

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

Evaluation report on the end-project effectiveness of participatory urban  
agriculture in pilot areas (ex-post)  
**FINAL VERSION**

Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts,  
Anton Melik Geographical Institute

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## 1 Introduction

This report is the final result of the AgriGo4Cities project<sup>1</sup> and the second part of a two-stage evaluation process. The ex-ante evaluation assessed the pre-project effectiveness of participatory urban agriculture in 2017, while the current ex-post evaluation serves to assess the end-project effectiveness of participatory urban agriculture in 2019. Their comparison reveals project progress and the change brought by the newly adopted participatory approach in urban governance.

The main purpose of the ex-ante evaluation was to obtain opinion of the target groups that relate to the potentials of urban agriculture to enhance participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development. The target groups encompassed:

- public administrators,
- vulnerable and marginalized groups,
- other interested stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, associations, development agencies, universities).

The ex-ante evaluation was performed in six pilot areas of the Danube region:

- Municipality of Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria),
- Municipal district Prague 9 (Czech Republic),
- Municipality of Székesfehérvár (Hungary),
- Municipality of Ulcinj (Montenegro),
- Municipality of Vaslui (Romania),
- Municipality of Velenje (Slovenia).

The ex-ante evaluation was executed in 2017 just before the beginning of the main project activities that encompassed:

- transnational training session in Munich (November 2017);
- organisation of six study visits in six different countries;
- establishment of six local partnerships;
- organisation of local workshops (three in each pilot area);
- development of six action plans;
- establishment of six urban gardens;
- final transnational conference in Budapest (March 2019).

The ex-post evaluation was then executed in 2019 immediately after the implementation of the main project activities. It addressed the same target groups in the same pilot areas by the same set of questions as the ex-ante evaluation (chapter 3). The only added questions were related to direct experience with the AgriGo4Cities project activities (chapter 4). Main comparative findings between ex-ante and ex-post evaluation are synthesised in the conclusions (chapter 5).

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<sup>1</sup> Urban agriculture for changing cities: governance models for better institutional capacities and social inclusion (AgriGo4Cities) is a transnational project financed by the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme. The main aim is to develop participatory urban agriculture as a tool to improve public institutional capacities for tackling social exclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups and stimulating sustainable urban development in the Danube Region. For more information, see the official project website: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/agrigo4cities>.  
Project co-funded by European Union funds (ERDF, IPA, ENI).

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Survey description

The ex-post evaluation took place from 8<sup>th</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2019. It was structured along five thematic sections. The first thematic section investigates familiarity with the basic terms such as urban agriculture, participatory planning and social inclusion. The next three sections are interested in the subjective preferences of the target groups about the potentials of urban agriculture to foster participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development in pilot areas. The last thematic section relates to participation in the AgriGo4Cities project activities and the general evaluation of the impact the participation had on the respondents' view on benefits of the participatory urban agriculture. The ex-post evaluation questionnaire 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 was 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), elderlies and children (Velenje) and single mothers with children (Prague 9). In the ex-post stage, only people who participated in any of the project activities were included in the sample. Consequently, the number of ex-post respondents was in many cases significantly lower in comparison with the ex-ante survey, but in general still sufficient to run basic statistical analyses.

Table 1: The structure of respondents in the ex-ante and ex-post survey.

	Public administrators		Vulnerable and marginalized groups		Other interested stakeholders		Total	
	Ex-ante	Ex-post	Ex-ante	Ex-post	Ex-ante	Ex-post	Ex-ante	Ex-post
Municipality of Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria)	58	30	30	31	30	30	118	91
Municipality of Székesfehérvár (Hungary)	59	19	27	12	31	17	117	48
Municipality of Ulcinj (Montenegro)	32	19	54	2	49	5	135	26
Municipality of Vaslui (Romania)	46	29	31	14	35	31	112	74
Municipality of Velenje (Slovenia)	55	12	50	21	36	19	141	52
Municipal district Prague 9 (Czech Republic)	28	28	26	42	60	27	114	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>388</b>



### 2.3 Description of methods

The results of the evaluation are presented by employing charts. The differences between ex-ante and ex-post evaluation were calculated by using the t-test or a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. The differences between target groups and municipalities were assessed by Kruskal-Wallis H test and Mann-Whitney U test as a post-hoc test. Mostly statistically significant differences are highlighted in the report.



