

# T5.5: Local Democracy Lab Poland, June 2021

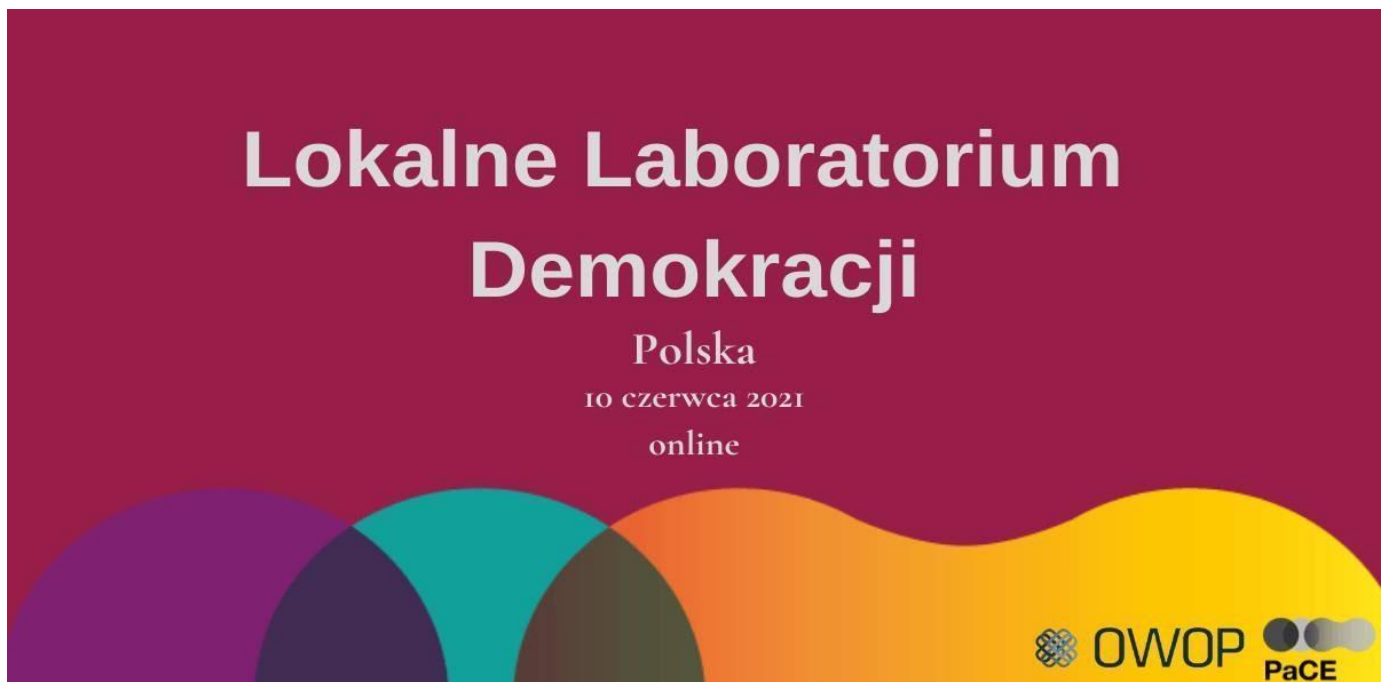
WP5 – Dissemination and engagement



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 Poland, a contribution of **24 participants** to the qualitative research on *“Trust in public administration, in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic”*.

## Acknowledgments

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

We acknowledge the active presence of the twenty-four (24) participants for sharing their insights, knowledge, experience, for their contribution to the research on populism movement in Europe and for engaging in such fruitful, constructive and open exchange of perceptions, opinions and ideas about democracy and trust in administration/public authority in Poland in the time of Covid-19 pandemic.

The organisational team consisted of: Krzysztof Leończuk - project manager (OWOP Poland), Patrycja Konopko - recruitment and promotion (OWOP Poland), Aleksandra Ziętek and Sophie Kiesouw - project leads from The Democratic Society in Brussels. The meeting was hosted by a team of experienced facilitators: Katarzyna Łotowska, Karolina Poczykowska, Anna Sędziak, Agnieszka Otapowicz and Krzysztof Leończuk. We would like to thank Róbert Bjarnason from the Citizens Foundation in Iceland for designing and developing the online deliberation platform Your Priorities, available to participants of the Democracy Lab.



We are thankful for all the help from every individual and organisations that supported us in preparing and reaching out to participants in Poland.

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



## About this document

**Task Lead:** RVK

**Contributors:** DS and CF

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2021

This document outlines the outcomes and lessons learned from the PaCE Local Democracy Lab organised in Poland by OWOP Poland and Democratic Society in Brussels on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 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 <a href="#">PaCE website</a> .	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)	

### Authors' contribution to the report

Krzysztof Leończuk, OWOP	Participants' description, figures, participant feedback, learnings from the event
Patrycja Konopko, OWOP	Participants' description, figures, participant feedback, learnings from the event
Aleksandra Zietek, DemSoc	Participants' description, figures, participant feedback, learnings from the event
Roxana Elena Cziker, RVK	Executive summary, recommendations, qualitative analysis of the participants' statements

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

HISTORY OF CHANGES				
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	KEY CHANGES	AUTHOR	
V0.1	28 <sup>th</sup> of July 2021	Initial version	Roxana Elena Cziker, RVK	
V0.2	3 <sup>rd</sup> of August 2021	Review 1	Aleksandra Zietek, DemSoc	
V0.3	4 <sup>th</sup> of August 2021	Review 2	Roxana Elena Cziker, RVK	
V0.4	9 <sup>th</sup> of August 2021	Review 3	Aleksandra Zietek, DemSoc	
V0.5	9 <sup>th</sup> of August 2021	Review 4	Roxana Elena Cziker, RVK	
V0.6	10 <sup>th</sup> of August 2021	Review 5	Aleksandra Zietek, DemSoc	
V0.7	120 <sup>th</sup> of August 2021	Review 6	Roxana Elena Cziker, RVK	

The working language of the report on PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Poland is English (EN), as required for reporting purposes by article 20.7 of the Grant Agreement. A Polish version is also available to enable the access of participants to the outcomes in their native language.

## 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 and GDPR, how we handle the data and the rights of participants to the research.

