

Application Form

PART 1: BASIC DATA

Contact details: *(this information will not be shared or published).*

CATEGORIES IN WHICH YOU WANT TO APPLY THE EXPERIENCE

1: TYPE OF EXPERIENCE: *choose the most important element (choose only one element which you consider the most outstanding of your practice).*

A) Deliberation Citizen assembly / deliberation workshop / lottery / legislative theater / participatory planning	
B) Decision Participatory budget / referendum / consultation / participatory process with vote	
C) Citizenship Citizenship / community action / permanent council / civic education / associationism / other initiatives to reinforce local democracy	X

2: TYPE OF GOVERNMENT: *choose one only.*

A) Up to 50,000 inhabitants (towns, small cities, rural areas).	
B) Cities between 50,000 and 250,000 inhabitants.	X
C) Cities between 250,000 and 1,000,000 inhabitants.	
D) Large cities or urban areas of more than 1,500,000 inhabitants.	
E) Supralocal, regional, provincial governments	

Experience data: *complete the information below in a clear and concise manner.*

Title of the experience: Citizen Participation for a greener Valongo - BiodiverCities Valongo
Name of the city or region: Municipality of Valongo
Inhabitants of the city or territory: 94672 inhabitants
Country: Portugal
Institution presenting the candidacy: Valongo Municipality
Website of the experience or institution: https://www.cm-valongo.pt/participar/biodivercities

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Profiles in social networks of the experience or the institution:		
Start date of the experience: June 2020		
End date of the experience: September 2022		
Budget of the experience: (indicate the budget of the experience or the resources mobilized for its development and implementation) The project received funding of €20,000 to hire experts in the field of participation to apply and facilitate participatory methodologies. Material resources were also mobilised, and Human Resources of the various municipal services were allocated to the design, monitoring and implementation of the project, namely the experimental actions.		
Type of candidacy <i>(mark with an X in the right column)</i>	New experience	X
	Innovation on an existing experience	
	Continuity of an experience	
Type of experience <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	Participatory budgeting	
	Participatory planning	X
	Standing council	
	Workshop / meeting for diagnosis, monitoring, etc.	X
	Public hearing / forum	X
	Poll / referendum	
	Assemblies / Citizen juries / Deliberation spaces	X
	E-government / Open government / Digital platforms	
	Citizen initiative	X
	Other (specify):	
Objective of the experience <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation	X
	Including diversity as a criterion for inclusion	
	Community empowerment	X
	To empower non-organised citizens	X
	To increase citizen's rights in terms of political participation	
	To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem"	
	To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy	X

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	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy		X
	To improve the evaluation and accountability of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		
	To improve any public policy through the active participation of the public		X
Territorial area <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	All the territory	Local	X
		Regional	
	District		
	Neighbourhood		
Thematic area <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	Governance		X
	Education		X
	Transport		
	Urban management		X
	Health		X
	Security		
	Environment / Climate change and/or urban agriculture		X
	Civic associations, grassroots and new social movements		
	Culture		
	Housing		
	Job creation		
	Decentralization		
	Local development		X
	Training / learning		X
	Economy and/or finances		
	Legal regulations		
Social inclusion		X	
All			
Other (write the topic)		Planning / Cocreation	
Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) associated	SDG 1 - No poverty		

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<p>with the practice</p> <p><i>(mark with an X in the right column, more than one option can be chosen, you can also add the specific target)</i></p>	SDG 2 - Zero hunger	
	SDG 3 - Good health and well-being	X
	SDG 4 - Quality education	
	SDG 5 - Gender equality	
	SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation	
	SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy	
	SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth	
	SDG 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure	
	SDG 10 - Reduced inequality	X
	SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities	X
	SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production	
	SDG 13 - Climate action	X
	SDG 14 - Life below water	
	SDG 15 - Life on land	X
	SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions	
SDG 17 - Partnership for the goals	X	

PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Fill in the following fields clearly and concisely. You can add links, images or graphics if you consider it appropriate.

Context:

In a **maximum of 300 words**, present the cultural, geographical, historical, institutional and socioeconomic context of the city, region or territory in which the experience takes place.

Valongo municipality is a territory of identity and discovery, centred in the people and prepared to face future challenges, based in a sustainable, competitive, attractive, and resilient development model.

