T5.5:
Local Democracy Lab Iceland, January 2021

WP5 – Dissemination and engagement

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822337.

Populism and Civic Engagement

Local Democracy Labs

Trust in public administration, in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic

The aim of this report is to present the outcomes of the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland, a contribution of twenty-seven participants to the qualitative research on *"Trust in public administration, in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic"*. The local democracy lab was hosted by the City of Reykjavík, a partner of the PaCE project. It was the first online democracy lab in a series of six local democracy labs planned to be held in six different European countries.

Acknowledgments

The organisation and implementation of the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland would not be possible without the financial contribution of the ***PaCE – Populism and Civil Engagement*** project financed by the European Union´s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the grant agreement No 822337.

We acknowledge the active participation of twenty-seven participants for bringing their insights, knowledge, experience and contribution to the research on populism movement, and for engaging in such a, constructive and open exchange of, opinions and ideas about democracy and trust in administration/public authority in Iceland in the time of Covid-19 pandemic.

We would like to acknowledge the generous and professional support of Sophie Kiesouw, project lead PaCE in Netherlands and Aleksandra Zietek, Local connector Krakow, Poland, both from Democratic Society in Brussels for closely planning together with the Municipality of Reykjavík the Local Democracy Lab in Iceland.

We would like to thank for the efficient and passionate support of Kári Gunnarsson, the leader of the facilitator team in Iceland that contributed along the organisation, implementation, selection of participants and carrying out the local democracy lab in Iceland. Thanks equally to the members of the facilitators team, Sigurborg Kr. Hannesdóttir, Finnur Þ´. Gunnþórsson and Dr. Magnús Yngvi Jósefsson from Iceland and Sophie Kiesouw from the Netherlands who creatively and professionally contributed in carrying out the online version of local democracy lab.

We acknowledge Róbert Bjarnason, manager of Citizens Foundation in Iceland for the design and development of the online platform of deliberation Better Reykjavík – Your Priorities made available for participants of the democracy lab.

We are thankful for all the help from every individual and organisations in Iceland that supporting us in preparing and reaching out to participants:

- Afríka - Citizens association of sub Saharan interests
- Afstaða - Association of incarcerated people.
- ALDA association for democracy.
- Association of elderly people.
- Association of students at Bifröst University
- Félagið Tékkneska á Íslandi
- FIA - Philipino-Icelandic Association
- Ghanaians in Iceland
- Iceland New Polska
- Islandijos Lietuvių Bendruomenė
- KUMPÁNI Student organization
- Landsbjörg. Öryrkjabandalag Íslands
- Projekt Polska
- Samtökin ‘78
- SONI - Society of New Icelanders
- Thailand-Iceland association
- The Iceland-Palestine association
- The Romanian network
- Velferðarsvið Reykjavíkurborgar

And all others that helped.

We would like to address a special thanks and gratitude to all participants to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland, for their time, contribution, ideas and inspiration.

About this document

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Date: 21st of April 2021

This document outlines the outcomes and lessons learned from the PaCE Local Democracy Lab held by the City of Reykjavík, Iceland on the 30th of January 2021. The outcomes and lessons learned are relevant for the development of future Democracy Labs and serve as guidance for other consortia and organisations engaging citizens in their research. This document is feeding into the official academic research of the PaCE project.

Dissemination Level		
PU	Public on the www.popance.eu and on the website of the PaCE Local Democracy in Iceland https://sites.google.com/view/pace-democracy-lab-iceland/home	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

A brief summary of revisions will be recorded in the table below.

	HISTORY OF CHANGES			
	VERSION	**PUBLICATION DATE**	**KEY CHANGES**	**AUTHOR**
	V0.1		Initial version	Roxana Elena Cziker, City of Reykjavík
	V0.2		Reviewed version	Kári Gunnarsson, leader of Facilitators Team
	V0.3		Reviewed version	Roxana Elena Cziker, City of Reykjavík
	V0.4		Reviewed version	Takis Pappas, University of Helsinki
	V0.5		Reviewed version	Roxana Elena Cziker, City of Reykjavík
	V0.6		Reviewed version	David Barnard-Wills, TRI, Ireland
	V0.7		Reviewed version	Mell Stevens, DemSoc
	V0.8		Reviewed version	Roxana Cziker, City of Reykjavík
	V0.9		Reviewed version	Roxana Cziker, City of Reykjavík

The working language of this document is English (EN), as required for reporting purposes by article 20.7 of the Grant Agreement. An Icelandic version is provided in order to enable the access to outcomes by participants to the local democracy lab in Iceland.

Disclaimer

The project PaCE has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the grant agreement No 822337. The opinions expressed in this document reflect only the authors´ view and reflect in no way the European Commission's opinions.

The PaCE project consortium respects the protection of personal information and data and adheres strictly to the rules set down by data protection legislation, how we handle the data and the rights of participants to the research.

The outcomes of the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland represent strictly the conclusions formulated on the opinions and perception of the *twenty-seven participants to the lab* and cannot be extrapolated as representing the

general opinion of citizens in Iceland because no standardized inclusion and exclusion criteria have been used for the participants´ selection. The general strategy of participation selection applied to the local democracy labs is to encourage participation across genders and from under-represented groups of people, and to enable the free will of members of the community to participate in the debate.

Table of Content

Local Democracy Labs…… 2
Acknowledgments…… 2
About this document…… 4
Disclaimer…… 4
1. Executive summary…… 7
1.1. Key findings…… 7
1.2. Recommendations…… 8
2. Introduction…… 11
2.1. Context of Local Democracy Labs…… 11
2.2. Consortium…… 11
2.3. Purpose of the Local Democracy Lab…… 12
2.4. Objectives of the Local Democracy Lab…… 12
2.5. Structure of the Local Democracy Lab…… 12
2.6. Preparatory stages of the Local Democracy Lab…… 14
2.7. Description of participants and selection criteria…… 15
3. Main outcomes of the online event…… 18
3.1. Framing the topic of discussion…… 18
3.2. Qualitative interpretation of outcomes/insights…… 19
3.2.1. Level 1…… 19
3.2.2. Level 2…… 25
4. Participants feedback…… 30
4.1 Participants feedback…… 30
4.2 Event learnings…… 31
References…… 32

List of Figures and Tables

Table 1. Partners of the PaCE project…… 9
Table 2. Description of participants (N=56) by educational background (registered vs. participated)…… 14
Table 3. Description of participants by gender participated to the online event (N=27)…… 14
Table 4. Description of participants (N=56) by age (registered vs. participated)…… 15
Table 5. Discussion points emerged from the Round 1 of the democracy lab…… 18
Table 6. Discussion points emerged from the Round 2 of the democracy lab…… 19
Table 7. Discussion points emerged from the Round 3 of the democracy lab…… 22
Table 8. Key words emerged from the discussion related to communication / information area…… 24
Table 9. Key words emerged from the discussion related to economy / social / personal…… 25
Table 10. Key words emerged from the discussion related to knowledge / politicization…… 27
Table 11. Answers of participants to the evaluation question regarding lessons learned…… 28

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Key Findings

The report highlights overall the participants' trust in the measures undertaken by the authorities regarding the protection against the Covid-pandemic. However, many of its actions were considered challenging by participants as they recognize its importance as a solid and non-partisan actor (State policy over party politics). Some participants have underlined the limited access and accessibility of information for minority groups, a lack of transparency and coordination between different authorities when it´s comes to the distribution of measures and the applicability in different sectors. They did not identify a clear distinction in the content of the measures were formulated by the authorities and whether those measures where related to the social, economic or personal area of life. Therefore, a dilemma has been highlighted by participants: whether the undertaken measures should be directed towards the protection of citizens and keep the country closed for people coming from outside or towards the protection of the economy and open the country for tourism.

The PaCE Local Democracy Lab – Iceland derived several interesting statements and declarations from twenty-seven participants. The participants´ statements have been qualitatively analysed by the thematic analysis method being organised in two levels.

The **first qualitative analysis level** of participants´ statements were allocated against four themes, based on whether the participants have evaluated the measures of authorities regarding the protection against the Covid-19 pandemic as positive, negative, challenging or participants felt responsible to formulate some recommendations/suggestions.

- Positive insights: 27
- Critical views: 45
- Suggestions: 65
- Challenges: 18

The **second qualitative analysis level** of participants´ statements reveal different themes related to a particular topic that participants were revealing in their affirmations as the main areas where the authorities´ measures have impacted:

- Economic sector
- Social sector
- Personal/health sector.