The outcomes of the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Poland represent strictly the conclusions formulated on the opinions and perception of the *twenty-four participants to the lab* and cannot be extrapolated as representing the general opinion of citizens in Poland 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.....	3
Disclaimer.....	3
1. Executive summary.....	7
1.1. Key findings.....	7
1.2. Recommendations.....	9
2. Introduction.....	12
2.1. Context of Local Democracy Labs.....	12
2.2. Purpose of the Local Democracy Labs.....	12
2.3. Objectives of the Local Democracy Labs.....	13
2.4. Structure of the Local Democracy Labs.....	14
3. Main outcomes of the online event.....	15
3.1. Description of participants and selection criteria.....	15
3.2. Outcomes & Insights.....	18
4. Participants feedback.....	27
4.1 Participants feedback.....	27
4.2 Event learnings.....	28

## List of Tables

<i>Table 1. Discussion points emerged from the Round 1 of the democracy lab.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Table 2. Discussion points emerged from the Round 2 of the democracy lab.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Table 3. Discussion points emerged from the Round 3 of the democracy lab.....</i>	<i>24</i>

## List of Figures

<i>Figure 1. Representation of channels through the participants get informed about the democracy lab.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Figure 2. Region representation of participants in Poland .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Figure 3. Representation of participants' gender .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Figure 4. Representation of participants' age .....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Figure 5. Representation of participants' educational level .....</i>	<i>18</i>



# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1. Key Findings

The PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Poland, held on the 10th of June 2021, was the fifth online event on the Zoom communication platform in a series of six local democracy labs carried out in different European countries and one pilot in Italy. The meeting attendees deliberated the *Trust in public administration at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic*. The session was hosted by the team of Ośrodek Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych (OWOP), The Support Centre for NGOs - from Białystok, and was attended by people from all across Poland.

The **network-based recruitment approach** has been used to select participants where different organizations and stakeholders have been mapped across Poland. The use of social media was another significant channel used for the participants' selection, specifically, the Facebook event on the OWOP and PaCE profiles, the PaCE website, the befriended Białystok Federation and the OWOP website ([www.owop.org.pl](http://www.owop.org.pl)).

During the recruitment process until the day of the online event, **forty-four (44) participants registered**, and **twenty-four (24), 54.5%** of the total registrations, attended the online event. Among the twenty-four (24) participants, the female gender is more highly represented (70,8%) compared with 29,2% of the male representation. The representation of participants' age is in the range of 18 to 75 years of age. The participants' educational profile is mostly university degree, 79% with a higher education degree. Among the participants, 71% were coming from the Podlaskie region, which is a result of the network-based recruitment approach. A countrywide Facebook campaign attracted 29% of participants, coming from different country regions.

The lessons learned from the recruitment process emphasize a positive and effective participants' interest by contacting people directly that serves for building up trust and confidence. Participants who attended the online event, coming from the outside the organisers' network, brought an added value to the discussion.

The PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Poland determined several interesting statements and declarations from twenty-four participants. The participants' statements have been qualitatively analysed by the thematic analysis method. The **qualitative analysis** of participants' statements was allocated against four themes, based on whether the participants have evaluated the authorities' measures regarding the protection against the Covid-19 pandemic as *positive*, *negative*, *challenging*, or whether participants felt responsible for drafting some **recommendations/suggestions**. Thus, the four envisaged categories are:

- Positive insights
- Critical views
- Suggestions
- Challenges

The outcomes of the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Poland have revealed different dimensions as premises of the public trust in authorities, such as the ***media influence, distribution, clarity and coherence of information, side and long-term effects, impact on social, economic, cultural sectors, impact on education, central vs. local administration***, to mention a few participants' viewpoints.

The participants highlighted and appreciated a few authorities' measures taken to handle the covid pandemic. Thus, based on the participants' outcomes, the Polish authorities have adopted a few strategies for the support of the population in the lockdown period, as a measure of diminishing the side effect of the restrictions, e.g., **the online Cultural programmes launched by the Ministry of Culture, online public access to the library publications, and launch of a new e-health consultation and e-prescription programmes** to serve all patients with different health issues.

The participants **positively** evaluated the quarantine measures applied to people infected with covid, locking down strategies in the first pandemic's wave, and keeping special schools for children with disabilities open.

There have been remarked some resilient attitudes of the cultural branch in Poland that manifested initiatives to access external grants and funds provided by the state and institutions in the absence of sustained support from authorities.

The report also highlights some **challenges and critical views** regarding the impact of measures undertaken by authorities on different sectors:

- Challenges generated by the strategies of “communicating public information” that have “influenced” negatively public understanding and “interpretation” of restrictions, consideration, and compliance with the measures adopted. Overall, the authorities' intervention and measures in response to the covid situation have been mainly evaluated by participants as **inadequate, contradictory, late decided, chaotic, reckless, unfair, impulsive, violating the law, and lacking coherent strategies and planning** to convey people in confusion, panic, fear, and distress.
- The **long-term side effects** of the pandemic and measures have not been adequately addressed, if not some of them completely ignored, such as **mental health, the psychological and emotional children's condition as an effect of extended isolation at home, disadvantaged groups of population such as ageing people, homeless, overweight children, people with different illnesses and chronic diseases**.

The lack of **management, accessibility, efficient and adequate communication with the public** has been emphasized by participants, particularly stressing how this translated into:

- insignificant explanations of the virus and its effect;
- unreasonably technical details and limited accessible information for the general public level of understanding when presenting the virus effects and status/statistic within the Polish population;
- frequent changes of measures with no preparation in advance and no public notification;
- regular and long-term exposure of people to adverse and pessimistic side effects of the covid;



Restrictions applied by the Polish authorities had barely considered the **multiple-option contribution** of various scientific communities, expertise, and civil society's practical expertise when the measures were adopted and implemented in different sectors and applied for different categories of population:

- measures have not been evaluated from the perspective of local needs and particularities; therefore, participants highlighted a lack of coordination between the central government and local authorities that responded late, “closed their doors,” and delayed the efficient intervention at the local level.
- decision-making process did not include multiple-perspective views, coming from public opinion, experts and specialists, NGOs, and civic organization consultation.

The measures lacked strategies for the side-effects management, such as **impacts on the economic and social sectors, education, and people's wellbeing and mental health**. The central authorities' focus has been on protecting public health, but still to the detriment of the mental health and psychological effect, and less on evaluating the consequences of chronic diseases and other illnesses present in the population. Some relevant examples are to be stressed:

- no clear distribution and application criteria of the financial support for entrepreneurs and cultural branches.
- no substantial support for teachers and principals in school regarding the organization of the online classes and in assisting teachers with limited digital literacy.
- lack of protection measures for disadvantaged groups of population such as ageing people exposed to the risk of isolation and for the homeless more exposed to the risk of contamination and spreading of the virus.
- poor management of the organization of medical services and assistance addressing the population suffering from different illnesses and chronic diseases.

The participants positively evaluated the opportunity to participate in the debate, where helpful information and opinion have been shared by different participants, highlighting the constructive effect of deliberation on social issues. Participants were calling for more similar events where people could express their opinions and share experiences. They positively appraised the participants' willingness to share their views and personal experience.