It is located in the Northern region of Portugal, belonging to the Metropolitan Area of Porto (AMP) and has a geographical area of 75.12 km².

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The municipality is a key territory, marked by important regional crossing channels, connecting the coastline and the countryside, as well as being a North-South connection. The urban structure of the county consists of two main urban agglomerates (Ermesinde and Valongo), separated by forested elevations, surrounding the main transport infrastructures as well as the main water courses of the region. The movement of people in the territory arise, mainly, from these two agglomerates to the “satellite” territories – Parishes of Alfena, Campo-Sobrado.

With the intent to highlight and disseminate the municipality’s rich identity, were created identitarian marks of Valongo Municipality, namely the slate, the trilobites and geological heritage, Santa Rita sanctuary and religious heritage, the railwayman, the traditional portuguese toy, Porto Mountains, the biscuit and regueifa, the romans and bugiada and mouriscada.

In addition, it is important to highlight that there are two mountains in the county (Santa Justa and Pias), which are part of the Site of Community Importance of Natura 2000, with a considerable forested area, which aggregates a Protected Landscape Area of regional and local scope, being part of Porto Mountain Park. As such, nature conservation and the value of natural spaces are assumed as one of the main priorities of the municipal strategy.

Precedents:

*Explain the precedents and origins of the experience: if it is the innovation of an existing experience, what are its origins; if it is a new experience, what are the antecedents in participation in your city, region or territory. You can also indicate if you have been inspired by experiences in other cities/countries. (In a **maximum of 300 words**).*

Valongo Municipality integrated a network of ten european cities created in the scope of the BiosiverCities project, from the European Union, an initiative aiming to involve citizens in the cocreation of greener cities.

With the target to create a Roadmap to improve biodiversity and green infrastructures of european cities, until 2030, Valongo designed and implemented an unique methodology, putting into place the project BiodiverCities Valongo, through the participation of civil society

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in decision making processes in order to build a shared vision for the green city of tomorrow.

Concerning the development and implementation of projects and activities of civic participation, Valongo has been focusing more and more in the involvement of local population, from the youngest generations to the older ones, giving a voice and an active role to the community, highlighting the following initiatives:

- Valongo Participatory Youth Budget: promotes the active participation of young people, allowing them to propose and decide on a portion of the municipal budget.
- Urban Biological Vegetable Gardens: Spaces that promote good agriculture practices, promoting cooperation and learning moments. Its maintenance is made on a shared and voluntary basis, by interested citizens.
- Reforestation actions: Involve volunteers and interested citizens in promoting the native forest.
- Requalification of the Green Corridor of Leça River: involves the community through participatory sessions dedicated to the general population, and schools specifically.
- Porto Mountain Park: Highlighting the collaboration of citizens in the development of the Park Management Plan and in the inherent activities.
- Children's Council: listens to children chosen by lottery, encouraging them to take an active role in the government and in the construction of the city.
- Valongo 4.0 - The Future Built by Children and Young People of Valongo: a participatory process that involved children and young people in the revision process of the Municipal Master Plan of Valongo.

Objectives of the experience:

*What is the objective listed in Part 1 that you think is the most important, and indicate other outstanding objectives of the experience. (In a **maximum of 100 words**).*

From the objectives listed previously, "Community empowerment" is the most relevant, since this initiative aims to promote an active participation from the entire community, in the construction and development of public spaces and biodiversity protection, giving a voice to people who don't, usually, have an opportunity to be heard.

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The involvement of the population aimed to strengthen the connection between the people and the green urban spaces already existent, improving them and making them more attractive, promoting its use and appropriation.

In addition, work was made in order to encourage the community to know and preserve the rich and valuable urban biodiversity of Valongo.

Methodology:

*Describe the methodology of the experience: phases of the process, participation channels. (In a **maximum of 300 words**).*

The adopted methodology for the implementation of BiodiverCities Valongo aimed to promote an active participation in all steps of the project, involving the community and the municipality, since the collective diagnosis phase, to the elaboration of proposals and to the definition and implementation of experimental cations, identifying issues related to local biodiversity and searching, together, solutions to these problems.

The active engagement of citizens in all phases of the project was a priority, ensuring a high level of adherence from the local community, making this work as a pedagogical process, in order to create opportunities for a collaborative participation and management of the territory's resources. The starting point were the Live laboratories existent in the municipality, Porto Mountain Park and Leça River Corridor, and the question on how biodiversity could be connected and extended throughout the territory, linking the city and the community.