### 3 Results

#### 3.1 Familiarity with the basic terms<sup>2</sup>

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

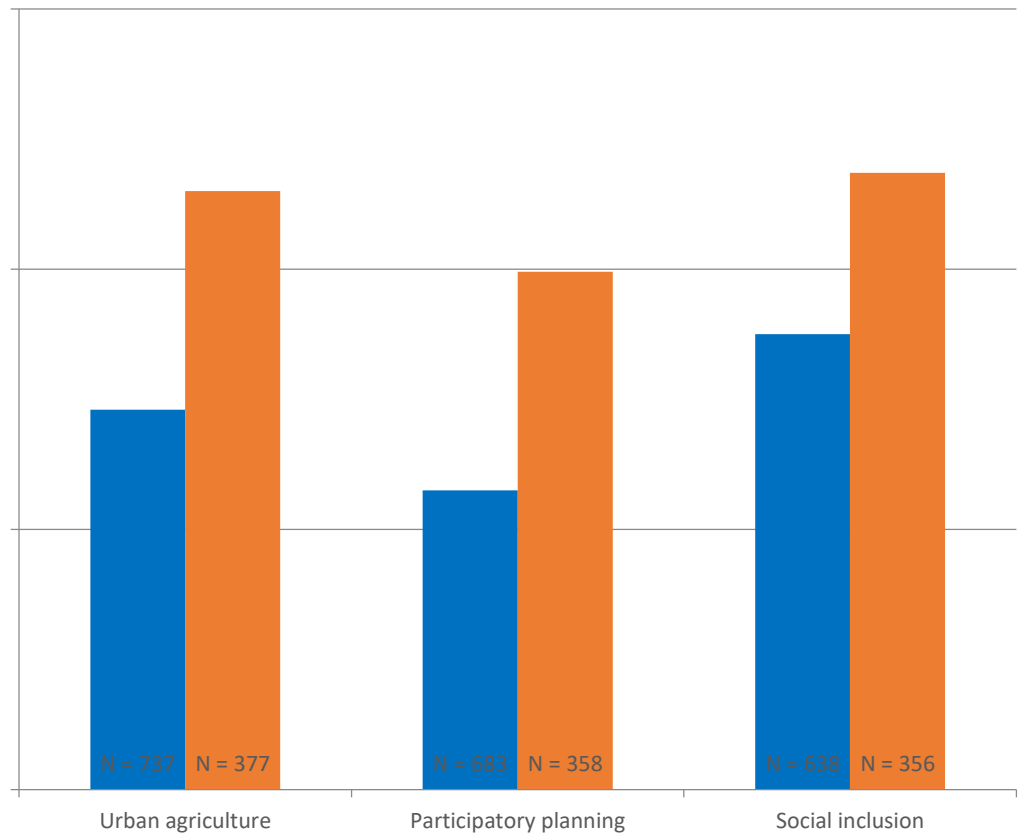
■ ex-ante  
■ ex-post

4 - I perfectly know what it means.

3 - I know what it means but don't know the exact definition.

2 - I heard about it but don't know exactly what it means.

1 - Not at all.



<sup>2</sup> 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.



**Key findings from EX-ANTE:**

- 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.