## 1.2. Recommendations

A list of recommendations based on the main findings of the participants' discussions are advocated by the leaders of PaCE's local democracy labs in collaboration with the Democracy Lab Poland facilitation team. The recommendations are based on areas and actions highlighted by participants as insufficiently and inefficiently addressed by the authorities' measures, or on the lack of strategies regarding the distribution, clarity, and accessibility of information for the public, and the side and long-term effects of the virus and the implemented restrictions. The proposed recommendations will be a part of the PaCE report shared with the European Commission based on the Grant Agreement of the PaCE project and exploited in a webinar organized with policy actors as a collaboration between the City of Reykjavík and Democratic Society.



1. **Adopt public measures** in line with the *Interdisciplinary capacity building-approach*<sup>1</sup> from integrating knowledge and diverse expertise and engaging different communities and organisations such as NGOs and civil society. The implementation of measures must comply with the principle of *relevance, efficiency, efficacy, impact, and sustainability*. Keep the balance of multiple-voices expertise both from the health care and social services sectors.
2. **Public communication strategies** might adopt clear, precise, coherent, and reliable messages and reconsider distributing information to the public, favouring people's understanding and cooperation rather than inducing **public panic and fear**. Adopt a broader perspective when envisaging public measures by analysing the situation at the international level, listening to experts, not succumbing to populism, and balancing the political decision in favour of expertise.
3. Review the authorities' strategies for practical implementation of the measures in the diverse contexts and consider better public response in line with the *particularities and needs of different sectors (economic, social, education) and different groups of the Polish community*, creating premises for coherent plans and envisaging priorities for disadvantaged and risk groups of the population.
4. **Harmonize the centralized strategies with the local strategies and policy** as a cooperative effort between the local authorities and communities and central government.
5. **Backup strategies and measures addressing the impact of long-term side effects** of the Covid pandemic, such as *mental health, psychological and emotional conditions and chronic diseases*, and other possible indirect impacts that the crisis might entail.
6. **Ensuring reliable medical services and prevention of morbidity as a measure of restructuring the health care services provision** to enable people suffering from different illnesses and chronic diseases to benefit from proper and adequate medical treatment and assistance.
7. Re-evaluation and adaptation of the laws based on the lessons from the covid pandemic, among other issues, reconsiderations of the professional activities and working conditions. The expert advisory group to the Prime Minister's cabinet should be extended to include the interdisciplinary capacity-building perspective.
8. **Provide protection measures** for disadvantaged groups of people, such as ageing people, who are more exposed to isolation, by encouraging **volunteering programmes and programmes for crisis management**, financed by the central government in cooperation with the local authorities.
9. **Prioritizing support programmes for education** considering **psychological support** for children exposed to difficult conditions and isolation during the pandemic. Adopt **after-effect monitoring programmes for children who have dropped out of school** during the pandemic. Re-evaluate the educational system by **providing support for teachers with remote teaching programmes** and courses to improve **their digital literacy**.

---

<sup>1</sup> Water Youth Network WYN and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery



- 
10. **Take advantage of international cooperation and European consultation groups** as a measure of good practice exchange by networking and debate with different stakeholders across Europe within the frame of the European Union programmes.



## 2. Introduction

### 2.1. Context of the 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, 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 to the PaCE's qualitative research. Thus, one of the participatory researches aims the carrying out of 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 and 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 six **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.***

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 proposing an innovative online forum to allow people of different backgrounds across Europe to participate independent of their geographic location.

### 2.2. Purpose of the Local Democracy Labs

The **goal** of the 3-hours-long local Democracy Labs held across the European focus member states 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 how 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, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria**.

## 2.3. Objectives of the Local Democracy Labs

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;

## 2.4. Structure of the Local Democracy Labs

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 frame and creates a welcoming and conducive 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. and 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 Your Priorities platform for 10 days prior the event.
2. **Online deliberation event.** Via Zoom communication platform, a 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 Your Priorities 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. After the plenary session, the participants were divided in smaller groups, where participants changed their group for each round. Each facilitator supported one group of participants and kept leading the same breakout group. The breakout and plenary session have been audio recorded, with the fully agreement of participants. The facilitators were using a 'Miro' online note board where they collected all discussion points carried out by participants.

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

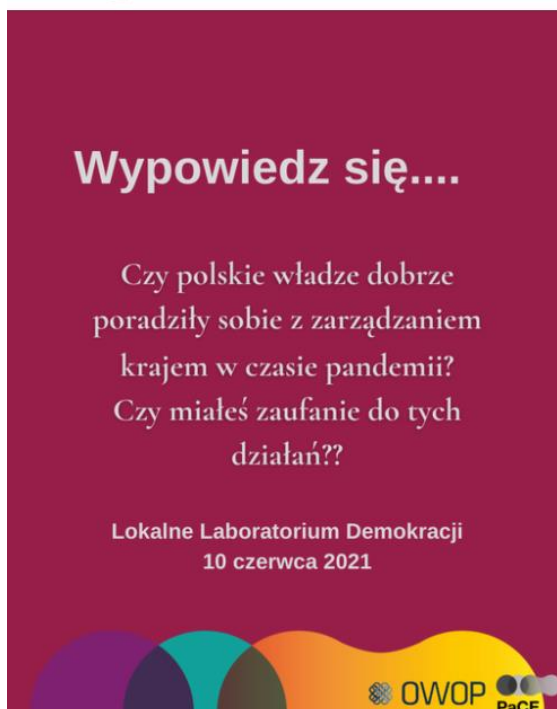
1. **Explorative question** - about the media and the pandemic (round 1)  
*How are public the authorities addressing citizens' concerns and needs arising from pandemic COVID-19?  
Share your experiences and insights.*
2. **Deepening question** - starting to get into the topic of how government is dealing with the pandemic (round 2)  
*What do you think of the Covid-19 restrictions and how they were decided by decision makers?*
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 pandemic, what would be your recommendation to the government? If you were in charge, what would you do?*

## 3. Main Outcomes of the Online Event

### 3.1. Recruitment Process and the Description of Participants

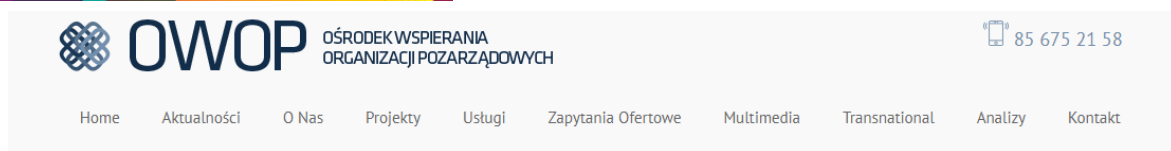
#### Recruitment process

Ośrodek Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych - OWOP  
Opublikowane przez: Patrycja Konopko · 26 maja ·  
Wypowiedz się!  
Krążą głosy, że Polska jest w demokratycznej przepaści. Co o tym sądzisz? Co myślisz o stanie naszej demokracji?  
Dołącz do naszego wydarzenia! <https://forms.gle/zyv9oQMxttoVoKvL9>  
Więcej tutaj <https://sites.google.com/view/democracy-lab-poland/>



Forty-four (44) people registered to the PaCE Local Democracy Lab, of which twenty-four (24) attended the online event. The day before the event, the participants were personally contacted by the recruiter based on the preliminary confirmation of interest. Hence, thirty (30) people confirmed their participation, nevertheless, nine (9) of these people did not show up at the online event, and three (3) people with whom the phone contact was unsuccessful attended the event.

