

Urban agriculture for changing cities:
governance models for better institutional capacities and social inclusion

Evaluation report on the pre-project effectiveness of participatory urban
agriculture in pilot areas (ex-ante)
FINAL VERSION

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Anton Melik Geographical Institute

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1 Introduction

The aim of this report is to evaluate the effectiveness of participatory urban agriculture to improve public institutional capacities for tackling social exclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups and stimulating sustainable urban development in the Danube Region. The evaluation is based on a survey among a) local authorities, b) vulnerable and marginalized groups, and c) other interested stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, associations, development agencies, universities) in six pilot areas of the Danube Region. These are municipalities of Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria), Székesfehérvár (Hungary), Ulcinj (Montenegro), Vaslui (Romania), Velenje (Slovenia) and the municipal district Prague 9 (Czech Republic). The main purpose of the survey is to **obtain opinion of the target groups that relate to the potential of urban agriculture to enhance participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development**. Observed differences between the target groups serve as the basis for developing policy recommendations in pilot areas. The report is part of a transnational project *Urban agriculture for changing cities: governance models for better institutional capacities and social inclusion (AgriGo4Cities)*. The project is financed by the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme. For more information, see the official project website: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/agriGo4cities>.

2 Methodology

2.1 Survey description

The survey took place from 25th October to 15th December 2017 just before the start of the pilot actions of participatory urban agriculture in six pilot areas of the Danube Region. The pilot actions take place in 2018 and consist of a) establishment of local partnerships for effective participatory urban agriculture (comprised from local authorities, vulnerable and marginalized groups, and other interested stakeholders), b) development of action plans of participatory urban agriculture, and c) implementation of action plans of participatory urban agriculture. To this end, the present report contributes to the *ex-ante* evaluation of the effectiveness of participatory urban agriculture. After the end of the pilot actions, the survey will be repeated in the beginning of 2019. Based on those results, a new report will contribute to the *ex-post* evaluation of the effectiveness of participatory urban agriculture and measure changes achieved through the pilot actions.

The survey was structured along four thematic and one demographic section. The first thematic section investigates familiarity with the basic terms such as urban agriculture, participatory planning and social inclusion among the target groups. The next three sections are interested in the subjective preferences of the target groups that relate to the potential of urban agriculture to foster participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development in pilot areas. The last section provides an insight into the demographic characteristics of respondents (see appendix).

The survey was prepared in English and translated into national languages of participating pilot areas. It was distributed to local authorities and other interested stakeholders in a digitized version and to vulnerable and marginalized groups on paper.

2.2 Description of the sample

The sample is structured along three target groups: public administrators employed at local authorities, vulnerable and marginalized groups, and other interested stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, associations, development agencies, universities). However, there were different vulnerable and marginalized groups



involved in each pilot area: the elderly and unemployed (Blagoevgrad), students with learning and behavioural difficulties (Székesfehérvár), the elderly and teachers working with children and children with disabilities (Ulcinj), the elderly and children (Vaslui), the elderly and children (Velenje) and single mothers with children (Prague 9).

Table 1: The structure of respondents in the survey.

	Public administrators	Vulnerable and marginalized groups	Other interested stakeholders	Total
Municipality of Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria)	58	30 ¹	30	118
Municipality of Székesfehérvár (Hungary)	59	27	31	117
Municipality of Ulcinj (Montenegro)	32	54 ²	49	135
Municipality of Vaslui (Romania)	46	31 ³	35	112
Municipality of Velenje (Slovenia)	55	50 ⁴	36	141
Municipal district Prague 9 (Czech Republic)	28	26	60	114
Total	278	218	241	737

2.3 Description of methods

The results are presented by employing infographics, i.e. charts and word clouds. The differences between the target groups and pilot areas were calculated by using the Kruskal-Wallis test, which is a non-parametric counterpart of the one-way independent ANOVA, and the post hoc testing by using the Mann-Whitney test and Bonferroni correction. Mostly statistically significant differences are highlighted in the report.

¹ 12 elderlies (62+) and 18 unemployed

² 3 elderlies (55+) and 51 teachers working with children and children with disabilities