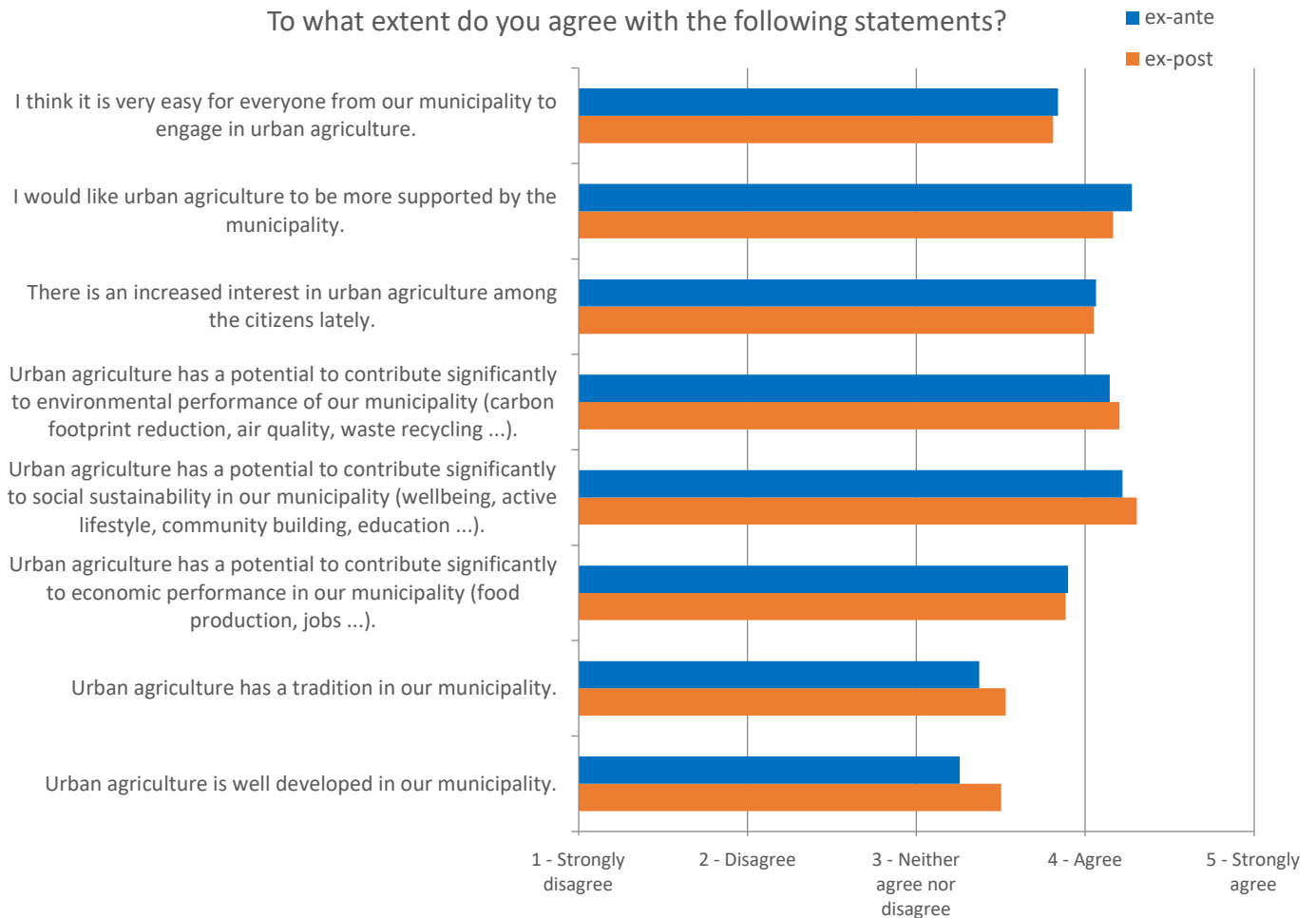
**Key changes from EX-POST:**

- The understanding of all three basic terms significantly improved among respondents.
- Statistically significant improvement was observed among public administrators and members of vulnerable groups for all three basic terms. The understanding improved the most among vulnerable groups, especially for the term participatory planning. The understanding of other interested stakeholders significantly improved for urban agriculture and participatory planning, but stayed at the same level for social inclusion.
- No changes were observed in Prague 9 (for all of three terms) and Székesfehérvár (for the term participatory planning).



### 3.2 Urban agriculture

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



#### Key findings from EX-ANTE:

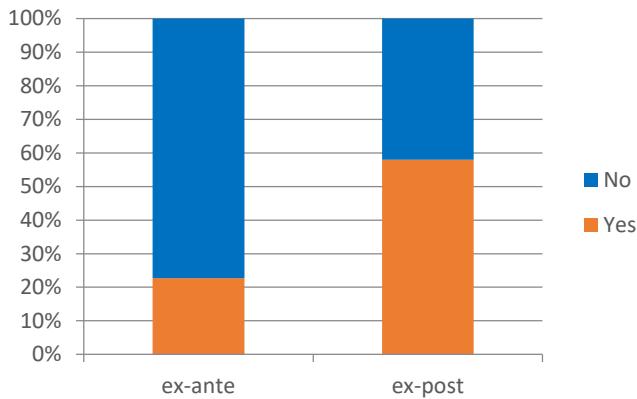
- Significant share of the respondents perceives urban agriculture as untraditional and less developed activity in their municipality. Some of them also think that it is not very easy in their municipality to be involved in urban agriculture.
- However, most of the respondents sees urban agriculture 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.