Participants agreed that:

- Language barriers are a big challenge for cultural, economic and social integration of foreigners in Iceland. This was seen even more urgently as public health information and news had to be communicated effectively across all social groups in the country. However, the group felt that the result was far from the ideal one.

- Better communication of the State's right-protecting entities, such as the Ombudsman (Umbodsmadur), is needed. With some groups being unaware of the violation of their rights, or that there is help available for them, with international students and workers specifically mentioned

On the other hand, the results revealed some interest of participants in preventive measures that they thought should be included into the priority agenda of policy makers. Examples included education programmes for people, accessible and better health care services, healthy life style and wellbeing programmes. They also felt there should be monitoring for any secondary effects on different populations in Iceland as a risk of social inclusion, personal life, possible exposure to domestic violence of some category of population, suicide and financial / economic collapse.

1.2. Recommendations

A list of recommendations based on the main finding of the discussion carried by the participants to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland are advocated by the members of City of Reykjavík team in collaboration with the leader facilitator of the local democracy lab in Iceland. The recommendations are formulated based on some areas and actions highlighted by participants as not being enough and clearly addressed by the authorities´ measures or lacking of strategies of making visible and accessible the information among minority groups. The proposed recommendations will be the subject of a follow up in-person debate in Iceland planned to be organised in the late autumn of 2021 with local policy and decision makers.

1. The *availability and accessibility of information, and additional explanation of*[1] undertaken measures was one of the limitations underlined by the participants that might influence the trust in authorities/government, especially when it comes to minority groups such as immigrants, workers from other countries, disabled people, elderly people or non-Icelandic speakers. Therefore, a **coherent information and communication strategy** is required from authorities for a better distribution of information about the implementation of measures in different context and sectors of socio-economic, socio-cultural, health and personal life. The communication strategy might ensure an inclusive approach for different members of the community that might guarantee the equal access to information of members of the Icelandic community. Simultaneously, more collaborative efforts are necessary to be created in the form of a *network among representatives of authorities and representatives of different minority groups*[2] so that the measures reflect the diversity of needs of different category of population.

2. The covid pandemic crisis and the protection measures have impacted, according to participants main discussion points in the local democracy lab Iceland, different sectors such as the **socio-economic, socio-cultural, healthcare sectors and personal life**. One issue emerged from the participants´ statements is that the measures are not formulated in a way that indicated which sector they were applicable to, and what possible impact they might have on people's life, such as, professionals' status, health, family and social participation. From this perspective, a more in-depth **strategy of distribution of information for different sectors** is required from authorities/government in order for people to evaluate the impact in different sectors of their life and enforcement measures in different contexts and different organisations.

[1] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.
[2] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.

3. *Media plays an essential role in the distribution of information*[3] within the extended Icelandic community. However, some participants in the local democracy labs have *criticized the transparency of information*[4] and the lack of engagement with the public. Some participants recommended a number of ways to improve this:
    - The creation of an open online platform for sharing opinions and seeking clarifications on undertaken measures and the regulation of implementation.
    - To have clear information on where and how to approach different authorities when there is a need for specific information.
    - The creation of a public space for debate and dialogue, where differences in opinion and possible conflicts between individuals and diverse communities could be addressed and some amelioration strategies can be proposed.

4. The covid pandemic and the undertaken measures have caused some indirect consequences on *personal life, family and social lives*. The prolonged cohabitation in the case of some members of the Icelandic community entails the *risk of domestic violence*[5]. In this context, the authorities/government strategy, in crisis situation such as the covid pandemic, it is recommended the inclusion within their measures a closer monitoring programme of family and different communities at risk of domestic violence and release protection measures that possible might **combat psychological and mental health effects**. Therefore, one of the recommendations made by the organisers of the local democracy lab in Reykjavík would be the setting up of some support groups where people with different needs can be assisted by specialists with **expertise in psychology for family, management of crisis and risk situation, and resilience support programmes**.

5. The covid pandemic has demonstrated one more time that people are not prepared when faced with a situation of crisis and they are not equipped with resilience mechanisms that support the management of social and personal life in such conditions. However, history has repeatedly demonstrated that a crisis can at any time "knock" on our door. Therefore, ***preventive measures*** **are necessary to be envisaged** for a better preparation of general population for and eventual crisis. In this regard, the participants have made some recommendations that support the creation of *public educational programmes*[6], especially in a form of a *regular educational strategy to be implemented in schools and industry*[7]. A resilient society must be willing to create and focus on *social and well-being programs and a healthy lifestyle*[8].

6. The crisis might entangle as well *adverse human rights effects*[9], especially when this comes to minority groups. In this context, educational programmes must be created in order to strengthen the people's knowledge of **availability of suitable protecting entities** such as Umbodsmadur (agent, law representative), Working, and Trade Unions.

[3] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.
[4] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.
[5] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.
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[8] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.
[9] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.

7. One of the significant effects of the implementation of protection measures against the covid pandemic was on the *employment sector*[10], where the most affected categories are groups of immigrants and people working in the foreign labour market. This has a significant consequence on the *tourism industry*, *where most of members of the minority groups lost their jobs*[11]. This discussion highlights the lack of authorities´ support measures and transparent clear information about which authorities' people can address particular questions to, how to apply for financial support and whether all category of workers such as self-employees have the rights to governmental financial subsidies. One recommendation might be that authorities delegate to civil community organisations (i.e. Trade Unions) the task of communicating preventive measures about the covid 19 to foreign workers in their native languages.

[10] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.
[11] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.

2. Introduction

2.1. Context of Local Democracy Labs

Across Europe there is a rise of political movements that claim to challenge *liberal elites* and speak for the *'ordinary person'* - *movements* that can be loosely categorised as *'populist'*. Many of these movements have undesirable tendencies.

> ***The Populism and Civic engagement project (PaCE) aims to understand and address negative tendencies associated with populist politics, to build upon the lessons of positive examples (such as Reykjavik), and hence play a part in constructing a firmer democratic and institutional foundation for citizens of Europe.***

The PaCE project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the grant agreement No 822337.

The PaCE research addresses the civic engagement approach by enabling active participation of people from different European countries in PaCE´s qualitative research. Hence, one of the participatory researches aims is carrying out six Local Democracy Labs in different European countries. The purpose of Local Democracy Lab is to assess the public´s attitudes to, and aspirations for democracy; to identify ways of democratic involvement; and to understand the way in which traditional and social media influence political and social opinion. The ***City of Reykjavik, in collaboration with the Democratic Society***, ***Brussels and Citizens Foundation, Iceland*** are the leaders in organising and carrying out, in different locations in Europe, a total of 6-8 **Democracy Labs** across Europe.

The Local Democracy Labs are in line with Objective 5 of the PaCE project:

> ***Engage with stakeholders, especially groups under-represented in public affairs, particularly younger citizens, schools and local communities, in new forms of democratic engagement appropriate in our digital age.***

2.2. Consortium

Table 1. Partners of the PaCE project

#	PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION	CODE	COUNTRY
1	Manchester Metropolitan University (**coordinator**)	MMU	UK
2	City of Reykjavik	RVK	Iceland
3	The Centre for Liberal Strategies Foundation	CLS	Bulgaria
4	The Paris-Lodron University	PLUS	Austria
5	The Technical University of Dresden	TUD	Germany
6	The Democratic Society	DEM	Belgium
7	Trilateral Research	TRI	Ireland
8	University of Helsinki	UH	Finland
9	Citizens Foundation	CF	Iceland

2.3. Purpose of the Local Democracy Lab

Local democracy lab is a 'deliberative' event which gathers people to discuss the condition of democracy in different European countries through the lens of present challenges. To this end, we are planning a new type of democracy Lab, turning the pandemic into an asset and propose an innovative online forum to allow people of different backgrounds across Europe to participate independent of their geographic location.

The **goal** of 3-hours-long local Democracy Labs held across the European countries is to ensure the widest democratic engagement throughout all stages of the PaCE project. A subsidiary goal (given the emergence of COVID-19) is to learn how to make online democracy labs work, so we can package the experiences into guidelines in order to help others to run them.

The selection criteria of European countries where the local democracy labs are carried out is in line with one of the tasks of the work package WP1 of the project, ***case studies of populist and nativist parties and social movements in different European countries***. Thus, the inclusion criteria are to cover Nordic, Eastern, Southern and Central European countries and Western European countries.: Iceland, Spain, Scotland, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary.