The invitation to participation in the online event has been launched for all interested Polish citizens over the age of 16. We aimed to spread information about the event to representatives of minorities, migrants, people of different professional and social backgrounds and considering/promoting the balance and inclusive strategies of including any gender. In order to reach potential participants, we launched a countrywide campaign on Facebook promoting the event, and we promoted it on the OWOP profile (together with the project website), and the befriended Białystok Federation as well as on the OWOP website [www.owop.org.pl](http://www.owop.org.pl).

[Wersja PDF](#)

#### Lokalne Laboratorium Demokracji 10 czerwca 2021 r

##### - Badanie zaufania do działań administracji publicznej w czasie pandemii COVID-19 -

Ośrodek Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych (OWOP) we współpracy z europejską siecią Democratic Society (Demsoc) z siedzibą w Brukseli, organizuje Lokalne Laboratorium Demokracji - [wydarzenie online](#), które gromadzi ludzi w celu omówienia stanu demokracji w Polsce, przez pryzmat obecnych wyzwań związanych z pandemią COVID-19. Wydarzenie jest bezpłatne, odbędzie się online, na platformie videokonferencyjnej Zoom we czwartek 10 czerwca 2021 roku ([wymagana jest wcześniejsza rejestracja](#)).

Lokalne Laboratorium Demokracji stwarza mieszkańcom okazję do omówienia swoich opinii i obaw dotyczących tego, jak władze publiczne radzą sobie z pandemią i zaproponowania dla nich rekomendacji. W ciągu 3 godzinnego wydarzenia, prowadzonego metodą World Cafe, przez profesjonalnych moderatorów, uczestnicy będą dyskutować w mniejszych grupach, dzięki czemu każdy będzie miał przestrzeń do wyrażenia własnego zdania. Zebrana wiedza zostanie wykorzystana w badaniach PaCE, a wyniki zostaną szeroko rozpowszechnione wśród decydentów.

Zachęcamy do udziału wszystkie zainteresowane osoby, w tym przedstawiciele mniejszości, migrantów, osoby o różnym statusie zawodowym i społecznym.

[Wymogi formalne uczestnictwa w wydarzeniu:](#)



## Facebook & Twitter posts



Federacja Białystok  
4 czerwca o 08:27

Demokracja? To jeden z typów ustroju państwa, zakładający udział obywateli w sprawowaniu władzy. Prosimy, podzielcie swoją opinią. Głos przedstawicieli organizacji społecznych jest bardzo ważny! Szczególnie zapraszamy społeczników z [Federacja Białystok](#). Zgłoszcie do badania [Ośrodek Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych - OWOP](#) i wypełnijcie formularz zgłoszeniowy. Warto!



Ośrodek Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych - OWOP  
31 maja o 12:27

Weź udział w badaniu, dyskutuj lub posłuchaj opinii innych - temat jest ważny: DEMOKRACJA 🙌  
OWOP współorganizuje [Lokalne Laboratorium Demokracji](#) - jedyne takie wydarzenie w Polsce i jedno z 6 w Europie, które daje możliwość społeczeństwu wypowiedzenia i za... [Zobacz więcej](#)



DOCS.GOOGLE.COM

### Formularz zgłoszeniowy

Dziękujemy za zainteresowanie udziałem w Lokalnym Laboratorium Demokracji. Laboratorium Demokracji to interaktywne wydarzenie online...



Hajnówka Dostępna  
28 maja o 10:59

💡 Zapraszamy wszystkie chętne osoby, które ukończyły 16 lat i mieszkają w Polsce do wzięcia udziału w LOKALNYM LABORATORIUM DEMOKRACJI, podczas którego będziemy dyskutować i zastanawiać się nad stanem demokracji w Polsce.

💡 Jest to bezpłatne wydarzenie online, które odbędzie się 10 czerwca br. Wymagana wcześniejsza rejestracja poprzez formularz: <https://forms.gle/zyv9oQMxttoVoKvL9>

💡 Zachęcamy do udziału wszystkie zainteresowane osoby, w tym przedstawicieli mniejszości, migrantów, osoby o różnym statusie zawodowym i społecznym!

💡 Więcej informacji: <http://owop.org.pl/public/lokalne-laboratorium-demokracji>

OWOP.ORG.PL

Lokalne Laboratorium Demokracji | [owop.org.pl](http://owop.org.pl)

Ty i Agata Rychcik



Lubię to!



Komentarz



Udostępnij



OWES Białystok  
Opublikowane przez: Patrycja Konopko · 31 maja o 12:21

Weź udział w badaniu, dyskutuj lub posłuchaj opinii innych - temat jest ważny: DEMOKRACJA 🙌

[Ośrodek Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych - OWOP](#) współorganizuje [Lokalne Laboratorium Demokracji](#) - jedyne takie wydarzenie w Polsce i jedno z 6 w Europie, które daje możliwość społeczeństwu wypowiedzenia i zaproponowania rekomendacji dla przedstawicieli władzy 🗣️

➡️ Co administracja publiczna robi dobrze a co źle w dobie światowej pandemii? Na pewno masz swoje spostrzeżenia ➡️ **POWIEDZ O NICH !**  
Twoje słowo ma znaczenie - to jest właśnie demokracja! 🙌

#demokracja #democracylab #pace #owop

Wypowiedz się....



OWES Białystok  
Opublikowane przez: Patrycja Konopko · 31 maja o 12:21

Weź udział w badaniu, dyskutuj lub posłuchaj opinii innych - temat jest ważny: DEMOKRACJA 🙌

[Ośrodek Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych - OWOP](#) współorganizuje [Lokalne Laboratorium Demokracji](#) - jedyne takie wydarzenie w Polsce i jedno z 6 w Europie, które daje możliwość społeczeństwu wypowiedzenia i zaproponowania rekomendacji dla przedstawicieli władzy 🗣️

➡️ Co administracja publiczna robi dobrze a co źle w dobie światowej pandemii? Na pewno masz swoje spostrzeżenia ➡️ **POWIEDZ O NICH !**  
Twoje słowo ma znaczenie - to jest właśnie demokracja! 🙌

