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Citizen Participation in Decision Making Processes in Croatian Local Government Units

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Abstract-The structured dialogue is a powerful form of communication between citizens and decision makers in the local government units (LGUs). Present state analysis shows that the leaders of municipalities and cities are generally not open to the implementation of a structured dialogue, and that citizens are also not too interested for that process, because they do not believe they can make a difference. However, a literature review and analysis of the implementation of projects structured dialogue through the Youth in Action and Erasmus + programs indicates that there are success stories and examples of good practice in this area. These examples come also from the "neighbourhood", from small LGUs, not necessarily from highly developed countries or just from the big cities; but the number of those examples is low. This paper proposes a methodology for increasing the level of structured dialogue in fields of different social issues in small local government units in Croatia (or other LGU with similar characteristics outside Croatia). The methodology is based on the Deming cycle and Balanced scorecard (BSC). The methodology defines what actions need to be taken in order to come up with a solution to social problems in a LGU. To evaluate proposed methodology, it was applied to 5 LGUs. A prerequisite for the application of the methodology is the existence of the will and motivation of both parties (LGU and citizens) to work together on social issues. The paper proposes a brief question mark that can be used to quickly identify the readiness of local government to implement such a methodology.

Keywords- *structured dialogue, decision making, citizens, local government units, methodology for increasing structured dialogue level*

I. INTRODUCTION

For the development of some place, city or municipality, it is certainly important to have a good communication between decision-makers (mayors) and citizens: (1) decision makers are well informed about the situation on the ground and according to that situation they can make adequate decisions, and (2) on the other hand, citizens are informed about the work of the city or municipal administration and propose solutions to the problems, i.e. participate in policy-making.

European Commission introduced term *structured dialogue* in 2005 [1]. Structure dialogue is as a process through which public bodies (on local, regional, national and European level) ask the citizens and consult with them on various important topics [2]. This dialogue encompasses not only the youth and decision makers who discuss certain topics but also different institutions, organizations, associations, groups, experts, and individuals. According to a report of the European Youth Forum, the highest non-governmental youth body in Europe, the structured dialogue in Europe is defined through: (1) National Working Groups consisting of representatives from National Youth Council(s), the ministry in charge of youth affairs; (2) national agencies that lead Youth in Action program and conduct consultations with the young people and policy makers at national, and, whenever possible, local and regional levels; and (3) European Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from European Commission, the Trio presidency and the European Youth Forum that compiles the reports, including inputs from national working groups, international non-governmental youth organizations and other international partners, into one or more background documents intended for an EU Youth Conference [3].

Although these bodies define how structured dialogue should be carried out (strategic view), problems arise at a local (operational) level where the structured dialogue is implemented through youth councils, local governments units, non-governmental organizations, and institutions. Implementation of the structured dialogue in local government units is often hampered by the fact that there are no youth experts who could direct the decision makers in the right path of action. One research on a local level found that the decision makers do not even know what is a structured dialogue [4]. Eurodesk and Agency for Mobility and EU Programs conducted a survey on how the structured dialogue is put into practice in Croatia [1]. Because the survey included various groups (not only on a local level), the results were somewhat better.

The focus of this paper refers to the structured dialogue with citizens at the local level, i.e. the consultations carried out between decision-makers in a local government unit (LGU) and citizens (including young people). Citizens can be organized through various forms of associations, act independently or through some institutions and organizations. The aim is to analyze the existing problems in communication between decision-makers and citizens and to determine how it can be improved. In this direction, methodology for increasing

the level of structured dialogue, that contains some of the basic economic methods that can be easily put into practice by citizens and decision makers, will be proposed. A prerequisite for the application of the methodology is the existence of motivation and a desire of both sides in decision making process, to increase structured dialogue in a local government unit.