2.4. Objectives of the Local Democracy Lab

Democracy Labs aim at reaching the following key objectives:

- To keep the research programme continuously connected to the **lived experiences** of participants;
- To think through, with participants, the ways in which they might want to be involved in making and shaping decisions that affect their lives;

Subsidiary aims:

- To produce rich qualitative data around the perceptions of power, trust, and democratic processes;
- To better understand the way in which traditional and social media influence and shape political and social opinions;
- To better understand the way in which community interactions influence and shape political decisions;

2.5. Structure of the Local Democracy Lab

The design of the Democracy Lab is based on the idea of the ***World Café qualitative method***, adapted for the online version. The world Café format fits the Positive Psychology research and creates a welcoming and conductive environment and a respectful relationship that promotes an equal partnership. The world Café operates on the principle that people are at their most creative when they are relaxed. This time the "café" has been taken in an online format, everyone in his/her own space and settings, promoting a diversity of space and coffee.

The World Café process is a simple method for bringing people together to focus on answering key questions. It is founded on the assumption that people have the will and capacity to work together. The process uses

connected conversations to share knowledge, ignite innovation, and tap into the intelligence of the group. The key elements of the process include:

- Small groups around table
- Informal conversations focus on key questions.
- Sharing ideas and knowledge as participants move among small groups.
- Opportunities to record ideas in words and images.
- Weaving of emerging themes and insights
- Awareness of social nature of learning
- Noticing that individual conversations are part of and contribute to a larger web through which collective intelligence can become aware of itself. (Löhr K., Weinhardt M. amd Sieber S, 2020; Guide to the World Café method)

Stages of the Local Democracy Lab

1. **Starting up.** Pre-event ideas generation on a dialogue platform. Online participation and ideas exchange on democracy and trust in government through Better Reykjavík platform for 10 days prior the event.
2. **Online deliberation event.** Zoom communication platform. January 30, 2021. 3-hour-long online deliberation event with about 30 participants. This is held in a World Cafe format and run by professional facilitators, ensuring everyone can have a say on democracy and trust in government in pandemic times.
3. **Follow up**. Post-event ideas gathering on a dialogue platform. Post-event ideas exchange, informed by findings from deliberation, enabling participants to engage further and express your options.

The online event started with a plenary session where participants have been introduced to the structure of the democracy lab and getting familiar with the research conducting in the PaCE project.

After the plenary session the participants were divided in five groups, where participants have changed their group for each round, except for the English-speaking group who has worked in the same group during the whole event. Each facilitator supported one group of participants and kept leading the same breakout group. The plenary session has been audio recorded, with the full agreement of participants. The discussion held in each breakout room session has not been recorded, instead each facilitator has been using a Jamboard (Google) online note board where they have collected all discussion points carried out by participants. After a breakout session of 25 minutes, the facilitators and their participants came back in the main plenary session room. A few representative of each group together with the facilitator responsible for each group have been presented the main key points of discussion.

The facilitators team of the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland are:

- **Kári Gunnarsson**, Leader of Facilitator Team with more than ten years of experience in training and life coaching. He is based in Reykjavík, Iceland.
- **Finnur Þ. Gunnþórsson**, with experience in adult education since 2006. He is a member of professional Staff– the Icelandic Association on mediation and ICF Iceland, the Icelandic coaching association.

- **Sigurborg Kr. Hannesdóttir**, specialized in public participation and consultation. For the last 20 years she has worked with municipalities around Iceland. She runs her own company ILDI Consulting in Grundarfjórður, West Iceland.
- **Dr. Magnús Yngvi Jósefsson**, is the research programme manager based at the mayor´s office at the City of Reykjavík, Iceland. He has background in organisational and strategy studies with the focus on digital transformation and sensemaking in organisation.
- **Sophie Kiesouw** is a process designer & facilitator working as a "local connector" at the Democratic Society in Brussel. She has experience as co-founder of Starters4Communities, a social enterprise working with cities & community initiative in the Netherlands.
- **Róbert Bjarnason,** entrepreneur who connected the public with the Internet in Iceland in 1993 and in Denmark in 1995. He is the founder of the non-profit innovation agency entitled Betri Reykjavík in collaboration with the City of Reykjavík.

The participants were engaged in three 'rounds' of conversation during the Democracy Labs, the discussion in each round being based on a question[12] in order to create a 'flow' in the conversations:

1. **Explorative question** - about democracy and the pandemic in general (round 1)
   How your feelings and concerns regarding Covid-19 are heard and addressed by your government?
2. **Deepening question** - starting to get into the topic of how government is dealing with the pandemic (round 2)
   How do you feel/ experience the covid-19 restrictions that your government has imposed?
3. **Reflective or activating question** - linking people's thoughts on the pandemic into some ideas, suggestions and recommendations (round 3)
   In a future wave of this (/a) pandemic, what would be your recommendation to the government? If you were in charge, what would you do?

2.6. Preparatory Stages of the Local Democracy Lab

In order to ensure that a diverse audience was reached for the study, one that sought to be inclusive of all points of view relevant to the issues addressed by the Local Democracy Lab, members of minority organizations and groups had to be actively included. A list of under-represented groups was compiled – including young citizens, immigrant populations, people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, members of the LGBT community, university students, members of women's organizations, and single parents – who were then contacted and asked to participate in the lab. Participants were contacted via Facebook groups for people in these demographics, contacted by phone, by email, and by word-of-mouth.

The PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland has been promoted as event on the Facebook at the following link: https://www.facebook.com/events/190383292831453/

[12] The questions formulated for the Local democracy labs represent a collaborative contribution of Democratic Society, Paris-Londron University of Salzburg, Centre of Liberal Strategies Foundation, Sofia and Citizens Foundation, Iceland.

One of the main challenges for the organizer of the democracy lab in Iceland was the limited interest of participants to contribute to the deliberation platform *Better Reykjavík – Your Priorities* both before and after the online event, even if participants have been personally contacted and invited to participate. One of the proposed solutions to improve the active participation on the deliberative platform was to present the structure of the platform, including how it works at the Democracy Lab in order to enable participants to get familiar with the topic of discussion on democracy lab.

2.7. Description of Participants and the Selection Criteria

The selection criteria of participants for the Local democracy Labs were created in a way that ensured a group of mixed participants, including the under-represented groups as:

- Different genders
- Ethnicity and immigration
- Different ages including youth and senior adults
- Diverse education background

A mixed methodology of targeted outreach to certain individuals and groups was applied, including working with different organisations and networks to target the engagement activities with citizens, and an open call for participation distributed via media representatives and social media, including the PaCE Facebook. No standardized methods of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied for the selection of participants to the local democracy lab. A core group of around 40 to 50 people was considered a good number that could allow for some drop-out on the day and still achieve a mixed demographic and geographic profile, as well as making sure that participants have a broad range of backgrounds and on opinions on what 'politics' means to them.

A total number of fifty-six (56) participants registered to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland. From these, twenty-seven (27) participated in the online event organised on the 30th of January 2021. A detailed description of the population participated to the democracy labs in Iceland is presented in the Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4.

Engaging research participants was guided by various European ethical principle and data protection regulations. There are different values that have become relevant from the ethical perspective such as respect, integrity, justice, beneficence, confidentiality and anonymity. The value of respect is one of the essential values has been acknowledge by the PaCE project that involves and recognises the value of each human being. The respect includes the recognition of human autonomy and the free will in decision making and conducting their own life. The PaCE report D6.1. Ethics handbook provides guidance on rules and principles that the PaCE consortium will comply with though that conducts the project.

Informed consent was obtained for each participant to the local democracy lab. The leaders of the event have explained the main aim and objectives of the lab in line with the research of the PaCE project. The participants in Iceland had two options to sign the informed consent: Dokobit system that enables a secure e-signature of participants, an internal system and support processes complying with ISO-IEC 27001 – the international recognised standard for leading information security management practices and via email. The Informed consent information also reflects the recitals and paragraphs of the General Data Protection Regulation (https://gdpr-info.eu/) regarding the purpose of data collection and storage, rights to request the restriction of personal data, identity protection.