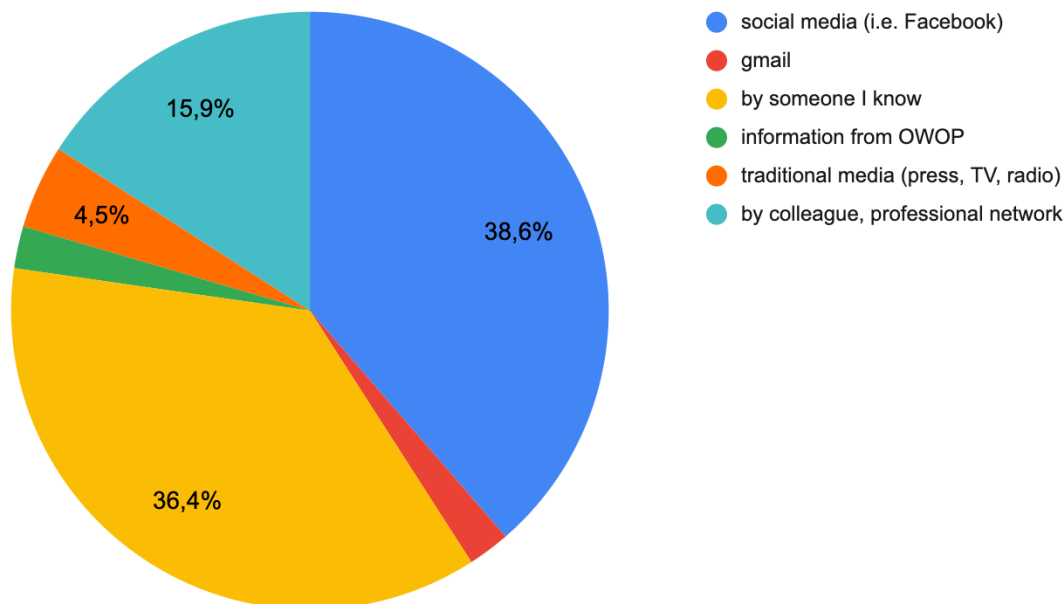
#demokracja #democracylab #pace #owop

Wypowiedz się....

In addition, we also launched other forms of public outreach, such as email, phone, and personal contact of the representatives of various NGOs in Podlaskie Voivodeship (well known by the members of the facilitation team and OWOP colleagues) who have been personally invited to the online event and encouraged to contribute to the recruitment process. Henceforward, we want to highlight that reaching organization networks and NGOs has been appreciated as a more effective recruitment strategy than social media outreach. Thus, around 55-58% of participants registered or attended the event (24 out of 44 applying and 14 out of 24 participating) have been acknowledged with the Democracy Lab via friends, colleagues, and professional contacts as a part of the OWOP's network. Among the remaining 42% of the participants, 70% were from outside the Podlaskie region - the effect of a countrywide campaign on Facebook.

**Figure 1.** Representation of channels through the participants get informed about the democracy lab

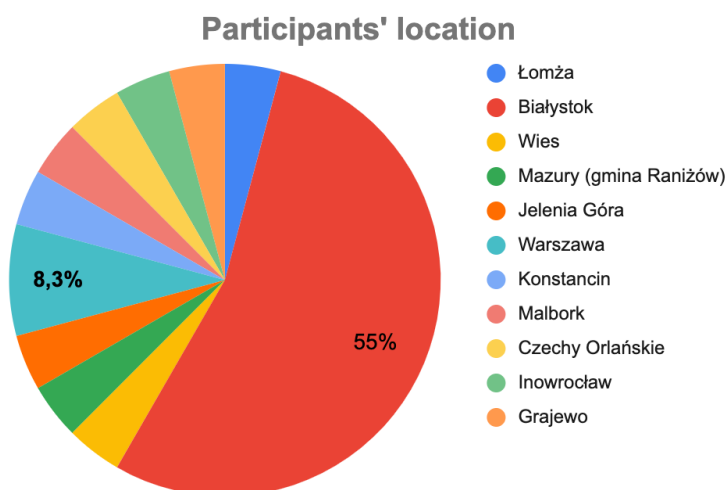
### How did you learn about the Local Democracy Lab?



### Description of participants

A significant number of participants was represented by women (71%) than 29,2% of male representation. Participants' educational background was mainly higher education level (79%) than secondary and vocational educational profile (only 20,8%). The participants' age range is between 18 to 75 years, with the highest representation of people active in labour (88%). In contrast, the middle-aged 36 to 65 have been significantly represented (63%). The selected sample has covered different regions in Poland, two-third (2/3) of participants came from the Podlaskie Voivodeship (Białystok, Łomża, Czechy Orłańskie, Grajewo), as a result of the direct outreach through OWOP, based in Białystok.

**Figure 2.** Region representation of participants in Poland



**Figure 3.** Representation of participants' gender

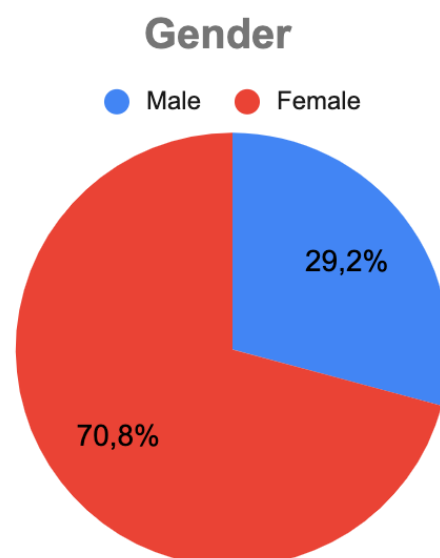


Figure 4. Representation of participants' age

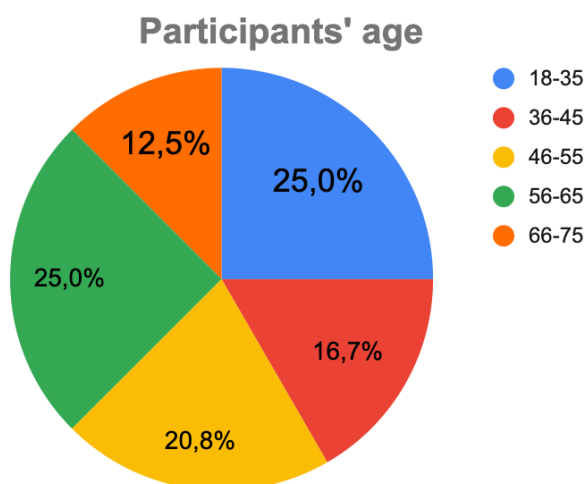
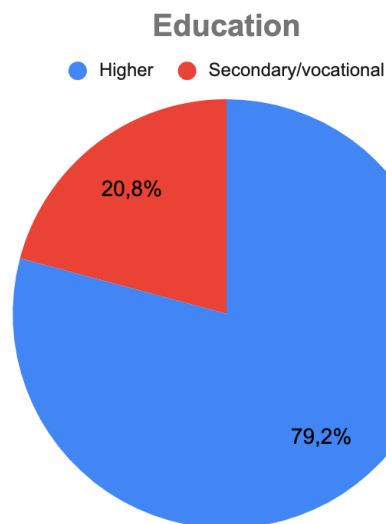


Figure 5. Representation of participants' educational level



### 3.2. Outcomes & Insights

The qualitative analysis of the participants' statements emerged from the local democracy lab (breakout session for each question), has highlighted four categories of **themes**:

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

#### Round 1. Q1: How are public authorities Addressing citizens' concerns and needs arising from pandemic covid-19?

**Round 1**

How are public authorities addressing citizens' concerns and needs arising from pandemic COVID-19?  
Share your experiences and insights.