II. State of the Art: Structured Dialogue

Now we bring an overview about previous researcher in scientific and professional literature related to structured dialogue and inclusion of citizens in policy making. Authors of the paper [5] explored the possibilities of a structured dialogue between Turkish and Greek communities in Cyprus. Using the Structured Dialogic Design Process, they proposed 27 options (for establishing dialogue) and developed an influence map. A structured dialogue can also be achieved through volunteering on different projects in local governments. Survey [6] explored the role of local government agencies in attracting and managing volunteers. Youth councils, for the most part funded by adults, can significantly contribute to local communities. The paper [7] describes the successes and perceived challenges of youth councils. NGOs and LGUs can efficiently collaborate and successfully deal with employment problems. NGOs play an active role in the implementation of the ALMPs in Finland and Sweden by (1) employing the long-term unemployed; (2) providing social services, mobilizing local resources and undertaking other types of activities that create jobs for the unemployed; and (3) providing voluntary work to volunteers – some of whom acquire skills that can help find a job in the open labor market [8]. Engbers investigated the characteristics of the most civic cities in the US and concluded that institutional factors unite cities with the highest levels of participation. These include a strong corporate presence, mobilization mechanisms, strong community identity, public spaces, good government and investment in youth. In their case, the above mentioned factors were only partially present [9].

Paper [10] describes various classifications, possibilities and uses of ICT in local government administration. In the structure dialogue process, we can identify ICT solutions and their advantages and disadvantages in relation to their benefits, costs, risks, and impacts. Using ICT, LGUs can create a culture of transparency [11]. Planas, Soler, and Vilà proposed an assessment tool – System of Assessment Indicators for Local Government Youth Policies (http://siapjove.udg.edu/), which provides both quantitative and qualitative indicators through which youth policy managers, with relative ease, can obtain assessment reports in 12 possible youth policy areas of assessment [12]. The emergence of social media, mobile technologies, Web 2.0 and the connected government do not play a truly significant role in the quest for e-government individually, but only in combination with other factors as discussed in [13]. In the paper [14] Agostino analyzed 119 Italian municipalities and examined in what way do social media stimulate public engagement. YouTube is used to support public communication and Facebook to support public participation. The Civitas Initiative provides a set of guidelines addressed to cities that want to start building their own social media communication strategy, but could also be useful in cities that already have a social media strategy in place and would like to improve it [15].

Authors of paper [16] dealt with the topic of creating successful public-private partnership model. This topic is very complex because public-private partnership (PPP) model includes different key stakeholders which have conflicted interests. Authors proposed the use of Bayesian network techniques in dealing with the problem. In the paper [17] the risk allocation in public–private partnership projects is discussed. Authors suggested an enhanced multi-objective optimization approach in order to achieve the fair allocation of risk between the PPP projects. The approach is based on knapsack method which is described and solved by applying the genetic algorithm.

Participatory Democracy is a relatively new phenomenon and it is related to including citizens in decision making process about public issues. In paper [18], some examples of such decisions are presented. Communication between citizens and public administration can be implemented by using online tools. Chun and Cho presented the usage of an online tool, Cyber Policy Forum by the Seoul Metropolitan City Government (SMG) in Korea, used for citizen participation in the policy making process. They also suggested some additional features of the software in order to achieve a true citizen-government partnership in policy decision making [19]. Similarly, Insua, Kersten Rios and Grima discussed several mechanisms for participatory democracy and provided a framework for decision support in this area and described decision support functions that could be implemented in such a framework (which has to be implemented as a Web-based group decision support systems) [20]. Authors of paper [21] presented methodology which can be implemented in small and medium local governments units in order to deal with sustainability of energy action plans. Methodology was based on multi criteria decision making approach and Electre III method. It was implemented in the case of municipality in Lombardi region in Italy for the most appropriate strategy (set of activities) to deal with reducing CO_2 emissions.

III. Current State in Croatia

When discussing complex decision problems in the area of public sector in Croatia, there is a lack of complex scientific studies like the ones presented in previous paragraphs of this chapter, but there are examples of implementation of structured dialogue in local government units in Croatia.

Even before entering the EU, the Republic of Croatia participated in the EU program Youth in Action (since 2009, although it was not a full member). Since 2014, Croatia participates in Erasmus+ program. In both of those programs, it was possible to submit a project proposal related to the communication of citizens (young people) and decision makers in order to increase structured dialogue level. In the program Youth in Action, from 2009 to 2013, it was applied and implemented 13 projects in the category of Youth Democracy Projects and 26 projects in the category of Meetings of young

people and decision makers responsible for youth policy [22]. In Erasmus+ (EU program started from 2014), so far it was approved 19 projects in the category of Key activity 3 - Support to policy reforms - Meetings of young people and decision makers in the field of youth (structured dialogue) [23]. This is a total of 58 projects on the topic of structured dialogue at the local level which is much too little because it relates the period of seven years and it covers 428 municipalities in Croatia and 127 cities (where the number of small cities is 90 - population less than 10,000 according to the census of 2011). Since the EU funding is limited, it is impossible to expect that every LGU apply and implement the projects in these programs. In that direction, the methodology proposed in this paper can be helpful to municipalities and small towns if they want to increase the level of structured dialogue.