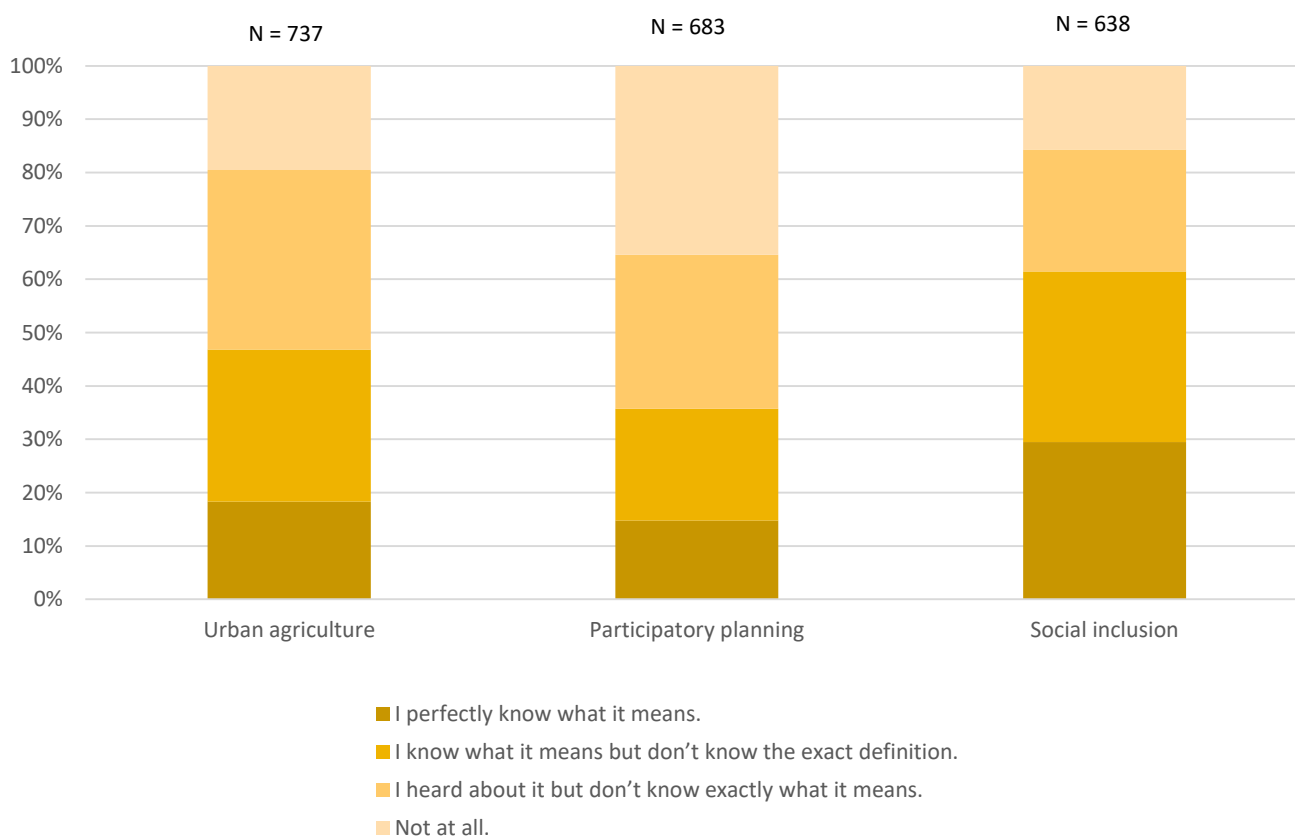
³ 16 elderlies (56+) and 15 children

⁴ 25 elderlies (65+) and 25 children

3 Results

3.1 Familiarity with the basic terms

To what extent are you familiar with the topics of urban agriculture, participatory planning and social inclusion?



Key findings:

- Most of the respondents are familiar with the basic topics addressed by the project. The most familiar is the notion of social inclusion, then urban agriculture and at the end of the participatory planning.
- However, only a small share of the respondents is perfectly aware of their meaning. Familiarity is significantly lower among members of vulnerable groups.
- There are also some significant differences between pilot areas. Familiarity with urban agriculture is the highest in Székesfehérvár (the only municipality with the organised gardening association) and a bit weaker in Blagoevgrad, Prague 9 and Vaslui. Participatory planning is the most familiar in Ulcinj and a bit weaker in Vaslui and Velenje. Familiarity with social inclusion is the highest in Blagoevgrad and a bit lower in Prague 9 and Vaslui.



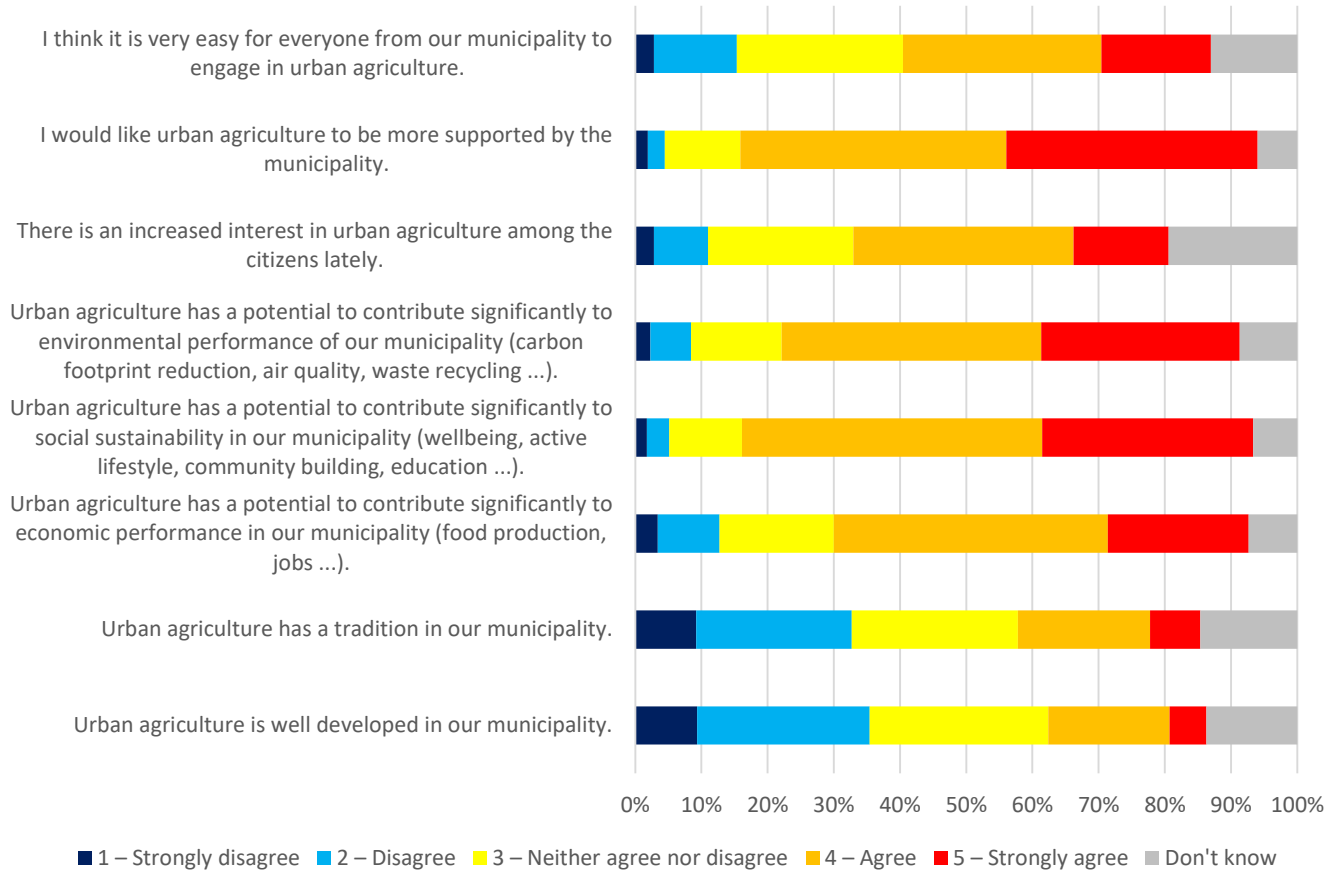
If respondents on the first question answered with any other category than “I perfectly know what it means”, they were provided with the corresponding definition below. In this way, it was guaranteed that all the respondents were aware about at least the basic meaning of main topics of the survey.