There seems to have been no communication between central and local government. There was a big gap between the government and the citizens.

The initial actions at national level were adequate, especially as the situation was new and threatening to everyone. Later on, the communications no longer met the criteria of relevance, being chaotic and not based on rational grounds.

Public television did not allow experts with a different opinion on the threats to speak. An example: the removal of the Pospieszalski programme from the air - resulted in even greater fear and speculation.

We can now see that it would be better to take some decisions at the level of local government.

Schools has definitely failed. Children are now back at school and do not know how to talk to each other. Time for learning is lost. Especially when they were at home alone because the parents are working - they were not able to.

We have medical services on the front line. The procedures for covid patients are very strange. Calls for the use of alternative medicines have not been heeded. This has left uncertainty about the good intentions of the authorities.

There has been and continues to be a dearth of debate on prevention and safeguards.

The government has failed at many things: the organisation of health services, education, communication with the public. Despite restrictions - for example, there were crowds of people in clinics.

Teachers and principals were left alone with decisions, no one helped them to organise remote learning. Elder teachers struggled with the technical aspects of learning.

Vaccinations [rate] would have been much better if some tasks had been delegated to local governments. Centralised distribution was an obstacle.

We are seeing pandemic fear among children, contact anxiety, fear of returning to school.

Fear is the worst thing. The closing down of the health service was very bad.

The authorities introduced security regulations and procedures which forced changes in the way work was organised in the institutions.

To date there has been organisational and communication chaos. Instead of factual information on how to proceed, we have been bombarded with figures, threatened with consequences, penalties, etc.

Fear makes people nervous and arrogant, causes changes in behaviour and irrational reactions.

The change of the client admission system in local government institutions went smoothly and was not controversial.

Remote learning often involved asking questions and testing.

There are no attempts to fight fake news or to clarify fake information.

The main discussion points for the Q1 for each of the four categories of themes are presented in *Table 1*.

*Table 1.* Discussion points emerged from the Round 1 of the democracy lab

<b>Positive insights</b>	<p><b>Resilience attitudes of cultural branch</b></p> <p>Due to the restriction of holding events, the artists have been exposed to financial difficulties. Therefore, governmental and external funds, such as Erasmus, were available for their support.</p> <p>Some of the cultural events have been shifted to online. <i>"Polish State Pandemic project - implemented with a grant."</i></p> <p><b>Measures adopted by the Ministry of Culture and Erasmus plus grants.</b></p> <p><b>Authorities' strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Adequate measures adopted at the national level in the early stages of the pandemic, essentially because of dealing with a new and threatening situation for everyone.</li> <li>– Launch of the 'Culture on the Net' programmes by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage</li> <li>– Facilitation of public access to the online library's resources</li> <li>– Regulations enabling NGOs to organize General meetings remotely</li> <li>– Launch of the new e-health consultation and e-prescriptions programmes</li> <li>– Implementation of the activity's security regulations and procedures in different institutions.</li> <li>– Smooth procedures of local government institutions for the customer service system.</li> </ul>
<b>Critical views</b>	<p><b>Public fear and confusion</b></p> <p>No clear travelling conditions information and support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland for people coming back to Poland. People were confused and did not know how they would return home. <i>"Media and politicians fuelled this fear; there was no reassuring information."</i></p> <p>Participants felt exposed to chaos and confusion due to the strategies practiced by authorities: <i>"minister Szumowski: "masks do not give anything", then switch to the obligation of wearing them, that entailed some subsequent consequences.</i></p> <p><i>"Fear makes people nervous and arrogant, causing changes in behaviours and irrational reactions."</i></p> <p><i>"Fear is the worst thing. The closing down of the health services was very bad."</i></p> <p><b>Distribution and accessibility of information</b></p> <p>The participants emphasized that lack of reliable information and provision of contradictory information by the Polish authorities, created to some extent an <i>"information chaos"</i> that put the population into a state of panic and fear.</p> <p>The measures undertaken have not been adequately explained to enable the general public understanding. The participants considered that people lacked information about the virus effect and lacked knowledge about the overall situation <i>"what is happening to us."</i></p> <p>Participants felt overwhelmed by a large amount of information distributed publicly (sometimes has been considered irrelevant), e.g., numbers, consequence threats, penalties, etc., to the detriment of more explanations and details about the virus and its effect.</p> <p><b>Authorities' response</b></p> <p>The public authorities did not properly address and respond to the public's concerns and needs arising from the pandemic. Their intervention has been mostly evaluated by participants as being inadequate, late, chaotic and impulsive, lacking of coherent strategies and sometimes not even related to the direct consequences of the pandemic. The authorities have been criticized as not having prepared scenarios for combating the effect of</p>



the virus and the level of measures' implementation and their effect have not been properly monitored. 'The trust in authorities was summoned by "no coherent single narrative."

*"Public authority made people feel controlled, used for unknown purposes, issues were smuggled into pandemic legislation which served party goals rather than the common good."*

The governance's strategy *"...taken us back in time, to the years when neither democracy nor co-decision-making mattered."*

A few aspects are to be stressed concerning the management of crisis by the Polish authorities:

- **No support services were available to the general public** in the early stages of infection. It was challenging to understand what type of disease people were facing and how to react and intervene if someone got ill. *"People/ services were very sympathetic, tried to help but were unable to do so, because of lacking resources and information."*
- **Lack of planning strategies and coordination** of health care services, education system, and inadequate public communication strategies.
- **Unclear and arbitrary rules regarding the distribution of support among the population** *"many groups have been excluded from support."*
- **Frequent changes of decisions and lack of vision** regarding the formulation and implementation of the measures. *"Why as a state we maintain Sanitary Inspection if there is no pathway of planning and management, including panic..."*
- **Involvement of police in** monitoring the implementation of measures by the population: *"police were checking if the householders were in lock-up."*

#### Central government vs. local authorities

There have been a lack of communication between the central government and local authorities and a massive gap between the central government and the citizens' needs. This lack of coordination entails a series of issues e.g. limitations to the treatment of diseases other than covid, inconsistent vaccine implementation system, different infections rates in different regions while same restrictions for all. Due to the lack of authorities' strategies and coordination at the national level, the decision-making process has been delayed at the local level.