Besides those 58 projects related to the structured dialogue Youth in action, Erasmus+), there is another one example of cooperation between citizens and decision makers – but only on national level. Croatian government implemented web portal esavjetovanja.gov.hr and so far 846 public consultations were held by using this platform (starting from December 2014) and 86 public consultations are currently open (state in November 2016) [24].

Local and regional government units are trying to follow this national initiative, but mainly without real results. They conduct Internet consultations with citizens to obtain different opinions, proposals and comments of citizens on different documents, i.e. decisions LGU decision makers are planning to make. In most often cases those documents are yearly budgets, LGU strategies (in general, or related to specific topic, such as tourism strategy, youth strategy etc.), regulations and strategic decisions.

However, such consultations are often conducted just because that decision makers can say that they work transparently and are open for public opinions, even though they are not interested for public opinions and do not use them in making final decisions. Situation analysis conducted through interviews with citizens have shown that the municipalities and small cities usually have no intention to accept the ideas and proposals received in the consultations. Often, when analyzing reports of conducted consultations, we can find various illogical explanations (why certain idea/proposal is not accepted) which can be refuted by using very simple arguments. On the other hand, the number of participants in the consultations is also small, mostly less than 10 participants per consultation.

In order to identify most of the reasons for non-application of a structured dialogue in practice, a survey was conducted in 10 local government units in Croatia with hundred participants in research. The participants were decision makers in the LGUs and members of institutions and associations acting in those LGUs. The method of data collection were interviews, panel discussions and surveys.

The reasons for non-application of a structured dialogue in LGU are the following:

- Decision makers are often unaware of the importance of the process of structured dialogue and the potentials (benefits) for community that it brings,
- some decision makers "live in the past", when decisions in such small municipalities and cities were made by using autocratic decision making style,
- some decision makers do not like to other people, especially young people, make suggestions about making decisions,
- some decision makers don't like and don't support various initiatives of the citizens regarding various social issues because they find them as a threat in terms of future elections,
- decision makers are not aware of the responsibility of their position (perception of "power" is not correct: the decision makers do not serve the people but the people have to serve them),
- some decision makers would maybe want something to improve in terms of increasing structured dialogue level, but unfortunately they do not have the knowledge about how to apply the process of structured dialogue and where to start from (and often they are not willing to learn),
- some decision makers do not have sufficient funds in the budget of the local government which would support the activities of citizens, implement youth policy, but at the same time do not have the resources (people or knowledge) to submit projects to the available tenders for civil society which could co-finance such activities.

On the other hand, when we talk about the non-application of a structured dialogue in JLS from the perspective of citizens, the reasons are as follows:

- citizens are also not aware of the structured dialogue as a concept and the potential that it can bring,
- citizens are not motivated for being socially active because they have no sense of contributing to society,
- often, citizens become active when some big problem comes, and then the engagement of citizens turned into a protest, not a dialogue,
- citizens do not want to be active because they have a fear of losing their job or that their family members will lose their jobs (if their activities will not be liked by decision makers, and decision makers often decides about employment in many organizations, institutions in LGU),
- their initiatives often do not support nor closest friends because practice shows that the vast majority of such attempts finish with big disappointment,
- citizens are often forced to leave the place they live (if they want to achieve something, and often only "survive") because most of small cities and municipalities are slowly dying – no jobs, no appropriate politics, no perspective.

Also, although there are examples of good practice in a structured dialogue and they can be well re-implemented, decision makers and citizens often do not know how to re-use or "copy" such examples of good practice in their LGU. They believe that the context of potential applications in their LGU is too much different from the examples of good practice, although this is often not the case.

In addition, the actors in the process of structured dialogue usually do not realize that social problems need to be solved by them, not somebody else. Sometimes they expect a "strange" quick solutions that should happen by itself, without any effort of the main actors in the process of structured dialogue. The reason for this can be found in previous experiences of citizens and decision makers when those quick solution to various problems without a lot of effort happened (they were often based on not-fair political decisions on national level: if decision makers on local level were member of the same political party as decision makers on national level, national decision makers approved projects from LGUs with same-political-party decision makers).