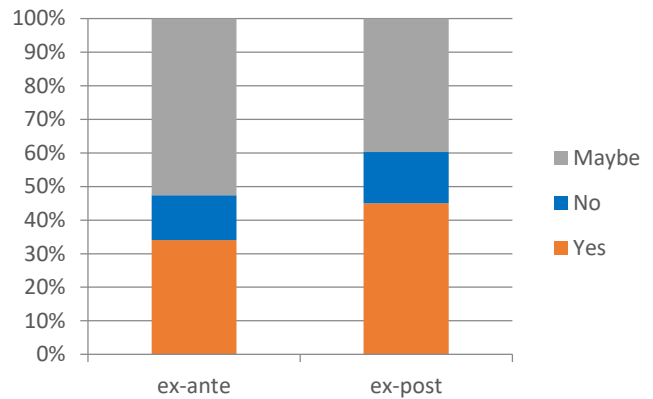
**Key changes from EX-POST:**

- Significantly more people see urban agriculture as traditional and more developed activity in their municipality, which can be directly attributed to the effects of pilot actions.
- Surprisingly, less respondents see a need to support urban agriculture by the municipality. However, the need for support still remains at a high level. Decreased interest for further municipal support could potentially be explained by two reasons:
  - gardeners' satisfaction with new developments and/or;
  - gardeners' recognition that municipal support should favour more bottom-up instead of top-down approach by limiting to just some aspects of urban agriculture (e.g. land provision, financing of tool and infrastructure) and letting most of the tasks to be performed by users (e.g. formulation of rules, control, organisation of events).
- There were no significant perceptual changes among public administrators. However, other interested stakeholders significantly changed their perception in terms of seeing urban agriculture as more developed and with greater potentials to foster sustainable urban development. In opposite, vulnerable groups assessed development and potentials of urban agriculture for sustainable development as less relevant. It could be hypothesised that pilot actions of urban agriculture made a more positive impact on other interested stakeholders than on vulnerable groups.
- There were no significant changes among municipalities, except in Vaslui and Blagoevgrad. Respondents from Vaslui took a more critical stance by seeing less potential in urban agriculture for sustainable urban development and less need for municipal assistance. They also think it is harder to be engaged in urban agriculture. People from Blagoevgrad perceive urban agriculture as more developed and consequently see less need for municipal support.

Have you ever been involved in any urban agricultural activity?



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



**Key findings from EX-ANTE:**

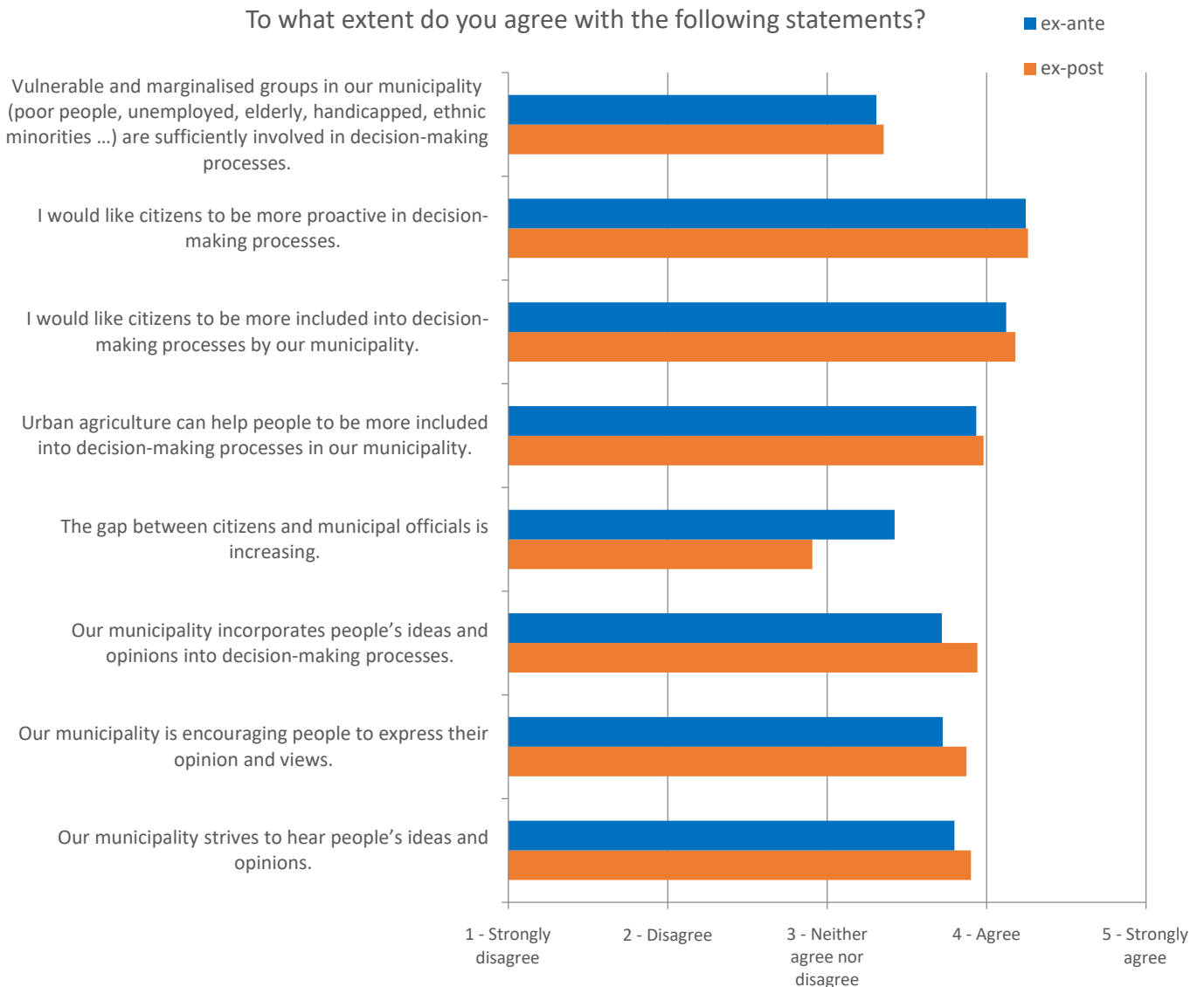
- ¼ of the respondents have already been involved in some urban agricultural activity so far. Among those that have not been yet, only a very small share is persistent in not even trying it.
- Vulnerable groups have been involved into urban agriculture more often than the other two groups. In terms of future orientation, there is 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.