- **Urban agriculture** encompasses urban food gardening and urban farming, without conventional (rural) farming activities. Urban food gardens can be divided into those based on individual production (family gardens and allotment gardens), and those based on collective schemes (educational gardens, therapeutic gardens, and community gardens). Squatter gardens can fall into both categories. Urban farming refers to intentional business models taking advantage of proximity to the city by offering local or regional agricultural products or services. Urban farms can be divided into those offering on-site experience (leisure farms, educational farms, therapeutic farms, and social farms), local food production, and other examples such as cultural heritage farms, environmental farms, and experimental farms.
- **Participatory planning** aims to involve entire community in the strategic and management processes of planning and decision-making. It is often considered as part of community development where local residents, leaders, and stakeholders cooperate on an equal basis. Participatory planning aims to harmonize views among all of its participants as well as prevent conflicts between opposing parties. In addition, vulnerable and marginalized groups have an opportunity to participate in planning and decision-making.
- **Social inclusion** is the process in which individuals or people are systematically promoted (or enabled full access) to various rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of different groups (e.g. housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation). Social inclusion aims to empower vulnerable and marginalized people to take advantage of global opportunities which affect their lives. It implies equal access regardless of gender, race or other personal characteristics.

3.2 Urban agriculture

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

N = 737



Key findings:

- Significant share of the respondents perceives urban agriculture as untraditional and less developed activity in their municipality. Some of them also think that it is not very easy in their municipality to be involved in urban agriculture.
- However, most of the respondents sees urban agriculture as a potential for improving municipality's economic, social and environmental performance.
- Most of the respondents would also like urban agriculture to be more supported by the municipality, although they are not so sure about the interest among citizens to participate in the activity.
- There are some significant perceptual differences between the main target groups:
 - Vulnerable groups agree more strongly that it is very easy for everyone from their municipality to engage in urban agriculture and see urban agriculture as more traditional and with greater potential to contribute to economic performance of their municipality.
 - Other interested stakeholders think more strongly that urban agriculture is less developed in their municipality.



What are the main benefits of urban agriculture for citizens in your municipality?
 Please, answer the questions with up to three keywords.



N = 518

Key findings:

- Respondents provided 1268 keywords, of which 315 were different. From the perspective of the individual keywords, they see the main benefits of urban agriculture in community building (73 answers) and providing jobs (72), following by benefits for the environment (56) and health (56).
- Vulnerable groups stand out from the other two target groups as they more often named economic benefits (21%), such as jobs and income, compared to other interested stakeholders (17%) and decision-makers (16%). To a slightly higher extent they also perceive spatial benefits (9%), such as nicer environment or aesthetics, in comparison to other two groups (5%). On the other hand, social benefits, such as community building, socializing, and social inclusion, were valued as somehow less important for them.
- Responses, revealing the perception of urban agriculture's main benefits were also significantly different between pilot areas. Economic benefits were the most often named in Blagoevgrad (28%), to almost the same extent than well-being benefits (28%). High percentage of responses, related to economic benefits, was also noticeable in Ulcinj (24%). Social benefits were highly valued in Székesfehérvár (28%), mostly at the expense of economic benefits (4%). On the other hand, social benefits of urban agriculture were not recognized as highly valuable in Vaslui (6%) and Velenje (10%). In both pilot areas, food benefits, such as producing healthy, organic and local food, were evaluated as more important (17%) compared to the other pilot areas. There was also above average number of responses of well-being benefits in Velenje (47%).



What are the main obstacles for development of urban agriculture in your municipality?
Please, answer the questions with up to three keywords.



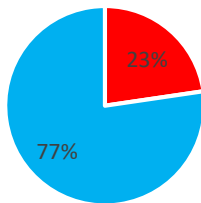
N = 485

Key findings:

- Respondents provided 1059 keywords, of which 150 were different. The most frequently exposed keyword was insufficient agricultural lands (106 answers), closely followed by lack of finance (99). Lack of information (71), lack of interest (71), lack of knowledge (57) and space (43) were also stated quite frequently.
- Associations most frequently belonged to the category of physical-environmental obstacles (290 or 27%), mostly lack of appropriate space for gardening or farming. The second most frequent group of associations were motivational obstacles (19%), namely lack of interest, closely followed by informational obstacles (17%), such as lack of information or lack of knowledge. Similarly, important were also political & administrative obstacles (15%), such as lack of support, bureaucracy, and legislation.
- Responses did not differ very much between target groups. Vulnerable groups more often named obstacles, related to physical environment (29%) and finances (14%), while they do not see motivational obstacles of such importance (15%) in comparison to other interested stakeholders (20%) and decision makers (22%). Political and administrative obstacles were more often stated by other interested stakeholders (18%).

Have you ever been involved in any urban agricultural activity?

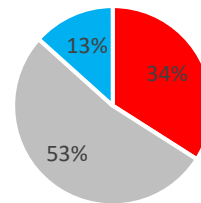
N = 688



■ Yes ■ No

If no, would you like to be involved in urban agriculture?