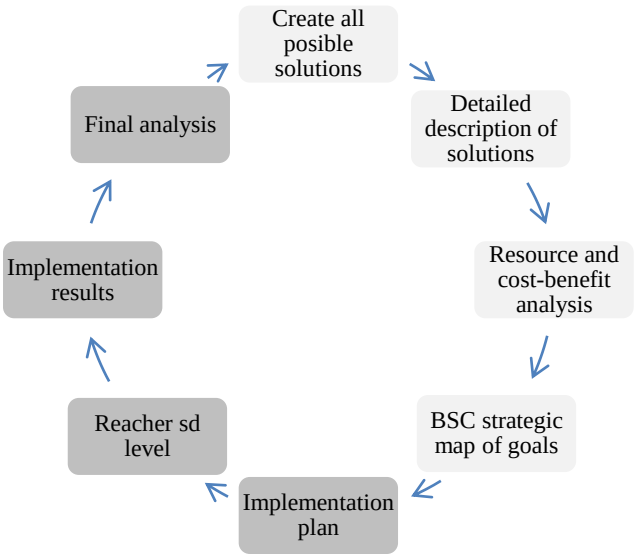


Figure 1. The core of methodology

IV. Methodology for Increasing Structured Dialogue Level

The methodology was created and evaluated as a part of international Erasmus+ project (2014-2-HR01-KA347-012471), and was based on the Deming cycle [19] and BSC (balanced scorecard):

- PLAN: designing or revising business process components in order to improve results
- DO: implementing the plan and measuring its performance
- CHECK: assessing the measurements and reporting the results to the decision makers
- ACT: deciding which changes are needed to improve the process

One of the basis of the methodology is BSC [25], a system for strategic planning and quality management. So, increasing the level of structured dialogue level in certain local government unit has been observed as the strategic objective of that local governments. Our approach as a performance management system uses BSC for non-profit organizations.

In our approach, we applied two Deming cycles: first on a theoretical level (without any application in practice) and then second, on a practical level. Of course, the Deming cycle implies a continuous process, and when the second cycle is completed, a new one can be applied for additional improvement. Our approach uses the not-for-profit BSC as a performance management system [26], [27].

The methodology is presented in Table 1 and the core of methodology is presented in Figure 1.

First PDCA cycle (lighter fill of shapes in Figure 1):

- In the beginning, we had to define a central problem, as well as other related problems. The central problem referred to the existing structured dialogue level, and the related problems were its sources (causes) or consequences (e.g. an LGU has no established youth councils; there is no support for NGOs; citizens do not understand many of the decisions made by the LGU's decision makers, etc.). The following methods and techniques can be used in defining the problems: a problem tree, case study analysis and present state analysis. Also in that phase, possible solutions need to be suggested. In the BSC, that means that we had to set strategic goals we wanted to achieve. Opposites of problems are goals which we want to achieve. Examples of goals are: transparent support for NGO sector, increasing quality of life, helping young people in employment, developing of tourism and many others. After setting the strategic goals, we had to do a SWOT analysis for each goal and pair the identified SWOT elements to create strategies and alternatives, i.e. activities that will help increase the structured dialogue level. Other methods that can help create such activities include brainstorming and case study analysis – good practices from other local government units. Result of this first phase is a list of all possible activities which, if correctly implemented, can solve detected problems.
- In the DO phase, all generated activities need to be described. We needed to identify (1) the benefits of activities in relation to the post-implementation structured dialogue level and inputted (2) cost and (3) resources. To identify these elements, we used a cost-benefit and resource allocation analysis or scenario analysis (trying to predict the process of implementing each activity, as well as possible pitfalls, reactions, and results). A part of this job is done by decision makers, and a part by citizens.