Table 2. Description of participants (N=56) by educational background (no. registered vs. no. participated)

	Secondary school		High school		University degree		Total	
	Value	Frequency	Value	Frequency	Value	Frequency	Value	Frequency
Registered	2	3.57%	13	23.21%	41	72.22%	56	100%
Cancelled	1	1.78%	0	0	9	16.08	10	(17.86%)
Confirmed but not participated	0	0	2	3.57%	11	19.64%	13	(23.21%)
Participated	0	0	10	17.86%	17	30.35%	27	(48.21%)
Not confirmed / not participated	1	1.78%	1	1.78%	4	7.15%	6	(10.71%)

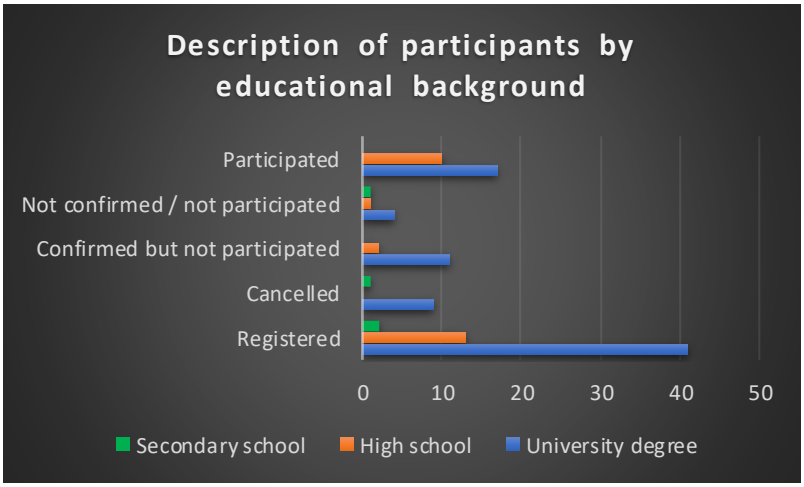


Table 3. Description of participants by gender participated to the online event (N=27)

	Secondary school		High school		University degree		Total	
	Value	*Frequency*	*Value*	*Frequency*	*Value*	*Frequency*	*Value*	*Frequency*
Gender (M)	0	0	6	22.21%	9	33.32%	15	55.52%
Gender (F)	0	0	4	14.77%	7	26.00%	11	40.77%
Gender (Other)	0	0	0	0	1	3.70%	1	3.70%
Total	0	0	10	36.98%	17	63.02%	27	100%

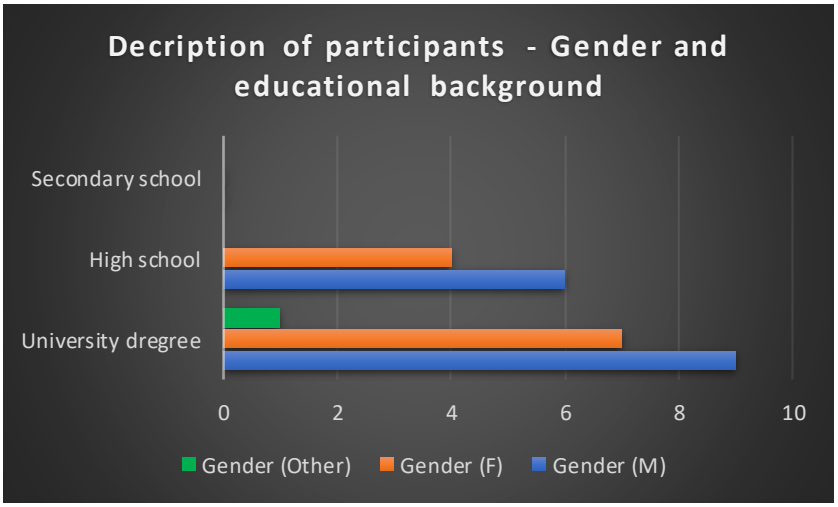
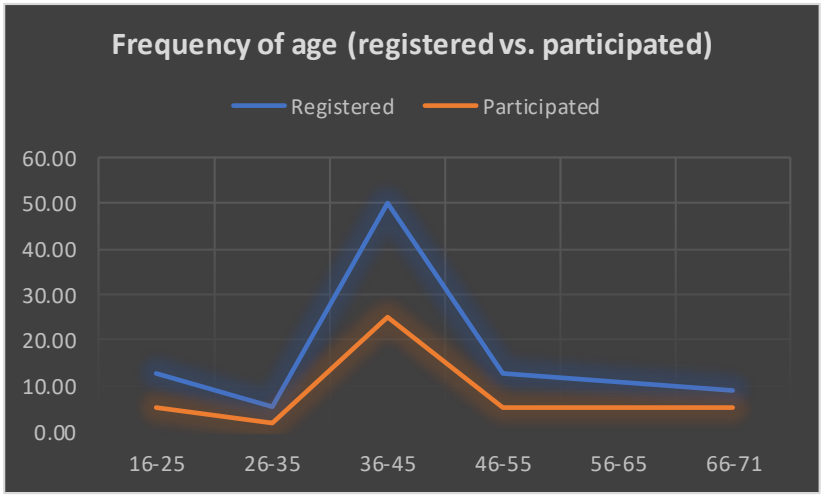


Table 4. Description of participants (N56) by age (no. registered vs. no. participated)

	16-25		26-35		36-45		46-55		56-65		66-71		Total	
	V.	Fr.	V.	Fr.	V.	Fr.	V.	Fr.	V.	Fr.	V.	Fr.	V.	Fr.
Registered	7	12.5%	3	5,36%	28	50%	7	12.5%	6	10.72%	5	8.93%	56	100%
Participated	3	5.36%	1	1.77%	14	25%	3	5.36%	3	5.36%	3	5.36%	27	48.21%



3. Main Outcomes of the Online Event

3.1. Framing the Topic of Discussion

The PaCE project focuses on studying the negative tendencies of the populism movement in Europe and the impact on the democratic process from a multidisciplinary perspective by engaging citizens from different European countries to participate in an offline local democracy lab. However, the Covid pandemic has impacted the originally planned methodology so that the local democracy labs have been shifted to the online mode. The general topic of the democracy lab is *Trust in government during the Covid pandemic*.

By trust in government we understand

> *"… the confidence of citizens in the actions of a government to do what is right and perceived fair."*

The confidence in actions of the government, based on the OECD studies,

> *"depends on the congruence between citizens´ preference – their interpretation of what is right and what is unfair – and the perceived actual functioning of government…"*

The outcomes of the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland demonstrate that the citizens´ perceptions and opinions regarding the measures undertaken by the Icelandic authorities are very diverse, based on which the government actions are evaluated. The perception and personal evaluation of the government actions can also be influenced by the individual's positive or negative experience with the service providers and different authorities, as evidenced by e the case from minority groups and participants at the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland. Therefore, based on this assumption, what seems suitable for an individual might be considered unfair by another. (Trust in government, policy effectiveness and the governance agenda, OECD 2013)

The Covid-19 pandemic and the measures undertaken by different authorities over the last year, have drawn the attention of different organisations and academics in terms of the direct and indirect effect on different sectors. According to some research, it has demonstrated that the covid pandemic brought both parties (citizens and authorities) several challenges, unknown and unexpected situations, uncertainty, and risks, that have impacted the social, economic, political, environmental, and person's life. According to the Alaszewski A et al. study, such unexpected/uncertain events that lead to the crisis might be experienced by individuals and social groups as a threat to their wellbeing (Alaszewski A and Coxon K, 2009) that entails positive and negative affect and emotions (Anderson E.C., Carleton R.N., et al., 2019). Therefore, in general, based on personal emotions, individuals imprint different connotations to an uncertain event that is subjective in line with diverse and complex factors such as personality, personal experience, context, and so on. In this context, the consequences are felt differently by each individual or smaller or larger community.

The outcomes of the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland unveil different opinions and insights of participants creating an extensive palette of perspectives noting on one side the positive contribution of authorities, but on the other hand, underlining some limitations created by the undertaken measures as a response to the protection against the covid pandemic. Participants also highlighted the media dimension that can influence how and what kind of information is distributed to the public and to what extent the public opinion voice has been listened and reflected within the undertaken measures.

Therefore, in this light, some participants perceive the measures as *positive and exemplars*; others *criticize the approach and the implementation strategies* of the government's measures; other participants make some s*uggestions* on how the covid pandemic might be approached through the glasses of personal experience and what is still needed so that different members of the Icelandic community feel included. Others view the measures as a *challenge* where more room for explanations is envisaged, learn from the past lessons, and imprinting a diverse and extended-multiple dimension approach.

3.2. Qualitative Interpretation of Outcomes/Insights

The method selected for the qualitative analysis of the data is *thematic analysis*. The method enables the identification, analysis and report of patterns (themes) within the collected data. Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names of each theme (Vaismorandi M et al, 2013; Lorelli S.N. et al, 2017). The applied data analysis has unfolded two levels of organisation of participants´ statements that have been inductively generated from the raw data:

- **Level 1 –** analysis of participants' statements based on whether the participant has considered the government undertaken measure as being positive, negative, challenging or whether they felt responsible to make some suggestions.
- **Level 2 –** analysis of participants' statements based on which sector has been touched by the undertaken measure: economic, social or personal/family/health sector.