The implementation of the project was made in collaboration with the L3P Team, from Aveiro university, and it was divided into four phases:

- 1) Participatory sessions, focusing the project's topic (urban biodiversity and public green spaces) and involved members from civil society, the municipality, as well as cultural and economic agents. Due to the pandemic situation the sessions were made virtually, organized in three steps: identification and validation of resources and problems; presentation of proposals; suggestion of experimental actions to be developed by the community.

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- 2) Coconstruction of a diagnosis through the mapping of green spaces, made by the citizens, with the support of a experts in biology and biodiversity.
- 3) Establishment of the goals and targets to achieve. The participants collaborated in order to identify the actions which should be implemented, based on the phases of the methodology.
- 4) Implementation of the experimental actions. These were selected according to its potential for replication and dissemination.

Innovation:

*Explain what you consider as the most innovative aspect(s) in the practice. (In a **maximum of 150 words**).*

The innovative aspects were related to the participatory methods, some of which were pioneer in the county, as the type of mapping and data used, and the interaction through different tools, promoting a true collaboration between all, from municipality technicians to citizens, which came together in an open dialogue on the need to protect biodiversity and green spaces. This dialogue placed side by side people and municipality collaborators, allowing to prioritize collective interests, rather than individual ones.

The actions, which were temporary and with low cost, allowed to experiment and test solutions on a small scall and achieve results in real time. The lessons learned can be used as a baseline for future investments and the analysis of the results will contribute to understand what does or doesn't work for the city and the community, making it possible to adapt interventions accordingly.

Inclusion:

*Point out the importance of including as many groups and diverse populations as possible, and how you have achieved it. (In a **maximum of 150 words**).*

One of the priorities of Valongo Municipality is to not let anyone behind on the path towards archiving a truly sustainable and just city.

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During the implementation of the BiodiverCities Valongo project there was a special care in involving different groups of the local community, bringing people with less opportunities and who, traditionally, are farther away from participatory and decision-making processes.

Citizens from different ages groups (from children to seniors) and with different education levels (university students, youngsters, members of the senior academy, families, members of associations and municipality collaborators) participated in the project, having the opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other, through intergenerational activities, for instance.

Communication:

*What has been the strategy and communication channels of the experience for engaging the population. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

Communication has a central role in the success of all initiatives, specifically in participatory initiatives for which is expected a high level of cooperation from the local population.

In BiodiverCities Valongo project the communication was made, primarily, through the municipality's website and social networks, mainly Facebook, being this one of the most effective channels to reach the majority of the community. In addition, it was used the email to communicate with municipality collaborators and local entities.

Throughout the project were published news, photographs and invitations to the population, published in the municipality's and partner's social networks, using an accessible and attractive language which could be understood by everyone.

Furthermore, the results of the initiative were made available, in a free and accessible way, in the Valongo's website and social networks, allowing for their consultation and in a way that they can be used for inspiration for other initiatives.

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Articulation with other actors:

*Explain how the experience was articulated with different actors and simultaneous or pre-existing processes. What roles did these participants assume? Explain the degree of success of this articulation. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

The project was developed in partnership with L3P, from Aveiro University, a valuable partner in the implementation of the participatory methodology and with a vast experience in cocreation processes. This partner developed the methodology used and guided the activities throughout the project implementation, analysing the data from the sessions and proposals from the participants.

During the participatory sessions and experimental activities, there was the involvement of experts of reference, on the topics of biodiversity and planning of public spaces, namely the Biologist Milene Matos, the architect Laura Roldão and the Engineer Sandra Vasconcelos Lameiras. In addition, the project had the cooperation of the local parishes where the different actions of the project were implemented.

The development of this initiative implicated the articulation between several municipal services and with external entities, which collaborated in different ways, not only in the organization of the planned activities but as participants of the project.

Evaluation:

*What evaluation mechanisms have been implemented? Develop whether the citizenry has participated in the evaluation of the practice. (In a **maximum of 300 words**).*

Since the methodology of the project implied a constant and close work with the participants, it was possible to obtain real time feedback from the citizens that collaborated in the different phases of the project.

In every participatory session were registered the contributes and opinions of each participant, in a public way, allowing a collaborative reading and corrections of possible discrepancies between the verbalized and written opinions.