TABLE I. PHASES OF THE PROPOSED METHODOLOGY FOR INCREASING THE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE LEVEL

PDCA	Goals	Methods/techniques	Outputs
Plan	Formulate the central problem Problem analysis Define goals Create potential solutions	Present state analysis Problem tree SWOT Forming strategies Brainstorming/Brainwriting Opinions exchange Case studies	Concrete activities that could help improve the structured dialogue
Do	Describe all defined activities	Logical matrix, Resource allocation analysis Cost-benefit analysis Scenarios analysis Debate, discussion In-depth analysis PESTLE	Detailed description of each activity implementation (costs/resources needed and benefits expected)
Check	Present analysis of all activities	Presenting analyses; Case studies	Analysis of costs, resources and benefits in all activities
Act	Select activities that will be applied	Structured dialogue: discussion (Evaluation)	BSC strategic map of goals
Plan	Implement selected activities	Creating an action plan (defining deadlines, responsibilities, budget) for each activity	Implementation plan BSC strategic map of measures
Do	Implement all activities	Implementation Creating checkpoints	Implementation results (measure values achieved following implementation)
Check	Present implementation results	Case studies	Determing the reached structured dialogue level
Act	Evaluate implementation results	Qualitative and quantitative analysis	Final analysis

- In the CHECK phase, descriptions of all identified activities (cost-benefit and resource allocation results) are debated and agreed.
- In the ACT phase, the decision makers had to select activities that would go into the implementation phase, keeping in mind their individual but also their combined effects. It is recommended to complete both the CHECK and ACT phase on the same day/at the same meeting. Personal attendance of the decision makers (not their delegates, i.e. LGU's employees) is also recommended because these are crucial moments in making the most important decisions. If possible, an additional group (i.e. people who did not generate ideas) should also take part in the process and evaluate the selected activities.

As shown in Table 1, the first PDCA cycle is purely theoretical, without any implementation. The prescribed methodology here entails dialogue steps that both the decision makers and young people (NGOs) have to take. We can say that *to increase the structured dialogue level, we have to use a methodology based on the structure dialogue mechanism*.

The second PDCA cycle takes place on a more practical level (darker fill of shapes in Figure 1):.

- In the PLAN (2) phase, we needed to create implementation plans (action plans) for all activities selected in the ACT (1) phase. The result was a BSC strategic map of goals. Deadlines, responsibilities, resources and other important elements had to be defined for each goal in the map. For each activity that will be implement we identify some values:

1. on scale 1-10 decision makers make assessment of how much will activity implementation contribute to structured dialogue (column 2 in Table 2),
2. on scale 1-10 citizens make assessment of how much will activity implementation contribute to structured dialogue (column 3 in Table 2),
3. calculate arithmetic mean of previous two values (average expected contribution of activity to structured dialogue level – column 4 in Table 2),
4. on scale 1-10 decision makers and citizens make assessment of current level of activity implementation (column 5 in Table 2),
5. calculate current contribution of activity to the structured dialogue (multiplication of values 3 and 4; column 6 in Table 2),

We also had to create a BSC strategic map of measures. For each measure, we defined four target values: U, u, 1 and L [26], [27]. Values between U and u suggest good goal achievement, values between u and 1 show satisfactory goal achievement and values between 1 and L indicate poor goal achievement. Now, it is possible to calculate current overall contribution of all activities to the structured dialogue.

- During the implementation phase, i.e. the DO phase, selected activities were executed and monitored. The person in charge of the activity oversaw its implementation.

- The CHECK phase starts when the last action plan activity finishes. Or, if there are many activities, it is recommended to define a checkpoint before the final check. In this phase of our project, the analysis of each activity implementation was done – we had to check whether the BSC strategic map goals had been achieved

    1. Using scale 1-10 decision makers and citizens make assessment of the achieved implementation level for each activity (column 9 in Table 2),
    2. By multiplying previous value with value from column 4 we become achieved contribution of each activity to the structured dialogue (column 10 in Table 2),

Now it is possible to determine new overall structured dialogue level and compare it to overall structured dialogue level before implementation.

- In ACT we drew conclusions on the measured values in the map of measures and goal efficacy (achievements).

In the case of more complex problems, software use is recommended. In our case, calculations were made in Excel. However, Dialog strategy is a more appropriate software because it enables dynamic monitoring of goal achievements through scorecard graphs [27].

The proposed methodology was validated during mentioned project and some of the results will be described in next chapter.

V. Proposed Methodology Validation

Methodology validation covered five LGUs, but this presentation will deal with the results of only one of them. Similar results were achieved in the other four LGUs. The project was structured in the form of six three-day meetings. At each meeting some methodology phase(s) was (were) carried out. Approximately 50 participants were present at the meetings and assignments were executed in groups.

