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## What is STEP?

via the project website: www.step4youth.eu.

STEP aims to develop and pilot test a cloud eParticipation platform, (available as a mobile application and through a web platform) enhanced with web / social media mining, gamification, machine translation, and visualisation features, which will promote the societal and political participation of young people in the decision-making process on environmental issues.

duration of the STEP project. Each issue will be available in a pdf format

STEP is since June 2015 in place and we, the project team, are pleased to welcome you on the pages of our first newsletter. We hope you will enjoy reading this issue and look forward to receiving your feedback.

The main component of STEP will be an eParticipation platform which will facilitate the interaction between end users (policy makers and young people), combining trend spotting and foresight with idea creation and innovation management, and will enable policy makers to analyse and discover new insights, based on well proven analytical methods.



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## Why is participation of EU youth in environmental issues important?

Europe's future depends on its youth. Promoting youth participation is fundamental in the EU policy. Especially for environmental issues, the participation of young people in decision making is extremely important, as decisions taken now on matters such as climate change, the depletion of resources, and the loss of biodiversity will have long-term consequences that will affect the future gener-

ations. Young people will have to live longer with the consequences of current decisions, and have special concerns and responsibilities in relation to the environment. The concept of public participation is also a fundamental principle in environmental law, while the Aarhus Convention, signed by the European Community and its Member States in 1998, gives the public the right to obtain informa-

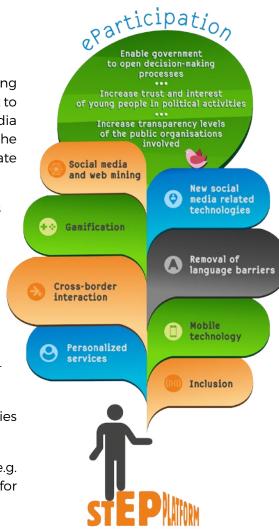
tion on environmental issues and participate in decision-making.

However, according to recent findings of the Eurobarometer, half of the young people tend to distrust the European Union. Traditional channels of representative democracy, such as voting at elections and joining political parties, only partially stimulate young people's interest in active participation.

# The technology behind STEP

The STEP cloud platform will integrate the following components:

- Social media / web mining component that will enable young people to view personalised and enriched information relevant to the topic they are viewing, filtered through multiple social media and web sources, in one unified environment. This eliminates the need to search for content on multiple platforms, and to navigate through the overflow of information available.
- Machine translation component that will allow users to access content from other countries in their own language, removing language barriers and fostering cross-border interaction.
- Text-to-Speech technology that will enable text to be read to users, and allow also visually impaired people to use the STEP platform
- Visualisation features that will enable public authorities to view visual representations of data input by young users, identify patterns, spot trends, and easily analyse feedback.
- Social media monitoring tool that will enable public authorities to effectively plan engagement strategies for youth
- Gamification features which will include specific rewards (e.g. awards, badges, competitions, etc.) for increasing motivation for participation of young citizens.





# Why should you be interested in STEP?

STEP addresses the need of public organisations to effectively open their decision-making procedures that have an environmental impact to young people, while it enables young citizens to participate in these procedures giving them the opportunity to bring issues to the attention of policy makers.

## ARE YOU BETWEEN 18 AND 29 YEARS OLD AND LOOKING FOR A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN YOUR AREA AND GLOBALLY?

Pantelis is a 21 years old student. He is studding philosophy at the local university and resides at the city centre where most

students live. When he was teenager, he started getting involved in local environmental campaigns, protesting against harmful investments and coordinated actions with specific demands on urban environ-

mental sustainability. Sometimes the demands reached the source of political influence meaning a small victory. But most of the times it was impossible to activate or even approach the authorities regarding environmental matters or to be involved in the decision making processes.

Nowadays, Pantelis is still an active citizen with environmental concerns and operates through the STEP platform. Although, his time is limited due to part-time work in a

small café, he manages to stay informed and constantly updated on the environmental issues through the social media feeds connected to STEP. Now he can easily find information about policy making decisions, expresses his opinion, and motivates his fellow students or even his clients to play environmental games in order to excite their environmental awareness. Additionally, he can perform both as part of a proactive team coordinating arguments and actions using STEP and as individual young citizen receiving feedback from the decision makers. Also, he finds exciting the cross-border interaction with other European stakeholders, provided by STEP in his own language, and prefers to engage with this wider environmental approach.