**Key changes from EX-POST:**

- There are more people included in urban agriculture nowadays and many more would like to follow the process, which is very encouraging.
- There are no significant differences between the target groups and municipalities.



### 3.3 Participatory planning



#### Key findings from EX-ANTE were:

- 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 to be (1) more included on the one hand and (2) 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



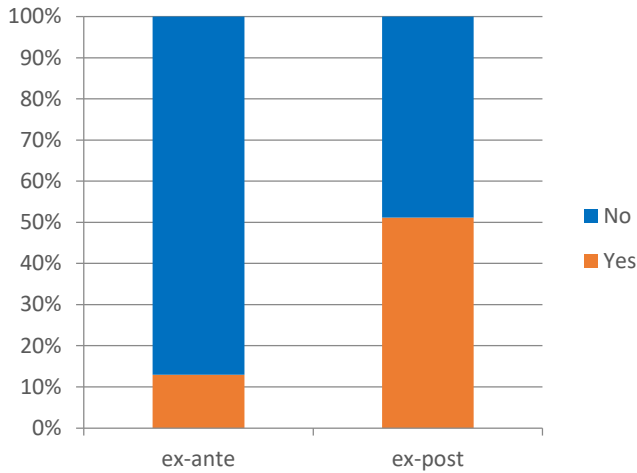
processes. Significant proportion of the respondents disagree with the statement that the gap between citizens and municipal officials is increasing.

- There are some significant perceptual differences between the main target groups:
  - Public administrators generally support greater inclusion of citizens into decision-making processes but to a slightly lesser extent compared to other two groups. The difference between public administrators and other two groups is greater when talking about the gap between municipal officials and citizens. Significantly more public administrators 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.

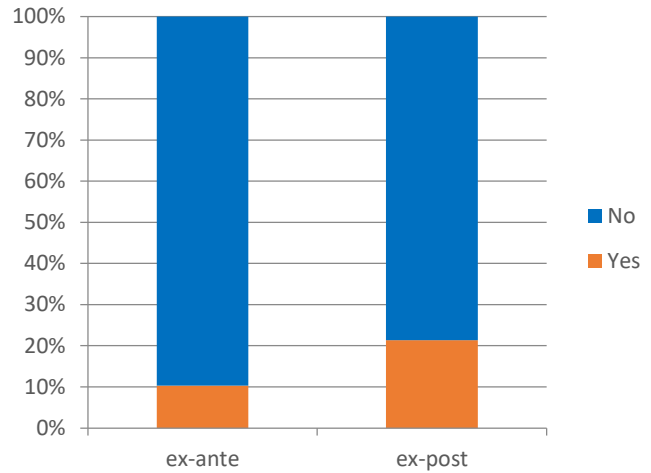
**Key changes from EX-POST are:**

- Respondents generally see positive developments in participatory planning. The most important difference is reflected in increased level of trust. Significantly less people (especially among vulnerable groups and other interested stakeholders) think that the gap between citizens and municipal officials is increasing. According to respondents, the higher level of trust was achieved through increased municipal endeavours to hear people's ideas and opinions and incorporate them into decision-making processes and increased municipal ability to incorporate people's ideas and opinions into decision-making processes.
- However, members of vulnerable groups still think that they are not sufficiently involved into decision-making processes. Probably they became more aware about their rights and possibilities for participation through engagement in the project activities.
- The most positive developments in participatory planning were observed in Blagoevgrad, especially when it comes to increased municipal endeavours to hear people's ideas and opinions and decreased gap between citizens and municipal officials. The latter was also prominently observed in Ulcinj and Vaslui. However, there were no significant improvements in Prague 9 and Velenje, except by stating that more people would like to be included into decision-making processes. These two municipalities already reported some struggles in participatory planning in the past and some obstacles obviously persist even to present time.

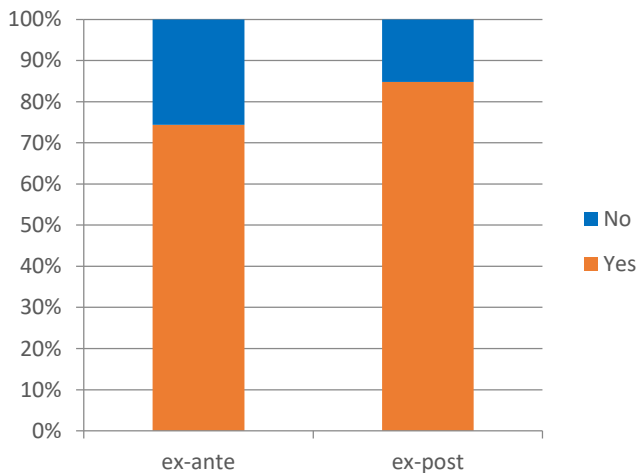
Have you ever been involved in a participatory planning process?