3.2.1. Level 1

The qualitative analysis of the participants´ statements emerged from the local democracy lab (five breakout session for each question), has highlighted **first level of themes** divided into four categories:

1. Positive insights
2. Critical views
3. Suggestions
4. Challenges

Round 1. Q1: How your feelings and concerns regarding the Covid-19 are heard and addressed by your government?

The main discussion points for the Q1 for each of the four categories of themes are presented in the *Table 5*.

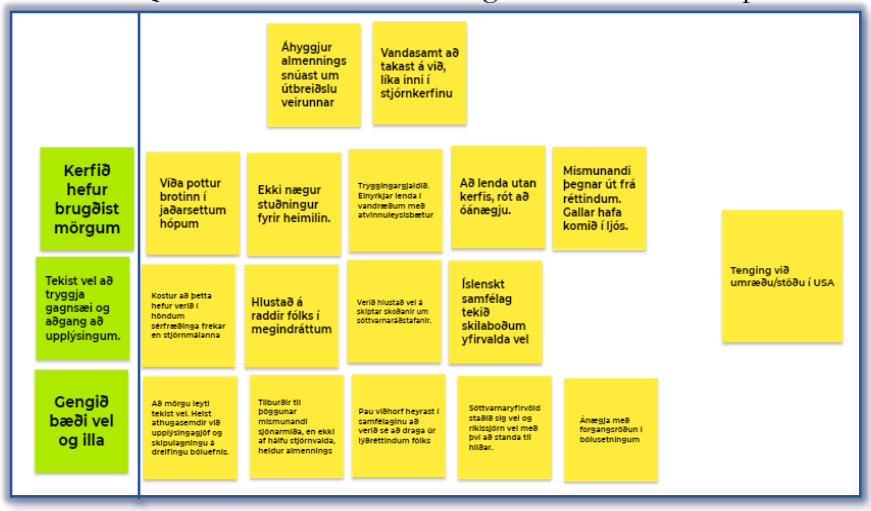


Table 5. Discussion points emerged from the Round 1 of the democracy lab[13]

Positive insights	Critical views	Suggestions	Challenges
Overall trust in authorities The situation in Iceland has been in general evaluated as exemplary to be taken as a model in Europe, driven by a professional monitoring strategy, where the information is regularly and well distributed in mass-media (TV, radio, websites – covid.is), even in several languages. **Response and attitudes of general population** Icelandic society responds well to the authorities' measures, being evaluated as not highly restrictive, enabling people to find their freedom of movement. Participants find the people in Iceland cooperative in the way they address and respond to the undertaken measures. **Role of knowledge transfer and contribution of experts** The advantage for Iceland was the evaluation of covid pandemic from the perspective of experts rather than politicians. The publichealth enjoys of trustworthy among the general population highlighting the importance of the knowledge transfer in addressing the pandemic. Professionals (medical staff/experts and police) have been the frontline in addressing the corona crisis. **Role of politics and politicians** The subject was less politicized compared with other countries, hence, the publichealth enjoys the trustworthy of general public.	**Lack of transparency and evidence** Participants have underlined the lack of transparency and evidence of the measures communicated to public. This strategy misleads people in the level of trust in "which voices" are to be listen when measures are to be implemented in different sectors. **Limited clarity and access to information for minority groups** Some measures are not enough clear, vague and unnecessarily complicated that lead people to confusion and misunderstanding. Participants have highlighted a lack of coordination between the measures undertaken by different authorities, the way the measures are communicated and the complexity of the way they are distributed to the general public. The information regarding the measures lack of clarity and accessibility when it comes to different minority groups such as immigrants, disabled people, non-Icelandic speakers. Therefore, the minority groups might feel discriminated and not finding their needs induded into the authorities´ measures. **Role of mass-media** Public opinion has not been taken into consideration, only select reporters get to the questions. Sometimes it comes close to hypocrisy during press conferences. **Economic issues** The main direct impact of the measures taken in Iceland was felt by participants in the economic sector; therefore, the main effect of the covid has felt into the employment sector of foreign market working mainly in the tourism sector and hotel industry, that actually has collapsed. As a consequence, one of the main issues is self-employment that has not been received the government financial unemployment benefits. Sometimes the unemployment issues are evaluated as falling under preferential treatment that left sometimes some people outside of the system. The business community and the rights of	Participants mostly from the minority groups manifest their interest for a collaboration between authorities and representatives from different minority groups for a better access to information. For a more fluid distribution of information participants find very useful the creation of a real communication platform where they can discuss different solutions and ask for clarification. Facebook groups for different community for an easier and more efficient distribution of information might be for a great help.	What is our role as community members? Where is the danger? Should the country kept closed for public protection or should be opened to revive the economy in Iceland? What kind of conversation has been created? Is there only one person to follow? Are people threatened to lose their employment rights or how are people protected?

[13] The text in the *Table 5* presents the discussion points of participants to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland in the Round 1. The statements represent a collection of a selected participant's insights recorded by facilitators on the Google Jamboard. Some points are directly captured from English and others have been translated from Icelandic.

Positive insights	Critical views	Suggestions	Challenges
The role of mass-media The contribution of mass-media has been considered important in the manner the information was distributed that has created trust among members of the Icelandic society.	employees are very important in such a crisis. Authorities may be too open to what stakeholder have been said and probably should have been stricter. The impact has been more felt in the economical side than in the social area. the participants have noticed a conflict of interest between the tourist companies and public. **Social issues** There is the perception that in the society the people´s democratic rights have been curtailed. The opinion of some participants reflects the concern of opening the country too soon for travellers without necessary imposing some strict monitoring measures of people to the boarder and increasing the risk of infection of Icelandic population. They rather consider better to dose completely the country until the virus is taken down or the vaccination process if finished.		

Round 2. Q2: How do you feel/experience the covid-19 restrictions that your government has imposed?

The main discussion points for the Q2 for each of the four categories are presented in the *Table 6*.

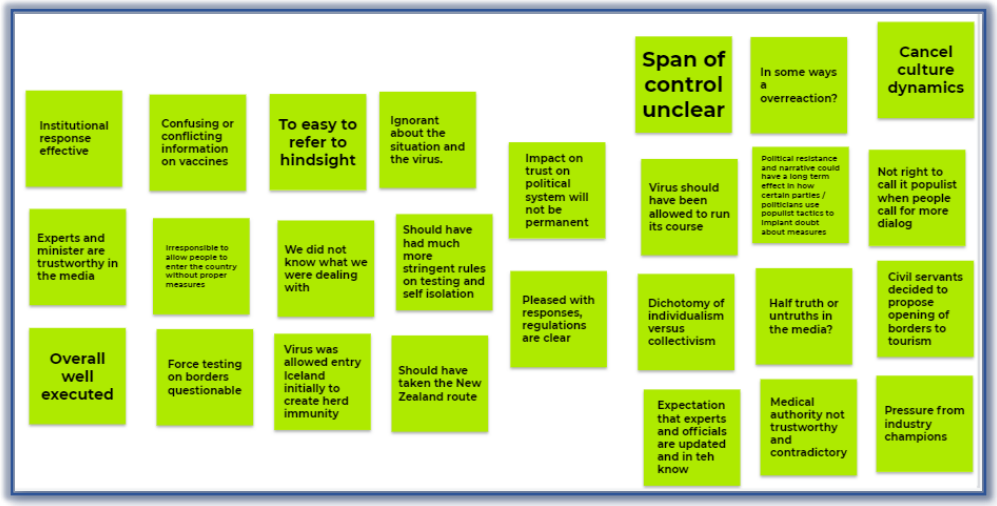


Table 6. Discussion points emerged from the Round 2 of the democracy lab [14]

Positive insights	Critical views	Suggestions	Challenges
Trust in healthcare authority and expertise of professionals	**Health dimension** Some participants´ concern was the long-term illness effect of covid. They perceive	Implementation of more in-depth research at the university level	Where is the line between the individual freedom

[14] The text in the *Table 6* presents the discussion points of participants to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland in the Round 2. The statements represent a collection of a selected participant's insights recorded by facilitators on the Google Jamboard. Some points are directly captured from English and others have been translated from Icelandic