*"Without the central government's support, many local governments also adopted a "closed" attitude - closed doors, closed space - only some of them have been looking for solutions."*

#### Public opinion and NGO's support

Public opinion has not been considered when the measures were adopted and implemented by the authorities in Poland.

Civil society organizations were severely affected by the restrictions. The NGOs and Community Activity Centres have been closed; there has not been ensured space for meetings. During the lockdown, the organizations lost contact with their users; they did not get the funds to run online meetings with the staff and the users. No NGO's support could play an essential role in supporting citizens at the community level.

#### Media's strategy

*"...media coverage reinforced public fear."*

Prolonged and constant exposure to the same information distributed by TV channels, mostly with negative connotations, determined people to adopt a reluctant attitude in following the news.

*"TV caused fear and panic, especially among the elderly and people with illnesses; we had to change our thinking by stopping watching TV."*

Some participants have highlighted the *"lack of open discussion in media (TV) in favour of the political debate."*

Participants felt that the Polish authorities have *"created space for spreading the fake news and created the premises for a political war."*



	<p>The experts in the field (e.g., health care, social, education, etc.) have not been encouraged to have a public intervention on public television; for example, <i>“Pospieszalski programme<sup>2</sup> was taken off the air - causing, even more, fear and speculation.”</i></p> <p><b>Impact on education</b></p> <p>The traditional, music and art schools were affected during the pandemic time.</p> <p>A certain level of uncertainty and confusion has been induced among teachers and school’s principals regarding the locking down conditions <i>“...teachers and principals were left alone with decisions, no one helped them to organise remote teaching.”</i> Teachers with lower digital literacy have struggled with technical aspects, and no support has been officially provided in this regard.</p> <p>Remote learning in schools has not been considered by participants successful, e.g., <i>children going back to school challenge communication with each other after</i>. Children alone at home have faced difficulties in time management and active participation in online courses.</p> <p>The pandemic has induced fear and anxiety in children when needed to go back to school.</p> <p><b>Impact on the family’s life</b></p> <p>People were tired of working from home, remotely and combining/separating the family life from the professional activity <i>“...you had to revise your whole life.”</i></p> <p><b>Impact on cultural and entertainment business</b></p> <p>The lockdown of the cultural events impacted the professional activities of different art branches. Therefore, artists have been supported both by the financial programmes offered by government and by external funds and subsidies, such as Erasmus plus. Concerts have been cancelled; the artists lost their income resources; organization of events engaging artists from abroad was a challenge: <i>“stress on how to put the pieces back together.”</i></p>
<b>Suggestions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– <i>“Need for planning - taking the public by surprise, frequent changes of decisions, there was no vision among those in charge.”</i></li></ul>

<sup>2</sup> The programme hosted by Jan Pospieszalski is entitled “Worth talking” and it is broadcasted by the public television. The format involves discussions on a given subject between the host and the audience with invited experts and politicians. The broadcast was taken off the air in April 2021, right before the airing of the episode on the pandemic. Short report on this issue by independent media “Rzeczpospolita”: <https://www.rp.pl/Media/210429932-Program-Pospieszalskiego-zdjety-z-anteny-Komunikat-TVP.html>

## Round 2. Q2: What do you think of the Covid-19 restrictions and how they were decided by decision-makers?

### Round 2

What do you think of the Covid-19 restrictions and how they were decided by decision makers?

In general, many of the restrictions were ok, except perhaps the closure of parks and forests. The introduction of a social distance was justified.

In the first wave [of the pandemic] lockdown was required, we didn't know much. We needed to assess the situation, but then many mistakes were made, there is no long-term strategy

The information on contagion and transmission of the virus is incomprehensible and vague.

Cultural institutions were closed down at the beginning of lockdown, concerts are still not allowed. You can organise weddings, sports competitions, but still no concerts.

Fortunately, the special schools were not closed and there were no more cases of illness in them

I think it is pointless to wear masks, especially unwashed and worn for months.

Maintaining basic hygiene should be the habit. But disinfecting should be over.

restrictions - before holidays and public holidays, at the last minute, without preparation - was incomprehensible. One example - the ban on visiting cemeteries on 1 November was introduced too late and caused huge

zbyt często wprowadzano zmiany wytycznych i obrotów, w dodatku niekonsekwentnie. Żadna branża nie mogła przewidzieć, co będzie za chwilę. Przykład - sklepy meblowe - raz mogły być otwarte, potem znowu nie.

There is no justification for most of the limiting legislation. "Disobedient" institutions have shown that it was not more dangerous, with no greater numbers of illnesses reported there.

The inappropriate procedure for introducing restrictions has resulted in restrictions on citizens' rights, and constitutional rights - such as the state of emergency - have not been exercised.

The question arises, was there any point in bringing children back to school now? From the point of view of the risk of contagion, it is inconsistent.

The state cannot be held responsible for the behaviour of citizens, but masks are generally ok.

There was a lot of anger in people that we restricted social contact. But restrictions were necessary. The closure of the institution was ok, although wearing masks outdoors was not needed.

There was inequality among different actors (some could, others could not). The Church could be crowded, and restaurants, even those outdoors, were closed.

Infected people should be in quarantine - that is ok.

In many cases, a lot of money was spent (the infamous breathing machines, the wrong masks) that could have been spent differently.

The example of the courts - the public is still illegally not allowed into the hearings, which is against the law. The presidents of the courts decide at their own discretion.

People should not be threatened as it takes its toll on mental and physical health. The elderly were afraid to leave home. More education - rather than prohibitions.

It is incomprehensible that people who have had the virus are 'safe', and it is possible that they can transmit it on their clothes or on objects.

Much depends on civic responsibility - this is most evident in the case of masks - there is no reaction from other people to non-compliance

Lokalne Laboratorium Demokracji, 10.06.2021

OWOP PaCE

The main discussion points for the Q2 for each of the four categories are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Discussion points emerged from the Round 2 of the democracy lab