Have you ever tried to initiate a participatory planning process?



Would you like be involved in a participatory planning process?



**Key findings from EX-ANTE were:**

- Only a small share of the respondents has been involved in a participatory planning process and has tried to initiate it so far. However, ¾ 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.

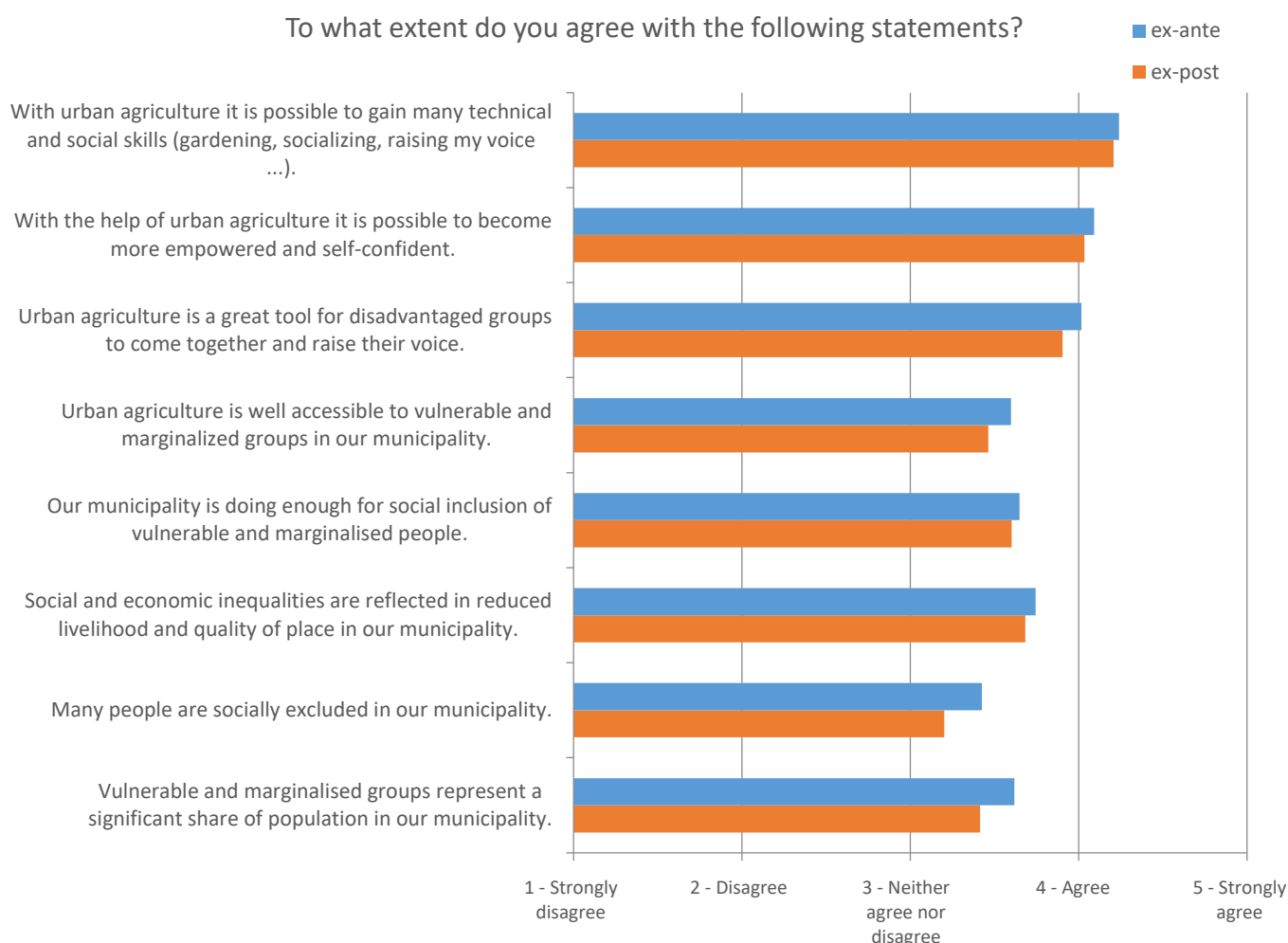


- Quite the opposite, respondents from Prague 9 are by far the least interested to be involved in participatory planning processes followed by Székesfehérvár and Velenje, whereas respondents from Ulcinj, Vaslui and Blagoevgrad express stronger aspirations for participation.
- Pilot areas do not significantly differ when it comes to initiation of participatory planning processes.

**Key changes from EX-POST are:**

- The level of involvement in a participatory planning and the initiation of a whole process significantly increased, which is expected after being engaged in the AgriGo4Cities project.
- However, the experience has obviously been positive when more people would like to attend a participatory planning process in future.

