's [Community Call](#) programme and UK-based Eden Project Communities' [Community Action Response](#) programme. Such umbrella programmes can provide a fitting home for initiatives that are smaller than would warrant a permanent staff or institutional presence, and/or initiatives that target areas of life not covered by core social welfare systems. Ireland offers a rich set of good practices here: for instance, the [Community Call](#) programme helped coordinate and promote online crafting resources, among many other activities; [Let's Play Ireland](#) initiative offered online resources for storytelling and play; the [Bloom at Home](#) event encouraged home gardening; and the #IrelandPerforms hashtag served as a virtual home for musicians giving concerts via social media.

Microgrant schemes offer a proven way to foster a diverse range of aligned, yet independent projects. A good example is a microgrant programme organised by the [Swansea Council for Voluntary Services \(CVS\)](#) in Wales, an umbrella organisation for civil society groups. Participatory practices funded and coordinated under the programme include a food bank, a food and medication delivery service, an initiative to purchase defibrillators, informational and other support services for migrants and international students, and digital capacity building for the local branch of the National Autistic Society.

## IMPROVE COORDINATION WITH INDEPENDENT CSO-LED INITIATIVES

A number of participatory practices **supplemented governmental responses**, without direct support or coordination. For instance, during the first phase of the pandemic, when established public sector services were often overtaxed and access was often limited, participatory practices were often spun up quickly by self-organised groups of residents and/or CSOs as stopgap measures. The most common examples were initiatives to provide basic goods or services to those in need (e.g., [Despensa Solidária](#) in Portugal and [Despensas de Comida Solidaria](#) in Spain; [Gabenzaun](#) in Germany; grocery shopping services worldwide).

However, initiatives with more complex aims also emerged: for instance, [Coronavirus Makers](#) in Spain and [Sjukvårdsutbildning för SAS](#) Personnel in Sweden, which sought to help fill material and human resource gaps in public health systems, respectively. Such practices benefitted from the agility and initiative that characterise self-organisation. Their success demonstrates how it is possible, during a crisis that overwhelms formal support structures, for government to “delegate” certain responsibilities to civil society. This proved especially valuable when policy measures themselves brought on unintended negative consequences: for instance, a number of participatory practices were initiated to mitigate the psychosocial impact of lockdowns on adults (e.g., [Plaudertischerl](#) in Austria, [Coronababbels](#) in Belgium) and children (e.g., [Let's Play Ireland](#) and [Kids Hack the Crisis](#)).

However, such practices also reveal gaps in governmental responses. Civil society organisation representatives interviewed in the COVINFORM project often indicated that their local governments did not seem well-aware of their actions or capacities, and sometimes did not adequately leverage these capacities. For instance, Magen David Adom in Israel noted that its wide volunteer network, which enjoys trust among vulnerable persons and groups, could have been used as a vector for health communication, but did not have access to appropriate materials (Edwards, 2023a, b). As mentioned above, governments could work to avoid such shortcomings in the future by proactively building relationships with CSOs and setting up single contact points for participatory practices during crises. This could enable a needs-based assessment of what degree of coordination with governmental organisations would best benefit each participatory initiative.

## ALLOW SPACE FOR INTENTIONALLY AUTONOMOUS PRACTICES

A minority of the practices identified were **intentionally autonomous from government** organisations or responses. Examples included initiatives with a socio-politically critical stance, such as [Kropotkin-19](#), organised by left-wing groups in the Exarcheia neighbourhood of Athens. This initiative was active in collecting food and medicine, whilst also providing social, psychological, and legal support to vulnerable groups such as refugees and other migrants. In cases in which an initiative's perceived autonomy is fundamental to its credibility and character, refraining from interference is perhaps the most appropriate response from local authorities. The existence of such initiatives could help maintain alternative and parallel pathways to support for population groups without a high level of trust in government, such as street people or undocumented migrants.