Positive insights	Critical views	Suggestions	Challenges
Iceland has a strong healthcare system; hence the actions and measures taken in have been decided from the professionals and experts' perspectives (epidemiologists and healthcare system) rather than emotions and political perspective. In general, the trust in government and the health authorities has been evaluated as high. The measures of health authority are trustworthy; however, a challenge has been underlined by participants: *how and which context the measures are applied.* The undertaken measures were not very strict and people did not face a lock down measures so that they were benefiting of free mobility, felt somehow as a balance between the undertaken measures and the population freedom. The population in Iceland was in general cooperative, considering that the measures are moderate. Not so many protests have been registered in Iceland. Most of them have been encouraged by immigrants that do not have outlet. **Political influence** The measures taken in Iceland has not been under the political influence. The populist forces have not received the attention. No racist attitudes have been noticed in Iceland. As a general perception, Icelandic population is willing to support the other communities. **Mass-media role** The ministry and health care authorities are very well appreciated by media. A positive cooperation between the authorities in charge to set up and distribution of measures and the mediation of	not only the short-term effect of covid (people's death), but also the long-term secondary effects (e.g. different kind of illness). Sometimes they considered that the effect of virus has been treated with ignorance and contradictory measures by authorities. The effect is perceived as well in terms of overloading the hospital and the medical staff and the long-term effect on the health care system. On the other side, the participants require more clarification and explanations about the contradiction the measures are applied in different contexts and the interpretation of these measures by different public institutions and services. Some participants consider some measures too strict and maybe it would be better to let the virus run its course. **Economic dimension** The measures are sometime too general and not distributed particularly to different sectors in order to better evaluate the impact on the people´s life. For instance, the economic consequences have not been clearly explained by the authorities. Sometimes public authorities have been suspected of listening to different stakeholders´ "voices," perceived by participants as a pressure of representative of industry interested in protecting economy and business to the detriment of public protection. Therefore, the authority decision regarding the relaxation of measures for favouring the tourism industry has not been considered professionals through the participants´ perspective. **Political dimension** Populism: emotions, fear, and society split up, people with knowledge are marginalized, working people ... to create distinctions (we/other). The level of participants´ understanding of the concept of populism was very different and were not sure how to understand it in the context of the covid pandemic. Political resistance and narratives could have a long-term effect on how certain parties / politicians use populist tactics to implant doubt about the measures.	regarding the effect of the covid and its measures on different sectors, seen from the perspective of data lacking in Iceland. More careful coordination between different authorities has been recalled by participants for a better implementation of measures in different sectors: socio-economic, socio-cultural, health, personal life. A more stringent rules on testing and self-isolation of people infected with covid. For instance, follow the New Zealand´s model. More stringent control rules at the boarders for people entering in Iceland. Programmes to build up the health system for better protection of population against the virus.	and the demands of the government? How to build your immune system to reduce the risk of getting sick? Half trust or distrust in media? Does the Ministry of Health follow the epidemiologist well enough? What exactly is democracy? How is defined? What opportunities does offer to public? Especially if people find themselves in isolation due to social conditions? Do we show enough protection measures for sensitive groups?

Positive insights	Critical views	Suggestions	Challenges
information through mass-media have been noticed in Iceland. **Benefit of being isolated on an island** Some participants mentioned that Iceland has the advantage as being island because the borders are easier to be controlled and monitor who is coming in the country. This is the reason why the situation of spreading of virus has been better controlled compared with other countries.	**Human rights** Some participants have commented on the protection of human rights, especially regarding groups of immigrants who are not always well informed about their rights and which institutions can be reached for getting more information or asking for assistance. In this light, participants have been requiring integrating human rights perspective in the authority strategy of setting up measures. **Social dimension** Participants have emphasized the effect of measures on the interaction of people and participation to social events. Therefore, they consider that the culture and social interaction dynamics has been cancelled/disrupted. The measures have also been affected the international students that even did not benefit from in-person courses still being charged with the tuition fee. **Secondary effect of measures** The long-term peoples´ isolation measures raise the risk of some community members being exposed to domestic violence, psychological and financial effects that have not been reflected or addressed in the undertaken measures.		

Round 3. Q3: In a future wave of this (/a) pandemic, what would be your recommendation to the government? If you were in charge, what would you do??

The main discussion points for the Q3 for each of the four categories are presented in the *Table 7*.

Table 7. Discussion points emerged from the Round 3 of the democracy lab [15]

Suggestions	**AUTHORITIES PROTECTION** **Dialogue and communication:** A better coordinated dialogue between authorities and representatives of minority groups is required. The public opinion might be better addressed by authorities. **Immigrants protection:** Address better the minority groups situation so that individuals from other countries e.g. exchange students do not isolate themselves and do not run into financial and psychological crises. Have more consultation with the marginalized and underprivileged groups early and throughout the situation. The participants are requiring a better access to information to foreign people living in Iceland or being temporarily in Iceland. Take care of those who do not benefit from the welfare system. E.g. migrant workers and those who have just entered the system. **Cover the diversity of members of Icelandic community:** It is recommended a better communication between authorities and representatives of different communities and minority groups. **Laws and regulations:** Propose laws about race protection not only progressive gender laws in Iceland. **Human rights:** Take care of people who do not know their rights or are litigants. Propose education programmes for protection of human rights and equal treatment for different nationalities. Those who carry mutations can travel. What is democracy and how to respect it, people need to be taught that. **Health protection:** We need to base the strategy of taking measures on knowledge and give an accessible explanation to different categories of citizens. We need to "fix" the lacking of power division of professionals. Important to create affordable healthcare system. Implement strict measures for people coming from outside. Maybe the country must be closed until the vaccination is finished as a general measure of public health protection. **Learning from Europe:** Authorities must keep an eye and learn from the lessons of Europe in addressing the covid pandemic and implementation of protection measures. **Prevention measures:** Authorities should implement preventive measures, healthy life style, wellbeing programmes and learn from the past lessons in order to address better the effect of the covid pandemic on the general population, including the minority groups. Address & reduce poverty as a preventive measure. **Preventive measures against domestic violence:** Preventive measures for suicide and violence. **Conspiracy theories:** Conspiracy theories on social media, perhaps, might be regulated. The government needs to curb this conspiracy information "Echo chamber on social media". **Political transparency:** Transparency in political decisions e.g. prioritization of financial support. **SOCIAL NETWORKS** **Support groups and networks:** Set up social networks and support groups of people. **Communication network**: Get information links into as many groups as possible. **Next generation protection: A** future generation programmes should be implemented in order to avoid the decreasing of interest of young generation in education and taking initiatives because of long-term measures of closing the schools. **Community responsibility:** Consideration and understanding of civic duty and responsibility. **Social isolation:** Prevention measures for social isolation and support groups.

[15] The text in the *Table 7* presents the discussion points of participants to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland in the Round 3. The statements represent a collection of a selected participant's insights recorded by facilitators on the Google Jamboard. Some points are directly captured from English and others have been translated from Icelandic

ECONOMY
Infrastructure programmes: Propose and implement economy programmes to protect industry.

Foreign labour: For the moment, "foreign labour" should not be imported during unemployment crisis.

Protection of economy: The measures should be better evaluated in terms of relaxation of measures to boarders only for economy protection reasons in the detriment of public health protection. Public opinion is, in general, important in this context. What about nationalizing industry?

Economic wellbeing: Focus on social and economic wellbeing e.g. universal income.

Worker rights: Implement measures for workers´ rights.

Trade union measures: The trade unions have brought an essential contribution by "taking the ball's lead" to spread information to the public and explain the government's measures.

MAS-MEDIA
Media transparency: If the state supports media, transparency and equality are needed. The media is very important when it comes to transparency and trust. But monitor which side the information is falling (e.g. the hands of different groups of interest).