### 3.4 Social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups



**Key findings from EX-ANTE were:**

- 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.



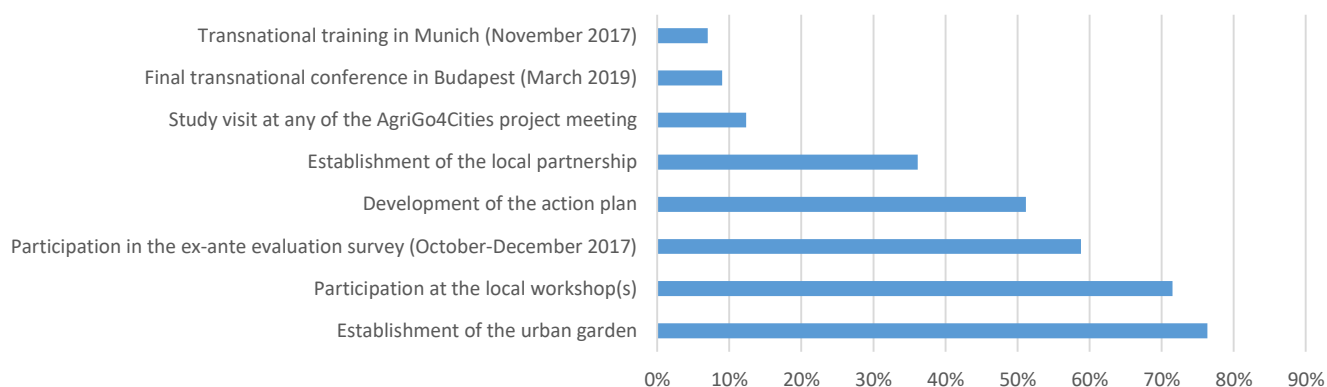


**Key changes from EX-POST are:**

- Respondents see less people as socially excluded in pilot areas and think that vulnerable groups represent a lower share of total population. This view is the most prominent among vulnerable groups themselves.
- However, respondents perceive urban agriculture as a less suitable tool to foster social inclusion. This opinion is the strongest among members of vulnerable groups, while other interested stakeholders still perceive it as an effective method to address disadvantaged communities.
- In Blagoevgrad, respondents are more aware of the presence of vulnerable groups in the town. Contrary, in Ulcinj less respondents think this way. The biggest change is noted in Vaslui: nowadays, they are more aware of the social exclusion and they are also more critical towards the municipal activities to reduce it. They are also more sceptical towards usefulness of urban agriculture as a tool for social inclusion; however, the share of people who see it as useful is still high.

## 4 Experience with the AgriGo4Cities

In which activity of the AgriGo4Cities project have you participated? (N = 386)