N = 532



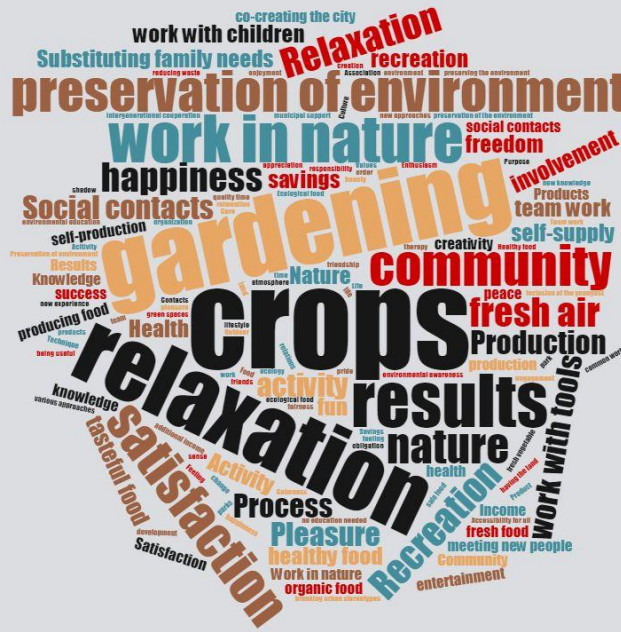
■ Yes ■ Maybe ■ No

Key findings:

- ¼ of the respondents have already been involved in some urban agricultural activity so far. Among those that have not been yet, only a very small share is persistent in not even trying it.
- Vulnerable groups have been involved into urban agriculture more often than the other two groups. In terms of future orientation, there are no difference between the target groups.
- Ulcinj is the only municipality with less experienced respondents in urban agriculture. That comes as no surprise, since, in contrast to other municipalities, Ulcinj does not have any urban agricultural site (except family gardens). In terms of future orientation, there is more interest in Blagoevgrad and Ulcinj, whereas Velenje and Prague 9 show lower motivational tendencies.



What do you like most when you are engaged in urban agriculture?⁵
Please, answer the questions with up to three keywords.



N = 134

Key findings:

Respondents, who were already involved in some urban agricultural activity, named 282 keywords, of which 122 were different. 37% of answers corresponded to a wide range of motivational factors, related to well-being, such as relaxation & recreation, work in nature or being on fresh air, happiness & satisfaction etc. Of a high importance was also production (26%), such as crops, results, healthy and fresh food, savings etc., followed by the process or the agricultural activity itself (17%), such as gardening, working with tools or creativity. A group of factors, related to socializing (12%) and environmental protection (8%) were somehow less important.

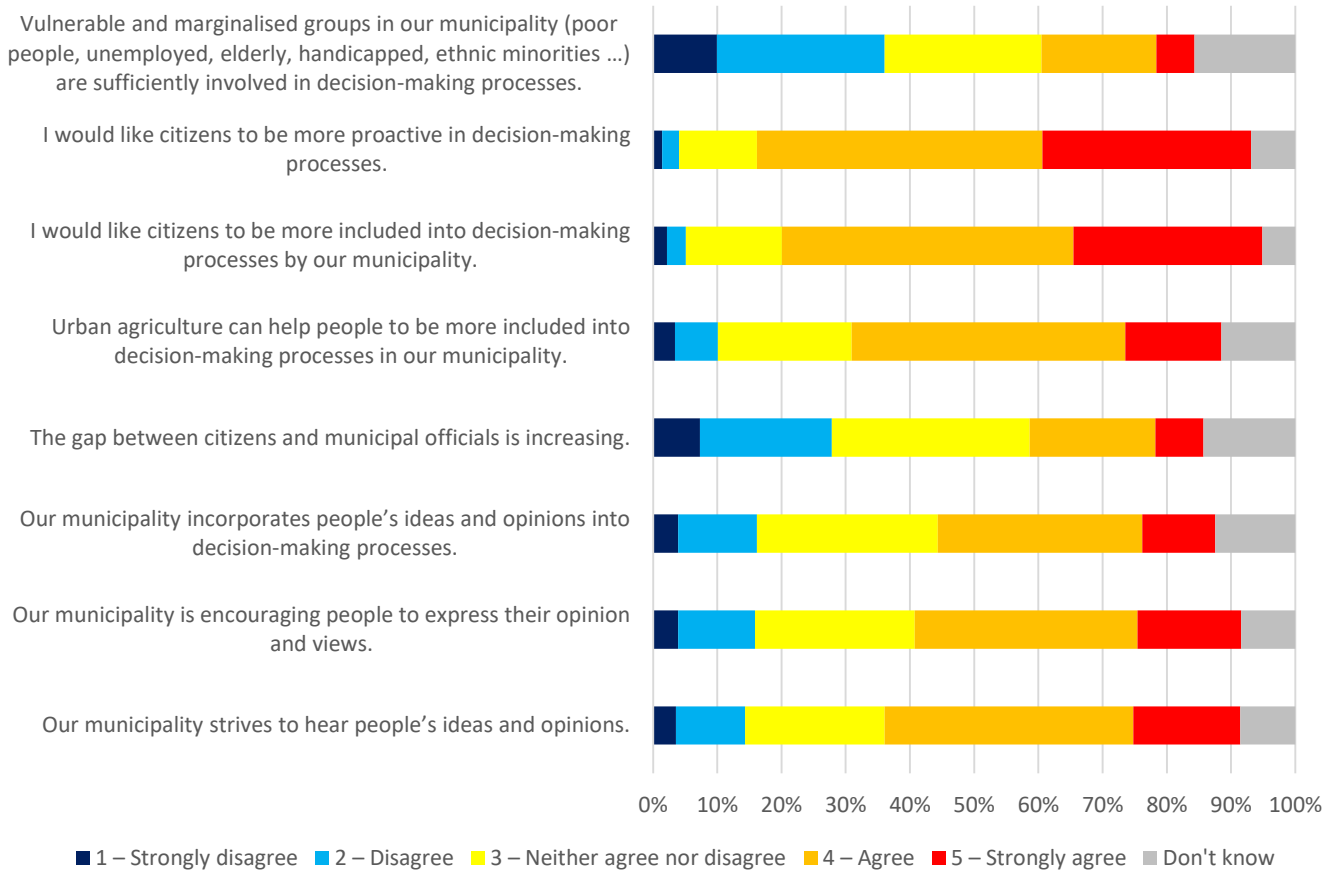
⁵ Only those that have been involved in some urban agricultural activity.
Project co-funded by European Union funds (ERDF, IPA, ENI).