### ARE YOU A POLICY MAKER TRYING TO QUICKLY OPEN YOUR DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

Ms. Rodriguez is the Mayor of a big municipality in Barcelona. Among her other duties, she has to run various types of decision-making processes, including those concerning controversial local environmental issues. These days, her main concern is the demolition of an amusement park located in the region of her municipality, so that a mall can be erected. However, this park is the green spot of her municipality and the location where the majority of young citizens spend their time, joking, hiking, or even enjoy-

ing the sunshine. As she expected, the announcement of the demolition of the park has aroused many conflicts in the community, with

the younger ones protesting and demanding to take part in the decision.

The Mayor believes herself that the best solution is to pose the issue for public consultation, but a solution has to be found immediately, because the owners of the potential mall are pressing her to accelerate the procedure. Moreo-

ver, she can't afford the risk of the potential budget spent and political costs of public participation with the conventional means, in-

trative and political control.

The STEP platform seems attractive to her as it is specially designed for young people aiming to increase their political and social en-

gagement with the usage of social media and participatory tools. She also needs tools to enhance



the trust, especially of the young, in decision making procedures in order to ensure accountability and social harmony. Furthermore, the STEP platform will help her to

interpret the young citizens' opinion via the visual representation of results which enable her to view patterns and spot trends, facilitating decision making. Hopefully,

this new STEP solution will help her meet the demanding targets of the community involving the youth in political activities with the limited resources available.

## The STEP consortium

#### DRAXIS



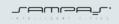






















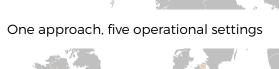


## The STEP External Expert Advisory Board

The External Expert Advisory Board comprises representatives from organisations relevant to youth participation, environment, policy making, data protection, and social media. Their role will be to participate in workshops in which they will review the project activities and outcomes, identify

the strong and weak points with respect to the objectives of the project and the applications of the results, and provide recommendations. For more information on the members of the Board please visit the STEP website (www.step4youth.eu).





Association of the Communities of Locride, Italy

Mollet de Valles Municipality, Spain

under grant agreement No 649493

Region of Crete, Greece

Hatay Metropolitan Municipality, Turkey

Valdemoro Municipality, Spain





## STEP meetings

#### 182 / 6 /2015

**STEP kick-off meeting** took place in Thessaloniki, Greece on the 1st and 2nd of June 2015. All partners were represented and contributed with ideas and expertise to ensure the smooth implementation of the crucial first semester of the project.



#### 586 / 10 /2015

The STEP partners met for the **2nd project meeting** in Istanbul, Turkey on 5th and 6th October 2015. The discussions focused mainly on several technical issues regarding the integration of the STEP platform, as well as on the preparation of the pilot implementations foreseen (current state analysis, barriers, opportunities, solutions, etc.). Moreover, the work done on user needs and on mapping of decision making procedures was presented.



## Progress so far

Until now, the following deliverables have been prepared and submitted to the European Commission:

- "D1.1-Project Management Handbook": summarises all the organisational structure, operating procedures and management tools of the project.
- "D1.2-Minutes of 1st Advisory Board meeting": provides an overview of the most important points discussed during the 1st External Expert Advisory Board meeting of the project.
- "D2.1-Report on decision-making procedures": maps decision making procedures on environmental issues so as to enable the STEP partners to get an insight in the regulatory environment, the stakeholders involved and the potential fields of e-participation applications.
- "D2.2-Report on users' needs and technical requirements": presents the research activities conducted for the definition of user and technical requirements for the STEP platform.
- "D6.1-1st IPR strategy report": provides an overview of the main aspects of IPR that need to be taken into account in the STEP project.
- "D7.1-1st Dissemination Plan": sets the dissemination strategy that will be followed and elaborates the project's dissemination activities that will be executed throughout the duration of the project.





## Learn more about **STEP**

Visit now the STEP website www.step4youth.eu. There you can find any information relevant to STEP you are looking for: the project objectives, updates from the pilots, partners' contact details, interesting news, public deliverables, dissemination material, and much more...

Also join STEP in social media to be constantly updated about all project news and activities.



: STEP H2020 Project



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: Step Horizon2020

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