3.2.2. Level 2

The qualitative analysis of the outcomes emerged from the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland has emphasized **second level of themes,** based on the three main areas that participants have been mostly emphasised in their statements:

- communication / information
- economy / social / personal
- knowledge / politicization

A. Information and communication

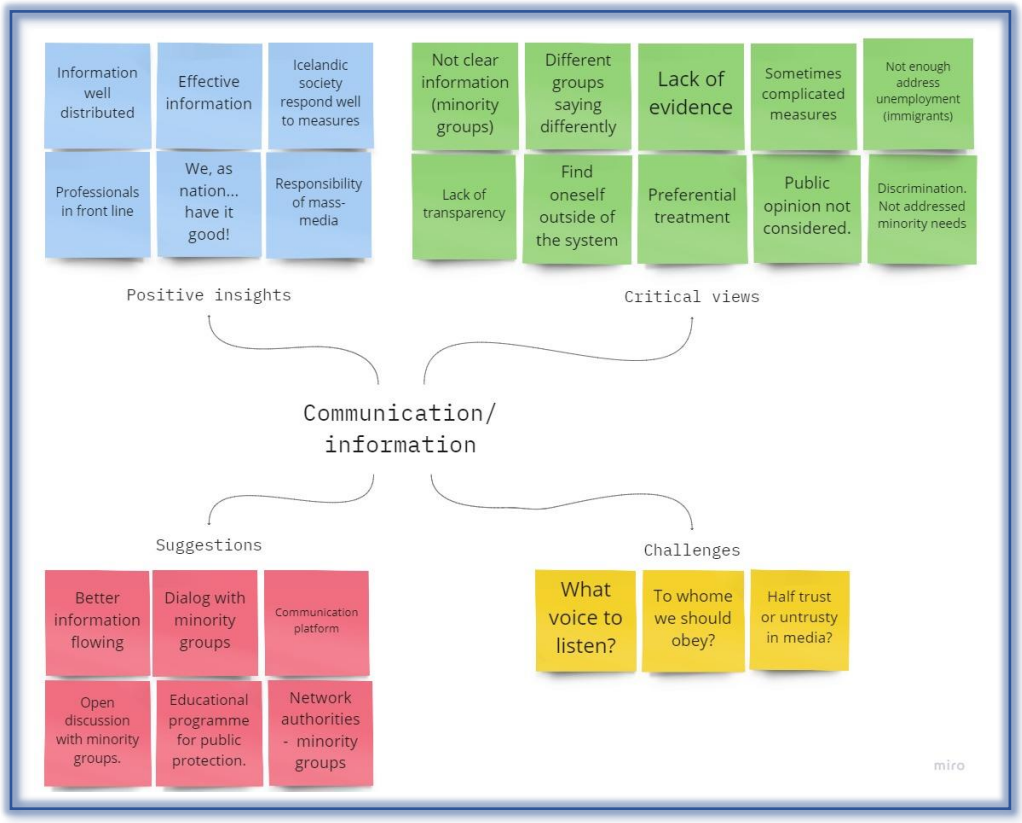


Table 8. Key words emerged from the discussion related to communication / information area

Disadvantaged groups	Minorities / immigrants	Disabled people	Public opinion	Consultation
Unemployment	Preferential treatment	Clarity	Networking	Cooperation / consultation
Nation	Public protection	Transparency	Professionals	

One of the main topics of discussion brought into attention by participants to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland is **transparency, distribution, clarity, and accessibility of information**. The discussion points reflect a polarized opinion of participants, in line with their experience during the covid pandemic, on whether they found *"their particular needs"* included in the measures and which side of the society and group each individual felt affiliated. Participants' overall opinion regarding the distribution of information about covid and measures was positive and confident, revealing a *high level of trust in authorities*.

"We as a nation… have it good!"[16]

However, some participants have pointed out that the measures were sometimes *unnecessarily complicated and contradictory*, leading people to confusion and misunderstanding in terms of; what voice to listen to, how the measures are applied in different places (workplace vs. shops, even from one shop to another) and what the role of different member of the Icelandic community is in relation to different measures. When the availability and accessibility of information are evaluated from the perspective of minority groups (immigrants, foreign workers, disabled people, etc.), the participants rate the undertaken measures as not addressing the diverse array of needs of all members of the Icelandic community. Even if the measures are available in different languages on the specific *covid.is web site*, people said it was; difficult to access the source of information, to understand them properly and to "interpret" the measures of measures´ implementation.

Additionally, participants thought that the **mass media** plays a significant role in the distribution of information and keeping people connected, however they felt that the *public opinion was not considered in media debate*[17].

Participants pointed out some issues they have been confronted with and made some suggestions on how the Icelandic authorities might better address and implement the measures to offer a broader perspective for the larger Icelandic community, including minority groups. According to the participant's opinion, one of the most affected groups of people are immigrants, non-Icelandic speaker community, disabled people, and foreign workers whose voice has not been listened to:

"Open the eyes and ears for minority groups."[18]

The participants were aware that addressing the diversity and complexity of different minority group is a challenge for some members of minority groups. Therefore, participants to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland, would like to see:

- a better flowing of information, and equal treatment of different groups;
- an official communication platform for different minorities where they can easily access the information in their languages;
- a robust communication channel for dialog and network between the public authorities and representatives of various minority communities;
- a concrete and practical educational strategy and support programs for public protection.

[16] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.
[17] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.
[18] Extraction of statements from the Jamboard notes taken during the online democracy lab in Iceland.

Economy, social and personal

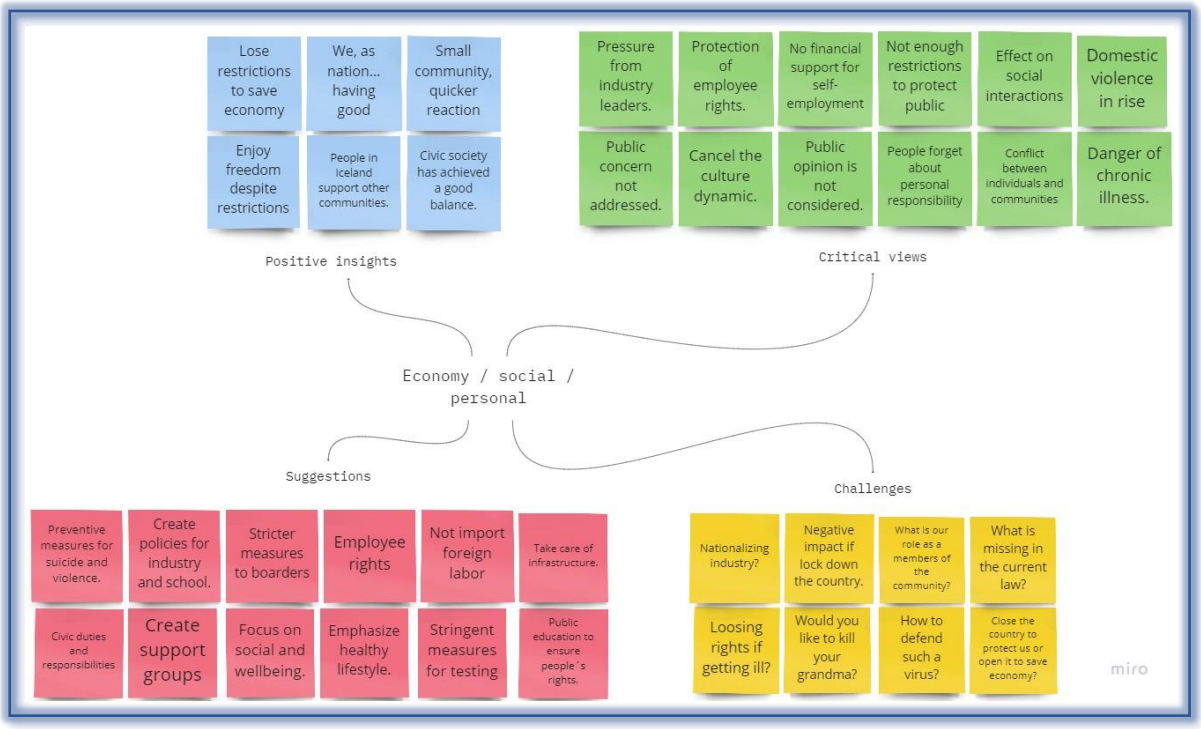


Table 9. Key words emerged from the discussion related to economy / social / personal

Civil society/our nation	Public concern	Public education	Support group	Social interaction
Individual / community conflict	Personal values / civic duties / responsibilities	Human rights	Culture dynamic	Social and wellbeing
Healthy lifestyle	Domestic violence	Restrictions	Infrastructure	Self-employment
Employee rights	Financial support	Unemployment	Foreign labour	Nationalizing industry

Another topic of discussion declared by participants accentuates the effect and impact of the covid pandemic and the undertaken measures on different areas such as **economy**, **society** and **personal/family/health**. A few areas of concern have been indicated by participants as not being enough addressed and reflected into the measures undertaken by the Icelandic authorities were **unemployment**, **labour protection**, **disruption of social interaction**, **risk of getting ill** and **health fragility**, and **exposure of people to chronic illness** as an indirect effect of the covid pandemic.

In the same manner like the approach presented for the communication/information theme, there was a different of opinion amongst the participants. ´ Some of the participants were more concerned about the *health consequences* and what kind of measures might be envisaged by authorities to strengthen the health care system and welfare services, what programmes might be implemented to better address the impact of coronavirus, and more robust health protection measures. For other participants, especially those of different minority groups, considered that unemployment has been on the rise in Iceland. With the effect felt mostly in the group of immigrants from other countries that have been primarily working in the tourism industry and at the moment has collapsed. Some participants consider that the unemployment strategies are not sufficiently elaborated in the way that address the diverse category of unemployment situations, and that the category of self-employment is left outside and not supported by the government financial support measures.