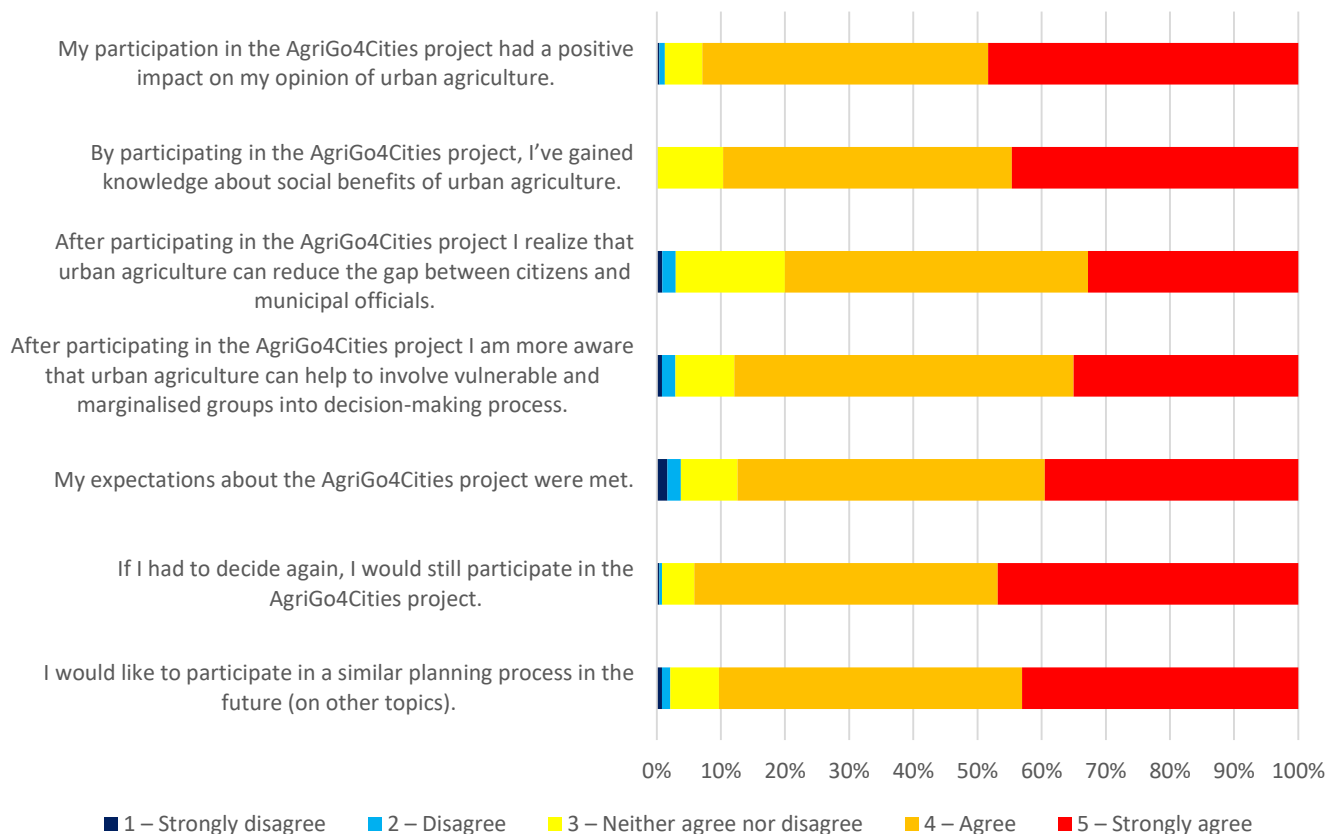


### Key findings from EX-POST are:

- Most of the respondents were involved to key local actions of establishing the urban garden and participating at the workshop(s).
- Many of them were also involved in background actions of participating in the ex-post evaluation survey, developing the action plan and establishing the local partnership.
- However, only a small amount participated in transnational activities such as training, study visits and the final conference.



We would like to know your experience with the AgriGo4Cities project activities.  
To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (N = 240)



**Key findings from EX-POST are:**

- Vast majority of respondents (> 80%) has had positive experience with the AgriGo4Cities project activities and would like to participate in future participatory planning processes (on other topics).
- There are some significant differences between the target groups. Public administrators expressed more positive views on achieved experience throughout the project and see more potential in urban agriculture to promote participatory planning and social inclusion.
- There are also important significant differences between the municipalities. The most positive experience and future orientations are exhibited by Székesfehérvár and Blagoevgrad which are closely followed by Vaslui and Velenje, while Prague and Ulcinj perform a bit lower on a scale.



## 5 Conclusions

The results of the ex-post evaluation clearly indicate that the general understanding and awareness about the project key themes significantly improved throughout the AgriGo4Cities project timeframe. People, especially vulnerable groups and public administrators, are more familiar with subjects of urban agriculture, participatory planning, social inclusion and their interrelatedness.

One of the key changes is that more people see urban agriculture as traditional and more developed activity in their municipality, which can be directly attributed to the effects of the AgriGo4Cities project activities. Ultimately, there are significantly more people included in urban agriculture nowadays and many more would like to follow the process in all pilot areas. However, less respondents see a need for urban agriculture to be supported by the municipality, although this desire still remains on a high level. The reason for such feedback could be twofold. Participants either became satisfied with new developments through the AgriGo4Cities project or would like to see a more bottom-up approach instead of top-down interventions from local authorities. This question certainly needs deeper investigation and more discussion between gardeners, public administrators and other interested stakeholders on how to cooperate and organize urban agriculture in future.

The emphasis on participatory approach obviously left a positive mark in opinion of the respondents since they would like to be more included in similar participatory actions. Significantly more people also think that the gap between decision-makers and citizens after the implementation of the AgriGo4Cities project is decreasing, which pinpoints to the increased level of trust in pilot areas. Many more respondents think that local authorities increased endeavours and abilities to hear people's ideas and opinions and incorporate them into decision-making processes. It obviously turned out that urban agriculture can be applied as a powerful tool to foster participatory planning.

Although respondents recognize less people as socially excluded in pilot areas, and this view is the most prominent among vulnerable groups, they expressed some doubts about the potentials of urban agriculture to address social exclusion. Vulnerable groups also expressed some critical notes on their involvement in decision-making processes. Compared to other target groups, which expressed a more positive stance, they see the established methodology of participatory urban agriculture as less suitable to cover their needs.

The AgriGo4Cities project obviously managed to make a positive change when it comes to development of urban agriculture and participatory planning. Many people would like to participate in both processes in future. It is extremely positive that especially public administrators see participatory planning as a relevant process that could be fostered also through urban agriculture. Other interested stakeholders also expressed some very positive reflections about the whole process. However, the project did not reach expected potentials in a full scope when it comes to social inclusion, at least not from the survey results. Critical observations from vulnerable groups signal an ongoing need to address their specificities with better solutions.