3.3 Participatory planning

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

N = 643



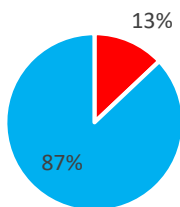
Key findings:

- More than 1/3 of the respondents think that vulnerable and marginalised groups are not sufficiently involved into decision-making processes.
- The vast majority of the respondents would like citizens (1) to be more included on the one hand and (2) to be more proactive on the other hand in decision-making processes.
- Most of the respondents also think that urban agriculture can help people to be more involved into decision-making processes.
- Most of the respondents think that their municipality encourages people to express their opinion and views, strives to hear people's ideas and opinions and incorporates them into decision-making processes. Significant proportion of the respondents disagree with the statement that the gap between citizens and municipal officials is increasing.
- There are some significant perceptual differences between the main target groups:
 - Decision-makers generally support greater inclusion of citizens into decision-making processes but to a slightly lesser extent compared to other two groups. The difference between decision-makers and other two groups is greater when talking about the gap between municipal officials and citizens. Significantly more decision-makers deny such a statement.



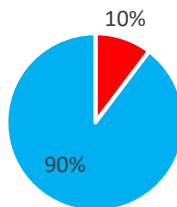
- Other interested stakeholders more strongly agree that vulnerable and marginalised groups are not sufficiently involved into decision-making processes. They are also more critical about municipal efforts to encourage people to express their opinion and views, to hear them, and incorporate them into decision-making processes.
- Vulnerable groups are a bit less confident about the role of urban agriculture to help people to be more included into decision-making processes.

Have you ever been involved in a participatory planning process?



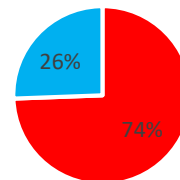
■ Yes ■ No

Have you ever tried to initiate a participatory planning process?



■ Yes ■ No

Would you like to be involved in a participatory planning process?



■ Yes ■ No N = 641

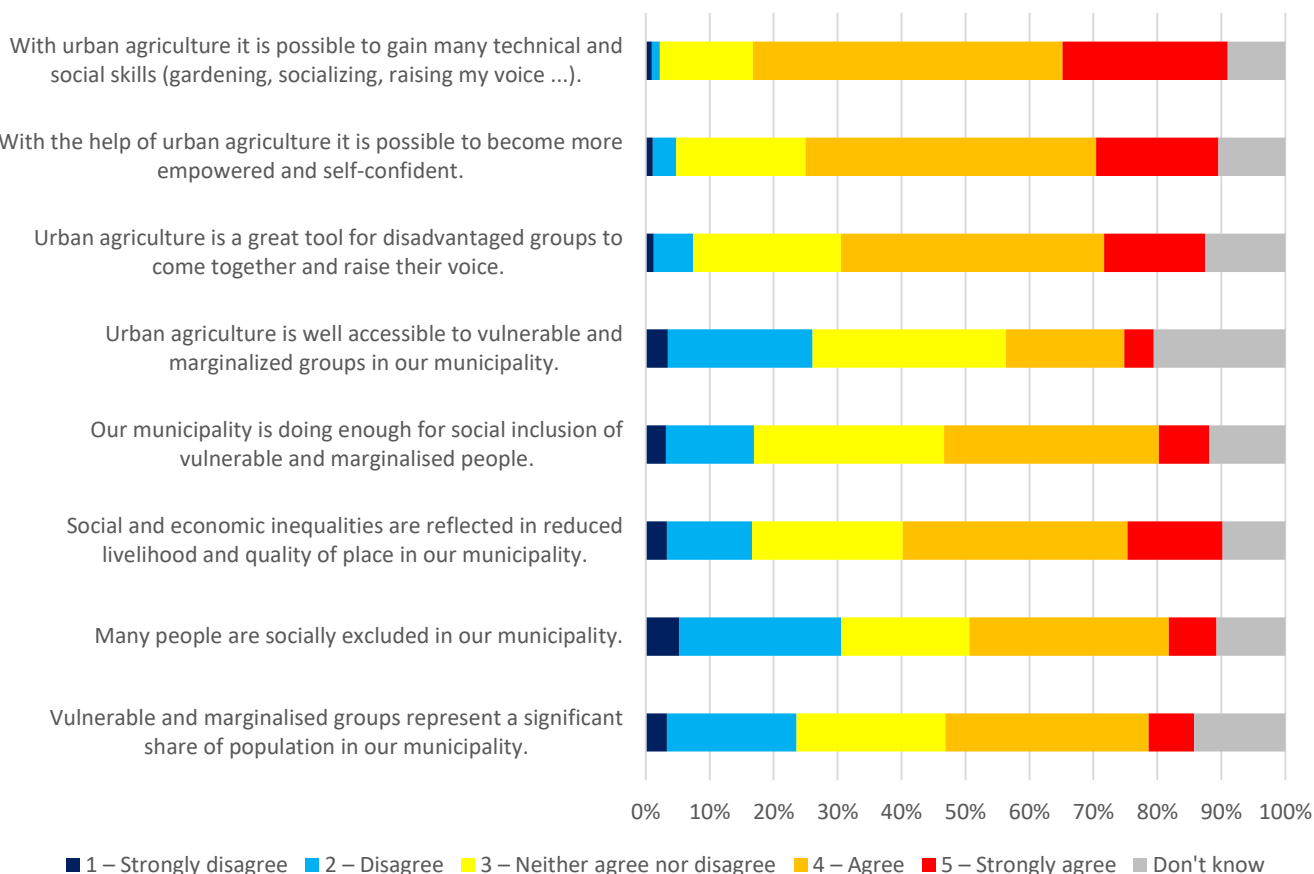
Key findings:

- Only a small share of the respondents has been involved in a participatory planning process and has tried to initiate it so far. However, $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents would like to be involved in a participatory planning process.
- Vulnerable groups have been involved in a participatory planning less often and have tried to initiate it less often so far. On the contrary, they also expressed less desire to be involved in future participatory planning processes.
- Prague 9 is the most experienced when being involved into participatory planning processes. Respondents are more experienced also in Székesfehérvár and Velenje but significantly less in Ulcinj, Vaslui and Blagoevgrad.
- Quite the opposite, respondents from Prague 9 are by far the least interested to be involved in participatory planning processes followed by Székesfehérvár and Velenje, whereas respondents from Ulcinj, Vaslui and Blagoevgrad express stronger aspirations for participation.
- Pilot areas do not significantly differ when it comes to initiation of participatory planning processes.