It is also possible that governments can learn from autonomous initiatives such as these to better prepare for future crises. COVID-19 can be seen as a ‘laboratory’ environment, in which many actors tried different strategies to address a common set of problems. Local policymakers would be well-advised to review the full range of actors and strategies within their municipality and beyond, identify gaps in their own responses, and take steps to close these gaps in preparation for a future pandemic.

Needless to say, a policy of non-interference with fully autonomous initiatives must have its limits. In the process of monitoring and learning from such initiatives, authorities must keep track of the kinds of information and support they provide. For instance, if the constructive criticism of governmental responses slides into spreading mis- or disinformation, then interventions are called for.

## Recommendation 3



### Use participatory practices to leverage existing networks

By definition, all of the identified participatory practices involved ordinary residents in significant ways. The majority entailed cooperation between core groups of organisers, wider circles of volunteers, and civil society organisations or other institutional partners or sponsors. Many furthermore focused on particular **“communities” – i.e., groups that share something in common.** This included:

- On-site aid initiatives that aided populations that share a physical location (e.g., [Despensa Solidária](#) in Portugal; [Despensas de Comida Solidaria](#) in Spain; [Gabenzaun](#) in Germany; [#VorreiRestareACasa](#) in Rome).
- Target-group-specific engagement drives that focused on populations that share a culture and language (e.g., [UNHCR](#) engagement with refugee volunteers in Cyprus).
- Solidarity and mutual aid initiatives organised by groups that share political beliefs and practices (e.g., [Kropotkin-19](#) organised by the leftist scene in Athens).

Regardless of whether they are geographically or non-geographically based, such communities are characterised by shared social networks and bonds of trust. These factors are multipliers that can enhance the efficacy of crisis responses. Civil society organisation representatives interviewed in the COVINFORM project often indicated that their target groups relied strongly on their own social networks for information during the pandemic, as well as for material and social support (Edwards, 2022). Fostering participatory practices could open up avenues of access to such networks for crisis responders. However, where communities with historically low trust in government are concerned, civil society organisers or self-organised groups of residents might prove more effective initiators than public authorities (indeed, in some cases, any explicit connection to government could be a disincentive to participate). Consultation with individuals and organisations that have already established trust within a given target community could assist public authorities in determining what types of support and levels of involvement are most appropriate.



## Conclusion

No crisis response can succeed if it is rejected by the populations that it targets. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how difficult it can be to achieve compliance with certain types of response measures. However, the pandemic has also offered numerous examples of residents going well beyond mere compliance, and actively contributing to responses locally and worldwide. This white paper focuses on inspiring examples of participatory practices organized by residents of the COVINFORM project target countries, as well as initiatives founded by civil society and governmental organisations that involved ordinary residents in extraordinary ways. Such practices often emerged in the heat of the moment, and thus relied heavily on existing physical, digital, fiscal, and institutional infrastructures. Local policymakers can facilitate the emergence of

effective participatory responses to future crises by prioritising improvements in these domains. The relationships between governmental organisations and participatory practices in the target countries varied greatly: some practices were sponsored by GOs, some were loosely aligned with governmental responses, and some were determinately autonomous. All three models can contribute in unique ways to a holistic crisis response: trying to centralise all resident-led initiatives under a single governmental umbrella is not advisable, but neither is leaving civil society unsupported. By working with diverse communities on their own terms, while ensuring they have access to adequate infrastructure, policymakers can help motivate these communities to leverage their resources and networks in mutually beneficial ways.



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# The COVINFORM project

<b>Acronym</b>	COVINFORM
<b>Title</b>	COronavirus Vulnerabilities and INFOrmation dynamics Research and Modelling
<b>Coordinator</b>	SYNYO GmbH
<b>Reference</b>	101016247
<b>Type</b>	Research and Innovation Action (RIA)
<b>Programme</b>	HORIZON 2020
<b>Topic</b>	SC1-PHE-CORONAVIRUS-2020-2C Behavioural, social and economic impacts of the outbreak response
<b>Start</b>	01 November 2020
<b>Duration</b>	36 months

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