Characteristics of those five LGUs were the following:

- each of the five LGU has low budgets,
- LGUs do not have employees whose job description would be (at least partly) related to the implementation of a structured dialogue,
- Both, decision makers and young people, don't have the knowledge and experience about the implementation of a structured dialogue,
- LGUs haven't establish youth councils boards which is their legal obligation [28] that some municipalities were not even aware of,
- LGUs haven't adopted local youth action programs and were not implementing programs for young people in line with the recommendations of the national program of action for youth [29]–[31]
- LGUs support young people mainly through low, insufficient and small number of scholarships for high school students and university students and they co-finance the transport tickets for high school students,
- young people who took part in this project can be classified into a group of young people with fewer opportunities by geographic and economic obstacles [32],
- citizens in the local government units are socially engaged through associations - NGOs which have financing problems,
- LGUs partly support various initiatives of NGOs financially, but this support system is not transparent even though there is a low obligation for public tendering [33],
- however, both stakeholders in the process of structured dialogue (decision makers and citizens) in all five JLS are motivated to change and improve communication.

The last mentioned characteristic has opened the possibility of application of developed methodology for increasing the level of structured dialogue and the achievement of the objectives of the project: creation of a transparent system for NGOs, the establishment of youth councils and increasing motivation of young people to become active participants in the social life of the community.

At the first meeting, the following activities were implemented: theoretical presentation on the structured dialogue; presentation on results of an income survey previously filled out by project participants (both the young NGO representatives and decision makers from LGUs); presentations on good practices in relation to the structured dialogue and case studies; brainstorming on possible activities that could be implemented in the LGU to increase the structured dialogue level; learning about the *problem tree* method: theory and examples; making a problem tree for three problems: *low structured dialogue level*, *weak support of NGOs by LGUs* and *weak motivation of the young people for active involvement in the community social life*; brainstorming on how to influence problem causes in the created problem trees; learning about *SWOT* in theory and practice; making SWOT analysis for two strategic goals: *increasing the LGUs' support of NGOs* and *making LGUs totally transparent and motivating the young people to be active participants in the community social life*; making strategies (grouping SWOT elements and creating logical activities); presenting examples of a good structured dialogue from a partner institution. The resulting activities stemming from the previously mentioned ones were candidates for implementation in the LGU.

At the second meeting, each activity was analyzed and described in detail. The goal of the meeting was to create an in-depth analysis of each idea. Participants completed resource analysis and cost-benefit analysis for each idea. They also carried out a scenario analysis – they tried to implement ideas on a theoretical, debate level and then to identify possible problems during the actual implementation. Young participants offered arguments and promoted benefits for each idea they wanted to implement. LGUs also weighed in with their perspectives, opinions, and experiences. Both evaluated each

idea on a scale of 1 – 10, where 1 and 10 denoted low and high contribution to the structured dialogue level in the LGU, respectively. (Evaluations are depicted in Table 2, columns 2 and 3.) Then, the structured dialogue was presented at a meta-level – activities that would help increase the structured dialogue level in the LGU were decided via structured dialogue mechanism (discussions, debates, case studies, personal reflections). Logically, one generated idea was to promote this project and foster similar ones.

At the third meeting, all of the results were presented to the decision makers and they had to decide which will be selected for implementation, bearing in mind costs and resources needed, but also the benefits that will each LGU reap through implementing each action. The young people presented activities and their arguments. In our case, not all of the proposed actions were accepted because, even though some of them do not require a lot of resources individually, their joint implementation was simply not possible.

LGU that is the case of our study selected the following activities: (1) organization of panel discussions and public debates dealing with the functioning of the LGU or the upcoming decisions; (2) influencing youth activities implemented by the county because until now they were for the most part located in other LGUs in the county; (3) introduction of an *LGU open day*; (4) supporting the state change of the law dealing with the establishment of youth councils (under the current law, youth councils members are primarily selected by LGU's council members, not by the young people whom they should represent); (5) activities directed toward educating elementary and secondary school students on LGUs and youth councils; (6) electing the children's mayor; (7) inviting applications for the LGU's youth council; (8) supporting NGOs by enabling their meetings and other appropriate indoor activities that are under the LGU's jurisdiction; (9) opening a Facebook profile and maintaining continuous communication with citizens; (10) recording LGU's council sessions; (11) upload radio show to a hosting service (such as YouTube) when decision makers are guests of that show; (12) support NGOs via public tender (competition) for the allocation of funds for NGO projects; and (13) supporting similar projects. Analysis of role of ICT technologies in process of structured dialogue is given in [34]. The listed activities were grouped with the BSC perspective and BSC strategic map of goals shown in Figure 2.