According to participants, the authorities in Iceland have been emphasizing with several occasions, especially at the first wave of corona pandemic, the effect of the virus mostly on the elderly population. Therefore, this kind of debate has raised different discussions between the young and the older generation since some young people get tired and lose their interest in strictly following the measures. As a consequence, the younger generation sometimes break the regulations to the detriment of public protections that sometimes lead to some conflicts among individuals:

"What! Are you just going to kill your grandma?"[19]

When it comes to evaluating the authorities', strategy that has been used for building up the measures, participants remarked about contradictory procedures. For instance, the dilemma on whether the borders should be kept closed or not for people coming into the country, the authorities are suspected to "listen" some stakeholders' voices (felt somehow as pressure from the representative of the Icelandic industry) that would like to protect the Icelandic economy:

"This is like sailing the boat!"

Therefore, based on these measures, people feel vulnerable and confused about whether the authorities should implement stricter measures to the border, close the country until the spread of the virus is more stable, or open the country for reviving the Icelandic economy. In this context, the measures are more lose, opening the country for the tourism industry and other business in order to improve the Icelandic economy that some participants felt it as a threat to their health.

Participants feel some negative effects of measures on the social life that have been affected the social interaction, created some kind of conflicts among individuals and different communities and polarized opinion about the people thinking differently regarding the covid pandemic:

"People who wanted open discussions were called "Covidiot" and "stupid"

One of the indirect effects remarked by the participants is the raising of *domestic violence* as *"forced measures"* that keep people longer home, lacking active actions. Therefore, some measures to prevent the secondary pandemic effect should be included among the Icelandic authorities' measures.

Participants have envisaged some recommendations on how some measures can better address different sectors:

- setting up a contingency plan for public protection;
- envisaging specific support measures for the Icelandic infrastructure;
- embed in the Icelandic society education program to protect people's rights;
- implement more stringent measures for public protection;
- consider preventive measures, and strengthening programs for social and wellbeing, healthy lifestyle;
- create support groups for people facing various difficulties, both economically and psychological as an effect of the covid pandemic.
- create protection measures for the Icelandic economy: for a while stop importing foreign labor, at least until the unemployment situation is getting better, or even think to put more accent on nationalizing the industry.

[19] Quote of one of participants to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland.

Knowledge and politicization

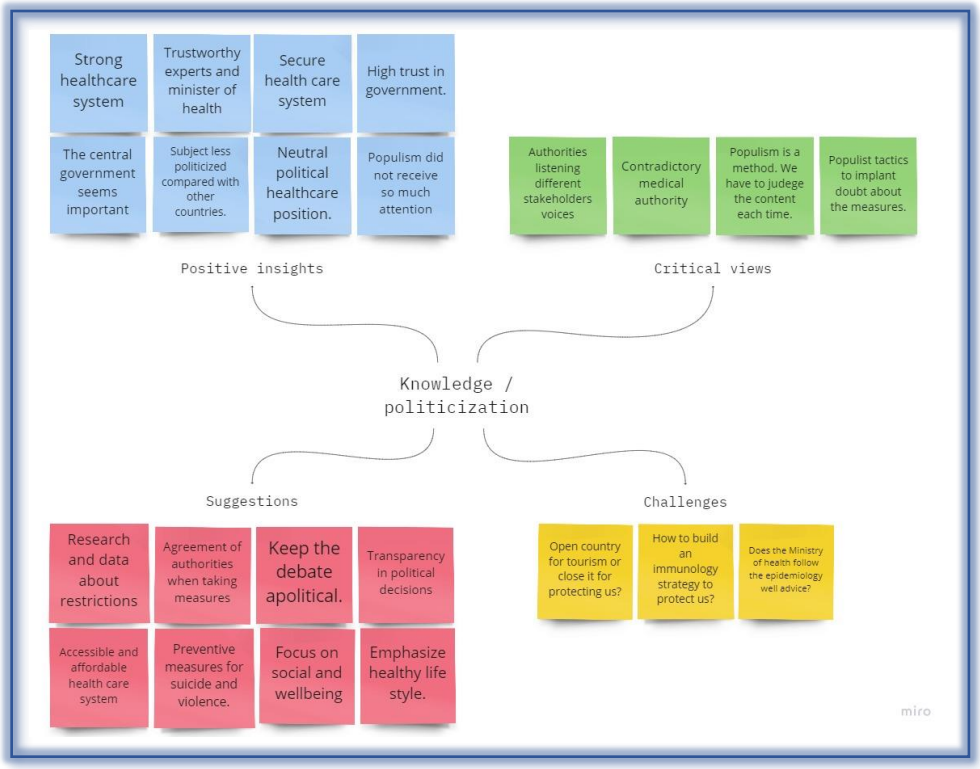


Table 10. Key words emerged from the discussion related to knowledge / politicization

Central government	Civil protection	Healthcare system	Strong healthcare and welfare	Hight trust in government
Authorities´ cooperation	Less politicization	Trust in knowledge	Preventive measures	Social and wellbeing
Suicide and violence	Healthy lifestyle	People freedom	Public interest	Populism in focus
Populism tactics	Apolitical debate	Transparency		

The third theme identified as a one of the main topics of interest is whether the measures undertaken by authorities carry a **political** or a more **knowledge-based** approach. The analysis of the data has revealed a strong trust in government, the healthcare authorities and the knowledge of specialists have significantly contributed to the setting up and implementation of measures for public protection. The participants found the centralized government approach worked very efficiently in addressing the covid pandemic across all Icelandic regions, with the healthcare service and police being the main authorities who have taken the lead in supporting the covid measures. Therefore, in this context participants have relied on the knowledge and measures taken by those two authorities and the politics did not play an important role in influencing the way the measures have been decided and implemented.

Participants have recommended more attention and research regarding the effect of restrictions and creating programmes for strengthening the immunology research.

4. Participants´ Feedback

4.1 Participants´ Feedback

Eleven participants out of twenty-seven have contributed to the evaluation of the event. All of them agreed on the relevance, importance and interesting approach of inviting people to dialogue and open discussion on different themes related to democracy process.

A couple of participants would have appreciated a wider discussion with more people, and a clearer distinction between democracy – populism – COVID.

The online evaluation enabled participants to rate the impact of the dialogue created among participants to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Iceland and to emphasize the lessons learned from the event.Two questions were asked by the lead facilitator and participants wrote their responses in the chat. The evaluation questions are presented below:

- *Have you changed your opinion on a certain issue today?*
- *What is the most important thing you're taking from this meeting?*

Twenty-three participants have answer to the first questions as following:

- sixteen of participants did not change any particular opinion;
- four participants are not sure;
- three of participants have change the opinion to some extent.

Things that participants took away from the meeting included dialogue as informative discussion, a wider understanding on the subject, the opportunity to listen to people with different opinions, and overall that the populism topic was an interesting topic to learn more about.

Table 11. Answers of participants to the evaluation question regarding lessons learned

What is the main lesson learned from the corona pandemic
The participants to this event are those who are interested in helping the society so we would have already taking the initiative to help.
How different groups in this country, despite of everything, have agreed on this in general terms.
Extensive consultation is important for success.
What people appreciate about being part of the conversation.
Various views
The discussion
The most important thing is that this form of discussion can be useful and informative.
We need further discussion about what it means populism.
I have learned different perspectives.
There is a lack of education about democracy and derived dimensions.
We need to take more often this kind of discussion in order for the change to happen.
Not sure.
Do not know.
A wider understanding on the variety of personal knowledge and experiences.
The debate, but not sure.
Maybe people do not agree on what is populism and it´s forms of manifestation.
The wishes of immigrant and disabled people is to be better informed.
How enlightening it can be to talk to people you do not know
We are seeing a lot of the same issues, the same pain threashold.
Gained a broader view on what other people are thinking.

4.2. Learning from Event

The digital environment still poses some challenges with some audiences. One of the participants´ remark was that the Google Jamboard was not a very helpful tool, this however was of great help for the event facilitators and given the volume of people in each session, it made sense to share the board to quickly and effectively communicate the audience's thoughts and keep the record of the discussion among participants in the breakout session rooms.

More persistent notifications would have helped some of the audience arrive on time or attend the event.

People appreciate the opportunity to engage in open talk with people they perceive as diverse or out of their immediate social circle.

It would be helpful for participants that we as event organizers would prepare simple to understand audiovisual material, to explain to the registered participants our understanding of elemental concepts to be brought up in the discussion. Concepts such as democracy in a particular system, populism in Europe and what is and what isn't a politician, which might differ from an elected official.

References

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