3.4 Social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

N = 632



Key findings:

- Most of the respondents support the general idea of urban agriculture as applicable to (1) gain technical and social skills, (2) become empowered and self-confident, (3) bring disadvantaged groups together to raise their voice.
- However, lots of people see urban agriculture as poorly accessible to vulnerable groups in their municipality.
- Significant share of the respondents thinks that within their municipality (1) many people are socially excluded, (2) vulnerable groups represent a significant share of population, (3) socio-economic inequalities affect reduced livelihood and quality of place. Surprisingly, a similar share of the respondents think that their municipality is doing enough for social inclusion of vulnerable groups. However, other interested stakeholders are significantly more sceptical in these regards.
- Significant share of members of vulnerable groups were unable to answer these questions.



4 Policy recommendations

The survey clearly determined the opinion of the target groups that relate to the potential of urban agriculture to enhance participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development. The observed preferences and the differences between the target groups provide a basis to develop the policy recommendations that could be structured along the following three themes:

4.1 Provision of land and funding for urban agriculture

The respondents mostly perceive urban agriculture as untraditional and less developed in their municipalities, although they (vulnerable groups in particular) see the potential for improving economic, social and environmental performance in it. To this end, the respondents would like urban agriculture to receive more institutional support in the form of land and finance. If we take into account the main benefits of urban agriculture, investments in urban agriculture pay off mostly in improved well-being of citizens, namely better health, quality of leisure time, and reduced level of stress. Other benefits, such as economic or social, should not be overlooked. It should not come as a surprise that economic benefits of urban agriculture are of greater importance for vulnerable groups as it can slightly improve their (in most cases worse) financial standing by providing them jobs, income and savings through free food. Therefore, municipalities should invest more efforts to overcome a lack of appropriate space for gardening and farming. In many cases, this can be improved with land use policy and management such as enabling urban agriculture on municipal vacant land or planning for new agricultural areas instead of vast transport infrastructure or shopping malls. In addition, small funding to equip the identified agricultural areas with proper infrastructure and tools would contribute a lot to increased level of urban agricultural activity.

4.2 Awareness-raising, knowledge and information on urban agriculture

Large percentage of respondents reported motivational and informational obstacles for the development of urban agriculture, namely lack of interest, information and knowledge. As the development of urban agriculture in the Danube Region is still more or less in the initial phase, being perceived as 'rural' and without tradition in the local culture in urban areas, also soft measures will be needed to increase the level interest among the inhabitants. Relevant institutions, such as local authorities and other interested stakeholders (e.g. NGOs) should therefore invest more efforts into facilitating awareness-raising campaigns, developing information tools and organizing educational courses about the benefits of urban agriculture in social, economic and environmental sense.

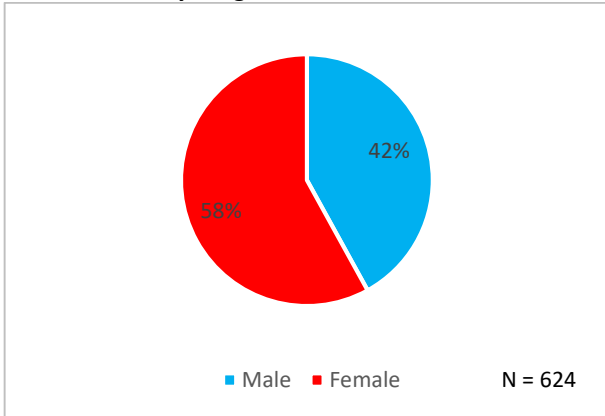
4.3 Urban gardens and farms as meeting points of the target groups

Most of the respondents agree that their municipality encourages people to express their opinion and views, strives to hear people's ideas and opinions and incorporates them into decision-making processes. The respondents would also like citizens to be more included on the one hand and to be more proactive in decision-making processes on the other hand. They agree that urban agriculture can act as a helpful tool to achieve these visions. However, there are some perceptual differences between the target groups that could be solved with their more frequent interaction. Decision-makers generally support greater inclusion of citizens into decision-making processes but to a slightly lesser extent compared to other two groups. They also more strongly disagree with the view that the gap between citizens and municipal officials is increasing. On the other hand, other interested stakeholders are more critical about municipal efforts to encourage people to express their opinion and views, to hear them,

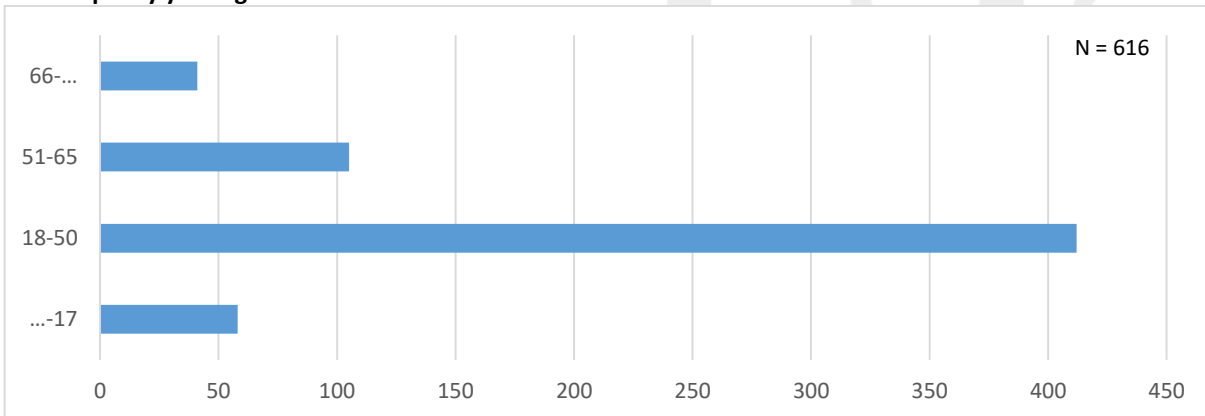
and incorporate them into decision-making processes, especially when dealing with vulnerable and marginalised groups. To bridge these gaps, the target groups could jointly use urban gardens/farms as meeting points and places of public discussion and participation. Since they all believe that urban agriculture can help people to be more involved into decision-making processes, the local authorities could organize public events on the grounds of urban agriculture more often. Instead of all the decisions being discussed and accepted during closed sessions of the city council, some of them (e.g. participatory budget) could be debated also outdoors, in public green environments and among people (similar to Greek's agora). Such models could work, while most of respondents expressed a desire to be involved in participatory planning processes.