The team of the project analysed the feedback received, making a reflection on the highlighted issues and adjusting the methods and processes of the project accordingly to the identified needs, in order to achieve the goals of the project and of the community itself, leading to the success of the project.

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Impacts and results

*Describe the impacts and results of the process. How many people have participated, and what are their profiles? What have been the impacts on public policies, the functioning of the administration, and the citizenry? (In a **maximum of 300 words**).*

The following results are highlighted:

- Participatory sessions: were organized 2 sessions, with 56 participants, being identified the issues related to Valongo's biodiversity.
- Bioblitz: Organization of a pedestrian walk through the city, with 21 participants, that mapped and identified the living species, pointing out the gaps between the urban green spaces, which could be intervened for biodiversity promotion.
- Organization of a guided walk, with 25 participants. During the walk it was distributed a survey on the topic urban biodiversity to collect information and proposals for future experimental actions.
- Experimental actions: implementation of actions (peeling of invasive species, construction of pollinator's flowerbeds and insect hotels), with 30 participants.
- Inauguration of a BIOteca: green itinerant biodiversity, focusing on biodiversity.
- Elaboration of a Good Practices Manual "DIY: biodiversity at home": Guide for the dissemination of good practices examples and guidelines for everyone to implement actions which contribute the preserve and promote biodiversity, in their homes, neighbourhoods' or cities.

These activities contributed to improve the aesthetic and functional of intervened public spaces; Promote knowledge and valorization of natural heritage and a better interpretation of the landscape; strengthen the territory's identity, promote sustainable tourism; promote the practice of sports in green spaces of public use; create a collaborative work dynamic and dissemination of knowledge which will continue after the project's implementation.

The level of engagement and commitment of the local community was significant, with citizens being proactive in the process of co-creation of proposals and observing a high level of interest in participatory actions and working to protect local biodiversity.

Considering the success of the methodology and the interventions made, it is hoped to replicate these pilot actions in other locations in the municipality.

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PART 3: EXPERIENCE SUMMARY

*A summary of the experience: origins, objectives, operation, results, monitoring, and evaluation. (Do not hesitate to repeat aspects that have already been written before. This summary will be shared on the digital platform for open evaluation and in the publication of the award). (In a **maximum of 500 words**).*

Aware of the need to protect local biodiversity and to value urban green spaces, the Municipality of Valongo aims to bring citizens closer to nature and involve the local population in these issues, since only through the involvement of citizens can a true transformation be achieved.

The municipality has joined the network of European cities created within the BiodiverCities project of the European Union, an initiative whose main focus was the involvement of citizens in the co-creation of greener cities.

In this sense, the BiodiverCities Valongo project, developed with the aim of identifying local problems in terms of biodiversity and existing urban green spaces. Aware that the participation can be a powerful ally to collectively capture, activate and generate innovative solutions, a participatory methodology was adopted aiming to ensure the active involvement of citizens in all phases of the project, which simultaneously was a pedagogical process that contributed to the construction of a common vision of territory.

The participatory methodology adopted for the implementation of the project was developed in collaboration with the Planning and Public Policies Laboratory (L3P) of Aveiro University, with a view to establishing opportunities for dialogue through informal environments, collecting information on the perspective of citizens, ensuring that participants had a voice in all sessions, providing spaces for the confrontation of ideas and the generation of consensus, making citizens co-responsible in the decision-making process and opening the way for the experimentation of solutions.

The implementation of the project went through four phases: from the realization of participatory sessions, to debate and identify problems, the co-construction of a diagnosis through the mapping of green spaces, the establishment of priorities and objectives and, finally, the implementation of experimental actions and the creation of a manual of good practices.

Thus, citizens were involved in a co-creation process, observing a collaborative work between the community and the municipality, from the collective diagnosis phase to the elaboration of proposals and the definition and implementation of experimental actions.

With BiodiverCities Valongo we intended not only to look at the public space, but above all to develop a project of community involvement in the construction of a biodiversity map for the municipality, as well as empower the community to actively participate in co-creation actions.



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We invite you to share annexes that allow you to better illustrate your experience: videos, photographs, documents... These can be sent through a file transfer service, such as WeTransfer, Dropbox or Google Drive.

Annexes available at:

<https://we.tl/t-SkgLfDBEEJ>

or

[Fotos e documentos de suporte](#)

Thank you for participating!