At the fourth meeting, as recommended in the methodology, additional evaluation of the selected activities (from the previous meeting) was done. Representatives from an LGU that did not participate in the project gave their opinions and recommendations on the selected ideas. That information proved valuable for the following phase and meetings (creation of an action plan). Besides that, project participants learned about new case studies on implementing structured dialogue.

At the fifth meeting, a BSC strategic map of measures was defined: people in charge, deadlines, resources needed and implementation description. That data was included in the *Decision about implementations of selected project activities*, signed by the mayor and presented to every NGO in the LGU.

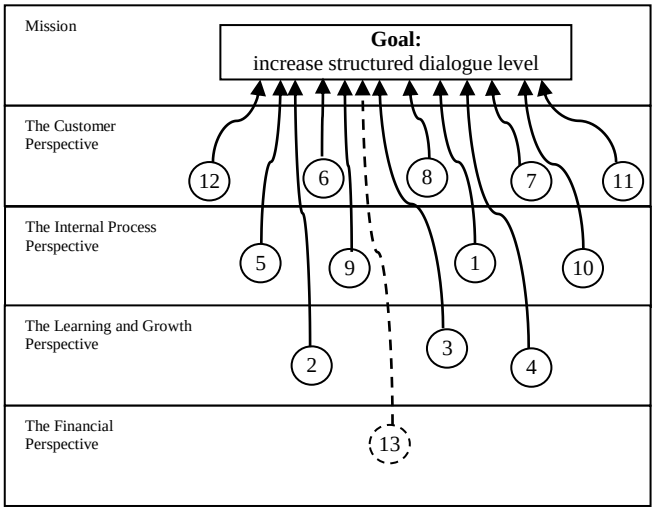


Figure 2. The BSC strategic map of goals

The time period between the fifth and sixth meeting was reserved for the implementation of every selected activity (DO (2)). After an activity had been implemented, the structured dialogue level was recalculated (based on the BSC strategic map of measures). Table 2 shows the implementation of the BSC strategic map of measures in MS Excel, where the structured dialogue level was calculated. The possible contribution to the structured dialogue for each activity was evaluated at the second meeting. Also, the average contribution of the NGO's and LGU's grade was calculated (column 4)). Those values became weights in measuring the structured dialogue level. During the structure level measuring, we had to evaluate the completeness of each activity implementation. We used a 0-10 scale for that – 0 meant that certain activity had not been implemented, and 10 meant that the activity had been implemented in full.

TABLE II. IMPLEMENTATION OF BSC STRATEGIC MAP OF MEASURES

A. No	Contribution to structured dialogue			Implementation of activities					
				Before project		Maximum		Achieved	
	NGO	LGU	AVG	Grade	Result	Grade	Result	Grade	Result
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1	9	6	7,5	3	22,5	10	75	10	75
2	9	7	8	0	0	10	80	7	56
3	10	10	10	0	0	10	100	5	50
4	7	5	6	0	0	10	60	10	60
5	5	2	3,5	0	0	10	35	10	35
6	5	4	4,5	0	0	10	45	10	45
7	2	1	1,5	0	0	10	15	10	15
8	9	7	8	0	0	10	80	10	80
9	10	8	9	0	0	10	90	10	90
10	7	5	6	0	0	10	60	10	60
11	8	5	6,5	4	26	10	65	10	65
12	5	4	4,5	2	9	10	45	10	45
TOTAL				7%	57,5		850	85%	726

Then, we calculated the structured dialogue level for each activity by multiplying the weight (the possible contribution of each activity in improving the structured dialogue level) and the grade describing the implementation completeness. Columns 5 and 6 contain data on the structured dialogue level before the project had started in the selected LGU. Columns 7 and 8 contain data showing what the structured dialogue level would be if all selected activities were fully implemented.