5 Appendix – demographic section

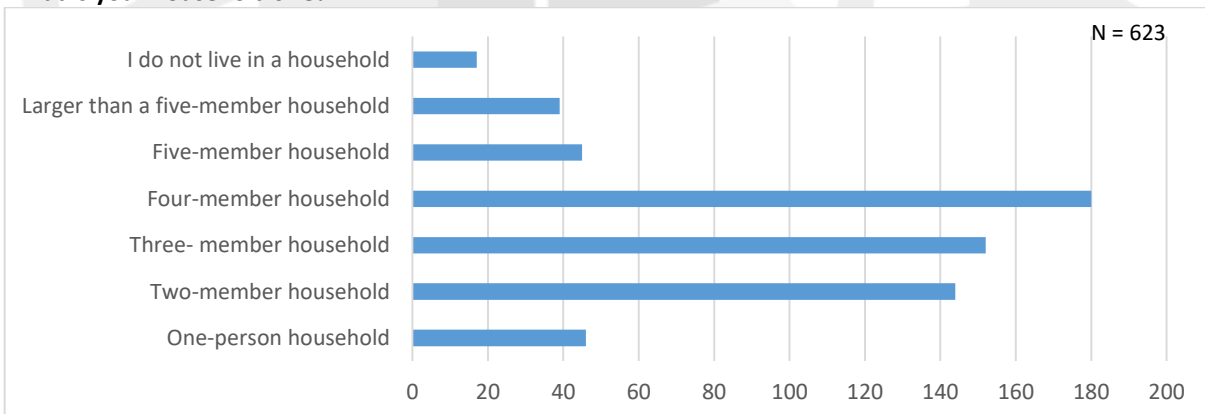
Please indicate your gender.



Please specify your age.

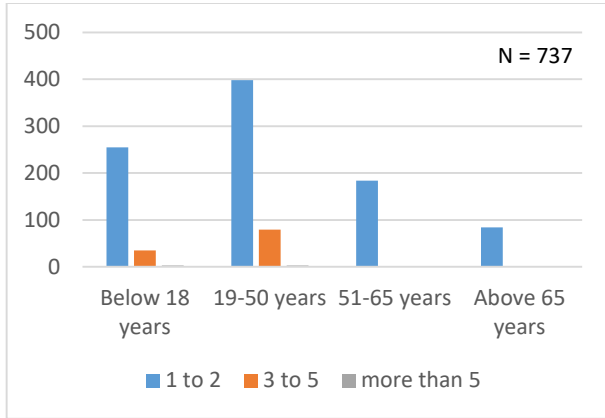


What is your household size?

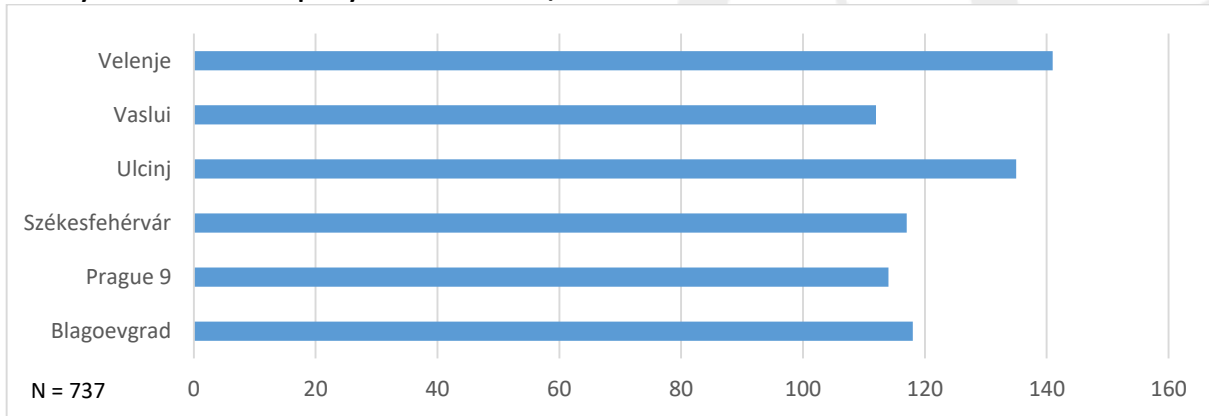


Indicate number of household members in a given age group.

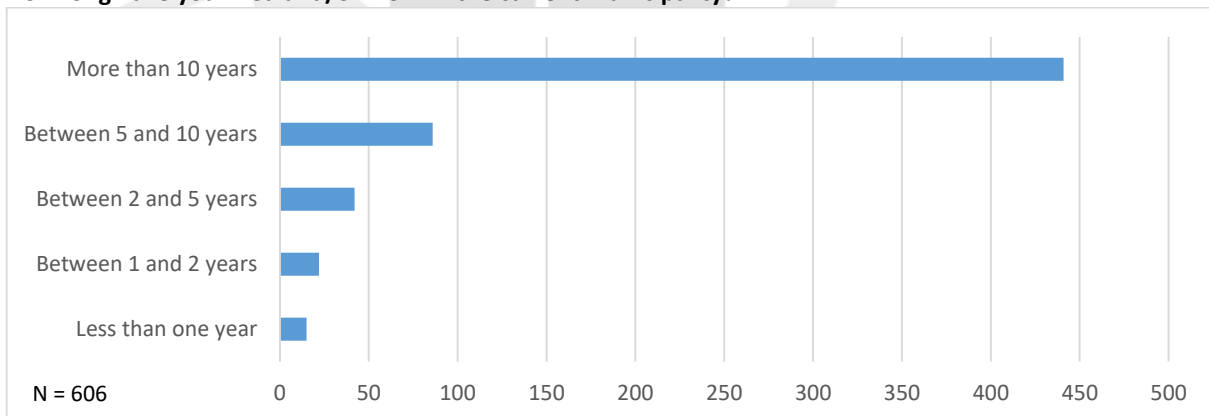




Select your current municipality of residence and/or work.

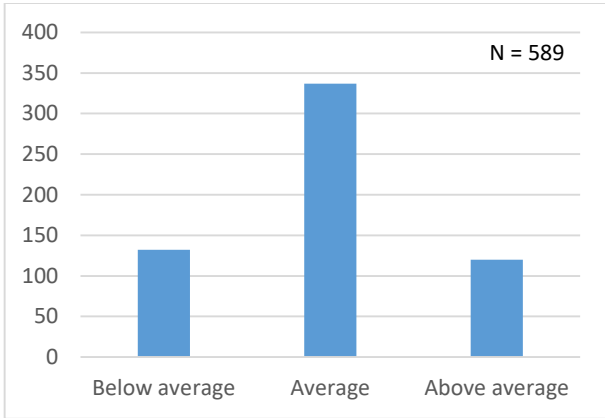


How long have you lived and/or work in the current municipality?

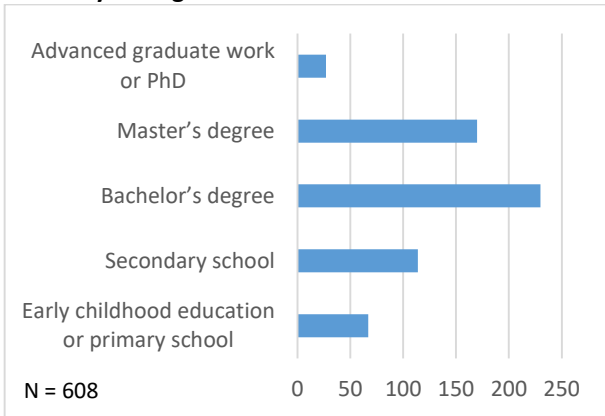


Please indicate your personal income per month compared to your national average.

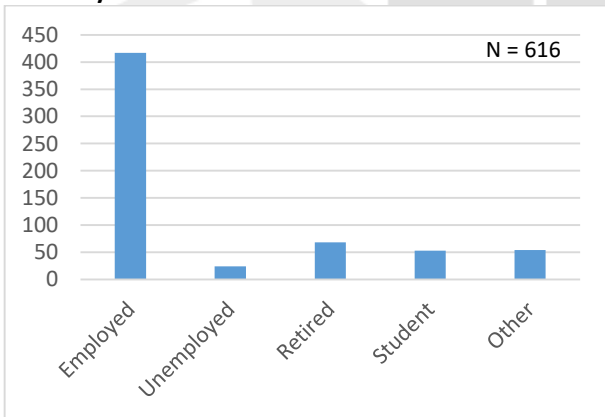




What is your highest level of education received?

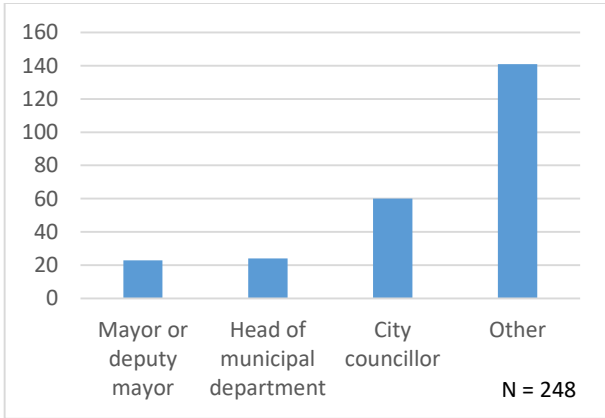


What is your current status?

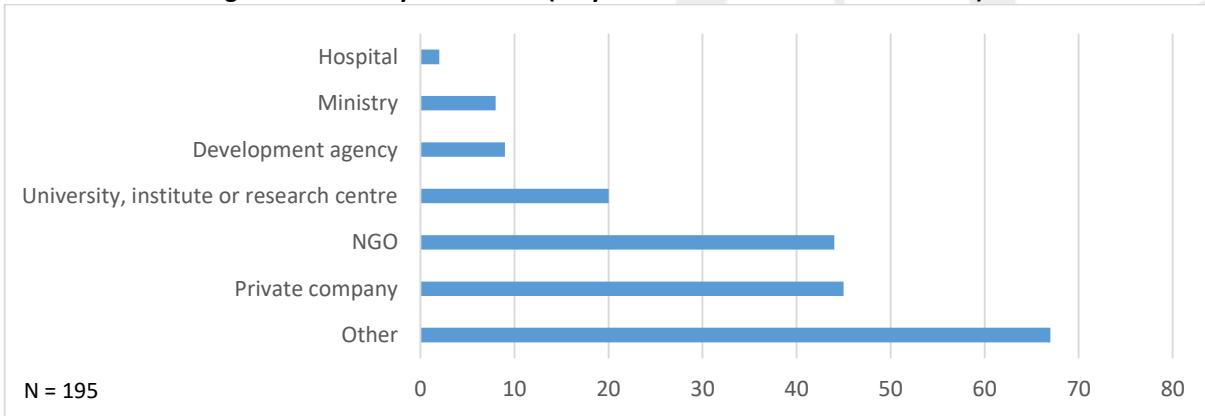


Please define your role in the municipality (only for decision-makers).





Please define the organisation that you work for (only for other interested stakeholders).



Do you take vulnerable and marginalised groups into account at your daily work?