At sixth meeting phases CHECK (2) and ACT (2) are done. In Table 2, last two columns contain data on the achieved state of each activity implementation. When comparing to maximum possible structured dialogue level, at observed LGU 85% of maximum possible structured dialogue level is achieved.

Also, qualitative analysis has been made through discussion and focus groups in order to evaluate applied methodology. All participants agreed that methodology is really helpful. It is not too complex and containing methods are simple enough to be understandable by all participants. Participants put accent on importance of double PDCA cycle: even though the first cycle is only theoretical, very useful and important information came as a result of resource and cost-benefit analyses and those information were valuable for making decisions.

VI. Limitations of Developed Methodology

As it has been already mentioned in this paper, a methodology for increasing the level of structured dialogue can be successfully implemented if it is satisfied an important prerequisite - the existence of the will and motivation of stakeholders to implement the methodology and work on structured dialogue. In section three we came up with the reasons why the structured dialogue is not implemented. Some of them are also the reasons for the inability of the application of the methodology for increasing structured dialogue in practice. But in the case when the will and motivation exist, the proposed methodology can be helpful and it can be a guideline to implement the structured dialogue in the municipalities and small cities.

A short questionnaire is suggested in Table 3. Based on responses on that questionnaire we can quickly and easily determine whether a certain LGU is ready to implement structured dialogue in practice and apply the proposed methodology. The questionnaire has to be filled by decision makers and citizens using a scale of 1 to 5, where:

- 1 means "strongly disagree",
- 2 means "do not agree",
- 3 means "neither agree nor disagree",
- 4 means "agree" and
- 5 means "strongly agree ".

After several focus groups with decision makers, we came with the proposal that the total result in given short LGU readiness questionnaire should be at least 15 and none of answer should be evaluated as 1 in order to successfully apply suggested methodology for increasing structured dialogue level.

TABLE III. Determining Readiness for Methodology for Increasing Structured Dialogue Level Implementation

Question	1	2	3	4	5
Decision makers in LGU like to hear different opinions about the problems of local government and they are open to communicate with the citizens.					
When deciding on the problems of local government unit decision makers do not favor and are not intended to favor private interests.					
In LGU, there are capable people (citizens) who are willing to get involved in social life and work for the common good.					
The citizens believe that they can change the situation in LGU and that their argumented opinions will be respected.					
Conversation between citizens and decision makers in LGU can improve communication between decision makers and citizens in the LGU.					

VII. Conclusion

The objectives of this paper were to determine the problems and the reasons for non-application of a structured dialogue in local government units in Croatia and to propose a methodology that helps LGUs (municipalities and small cities) to implement the structured dialogue in practice. Preliminary studies conducted in ten LGUs in Croatia have identified the most common reasons for non-implementation of a structured dialogue in practice, but on the other hand, preliminary study identified good examples of the implementation of the concept of structured dialogue (communication between citizens and decision makers in LGUs) in the world and Croatia. In Croatia these examples are mainly related to the implementation of the EU programs Youth in Action and Erasmus+.

The paper proposed a methodology for increasing the structured dialogue level. It is based on double Deming cycle and the balanced scorecard (BSC). Designed methodology was implemented on international Erasmus+ project (2014-2-HR01-KA347-012471) in five local LGUs. The methodology includes a measurement instrument for measuring structured dialogue level through selected activities that are implemented. Qualitative analysis was conducted among decision makers and citizens in LGUs on the project and showed that decision makers and citizens find the proposed methodology very useful and helpful. It consists of several economic methods that need to be applied at “simple logical” level, which means that methodology is applicable by all participants regardless of prior knowledge. Instrument is also a practical and very useful since the decision makers so far generally didn’t monitored and measured the implementation of their decisions.

Also, the implementation of a methodology for increasing the level of structured dialogue leads to better understanding of the other side in process of structured dialogue: decision makers better understand the citizens, and the citizens better understand the decision makers. Both sides are becoming aware that together they can create a better situation than if each work separately. There's also a greater mutual respect and esteem.

The methodology is validated on the same project. An important preconditions for the implementation of a methodology for increasing the structured dialogue level are will and motivation of both parties (decision makers and citizens). In this context paper proposes a brief questionnaire with very direct questions on the basis of which we can assess the readiness of a society (LGU) for the implementation of proposed methodology.

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