Positive insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The requirement of wearing masks in public spaces</li> <li>– Restrictions have imposed limited contact among people, e.g., limited number of people in shops, seats on public transport.</li> <li>– The lockdown in the first wave was necessary in order to assess the situation.</li> <li>– Quarantine measures for infected people.</li> <li>– Keeping special schools for children with disabilities open. No infection was registered there.</li> </ul>
Critical views	<p><b>Authorities' strategies</b></p> <p>The authorities' intervention has been mainly evaluated by participants as inadequate, late, chaotic, and impulsive, and lacking coherent strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Inconsistency in the manner the restrictions have been applied to different groups of population.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Closing of sports halls and physical activities, such as swimming pools, restaurants, forests, gyms, concert halls, local government offices, and facilities "lockdown of those spaces serve no purpose." but keeping the churches, weddings, and sports competitions open.</li> <li>○ "Shops and churches were open, and public offices were closed. Closed clinics and dentists. The feeling was that officials hid behind a covid screen. This situation has created demons, people sensing the unfairness meddled." "A lot of money has been spent in wrong [badly sewed] masks, "famous" respiration devices. The money could have been spent differently."</li> <li>○ e.g., 'Shopping hours' for the elderly – senior members of the society were granted the opportunity to shop during certain hours when younger people were not allowed in the shops and public facilities. Outside these designated hours, the elderly people were allowed to shops too.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>"50 people allowed to participate to weddings while [regular] meetings of 10 were impossible."</i></li> <li>– <b>Lack of the legal basis for the measures implemented.</b> <i>"Restrictions were often an excuse used to impose other restrictions, unrelated to the pandemic, limiting the people's rights and freedom."</i></li> <li>– <b>Infringement of freedom by a total ban on gatherings.</b> The ban on public gatherings was introduced by the PM/Health minister decree, which violates the constitutional right to assembly. The constitution is prevalent to the bills and decrees – in that sense, the ban was illegal and violated one of the freedoms guaranteed by the constitution.</li> <li>– <b>No advance notice of possible measures,</b> e.g., last-minute changes of restriction before holidays and public holidays, such as the 1st of November<sup>3</sup>, induced frustration among people.</li> <li>– <b>Insufficient involvement of experts from various fields in consultations and decision-making processes.</b></li> <li>– <b>Frequent and inconsistent changes of guidelines and restrictions,</b> e.g., <i>"no industry could predict what was going to happen next."</i></li> <li>– <b>No clear and straightforward public explanation about the virus and its effect.</b></li> <li>– <b>Poor manner of restrictions implementation</b> that resulted in <i>"restrictions on citizens' rights; and constitutional measures, such as the state of emergency, was not exercised."</i></li> <li>– <b>Poor prioritization of different categories of the population for the vaccination programme,</b> e.g., <i>university teachers who teach remotely, were vaccinated first</i></li> <li>– <b>Less access to information for disadvantaged groups</b> e.g., ageing people and people with disabilities were most affected due to the limited access to a computer and lacking digital literacy; poor access to information, exclusion of the ageing people through the envisaged measures that lead some of them to depression. <i>"...elderly people's hour – a stigma."</i></li> <li>– <b>Differentiation of distribution of measures by regions,</b> e.g., the authorities did not consider implementing different measures according to different local situations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on economy</b> Not all entrepreneurs benefited from the financial support provided by the government (the so-called 'anti-crisis shield').</p> <p><b>Secondary effects on the general health of population and people with different chronic diseases</b> Participants highlighted the restriction of doctor's visits for people with different illnesses and chronic diseases. Most of the treatment have been provided by phone which in some situations were difficult from the perspective of the adequate evaluation of patient's health status.</p>
<b>Suggestions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Some restrictions may be necessary but.... They could have been introduced differently, e.g. a ban on entering hospitals, distant learning (which could be hybrid)</i></li> <li>– <i>Masks - "the people must wear them" and those in power do not, a mishmash of law and lawlessness, one does not know where one ends and where one begins, what is allowed and what is not allowed; if restrictions are introduced, an example should come from the top</i></li> <li>– <i>Investing in the hygiene programmes.</i></li> <li>– <i>Long-term strategy for dealing with such cases is necessary</i></li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Was there any point in children returning to school now [at the end of the school semester]? (from the safety reasons perspective)</i></li> <li>– <i>I think that wearing masks, especially not washed and worn for months - does not make sense.</i></li> <li>– <i>Civic responsibility in following and respecting the restrictions.</i></li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> of Nov is public and religious holiday when people visit cemeteries across Poland to honour the memory of those who passed away.

### Round 3. Q3: In the future wave of this pandemic, what would be your recommendations to the government? If you were in charge, what would you do?

#### Round 3

In a future wave of this pandemic, what would be your recommendation to the government? If you were in charge, what would you do?

More power should be given to the local government, with local responsibility for cooperation with the Sanitary Inspectorate and other partners

All the scandals connected with purchases during the pandemic - the purchase of masks, respirators - must be brought to account.

The legality of the solutions, their constitutionality, should be taken care of.

The voice of scientists and specialists should be more often heard. Not only virologists and doctors, but also others - psychologists, sociologists, economists and educators.

The way education is organised could be changed - breaks in the classroom etc. It should be kept in mind that children suffer the psychological consequences of isolation.

Perhaps it would be worth discussing the issue of the pandemic at supranational level, for example in the European Union.

It is important to balance the competences of the central and local governments - (e.g. the distribution of vaccines is unnecessarily centralised)

The socio-economic situation should be considered - the system of allowances, flexibility of employment, introduction of rules and regulations concerning remote working.

I dream of a situation in which the political culture of those in power increases.

Cultural institutions should not be closed. It is enough to limit the number of people

In-person school education should be reinstated sooner - leaving pupils at home has an impact on the whole economy

Should we help other countries or not?

Some decisions have to be taken at a central level, delegating all decisions to local authorities would cause chaos

The pandemic has revealed how little power local governments have and how much the central government can grab.

disaster should be introduced, which would enable different funding - the payment of compensation - so that the money goes to those who have actually lost, and not to those who are good at filling in

The fate of homeless people during a pandemic should be considered-

Those children who have dropped out of the school system and those whose mental resilience has declined need to be addressed: research shows that on average children gained 8kg in weight during lockdown!

Should the principle of social solidarity operate? Should we, as Europeans, impose our aid on Africa? Food, vaccines, etc.

Lokalne Laboratorium Demokracji, 10.06.2021

The main discussion points for the Q3 for each of the four categories are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Discussion points emerged from the Round 3 of the democracy lab

Suggestions	<p><b>Authorities' management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Evaluation of economic, social, and financial consequences.</b> Evaluation strategies of economic, social, and financial consequences should be administered before the measures are publicly implemented, e.g., <i>"the transformation of hospitals into unidirectional intervention services (covid) is ineffective and leads to a substantial financial burden."</i></li> <li><b>Differential criteria for implementation of measures.</b> Reconsider the manner the restrictions are applied in different sectors, choosing limited access of people rather than complete close, e.g., cultural institutions, health care services, public offices, sports activities, since these might be considered preventive measures for the people's wellbeing and mental health.</li> <li><b>Differential criteria for financial support.</b> Financial protection measures should be re-evaluated.</li> <li><b>Vaccination priority.</b> Reconsider the priority distribution of different categories of people for vaccination. Perhaps it would be more efficient to vaccinate professionally active first in order to sustain the economy of the country.</li> <li><b>Official committee for national disasters.</b> A special committee might be envisaged and general strategies for intervention and public support must be considered by the authorities in case of natural disasters.</li> </ul> <p><b>Central government vs. local authorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better coordination strategies and sharing power/decisions of the central government and local authorities <i>"...local governments know better the needs."</i></li> <li>The centralized measures should be taken over, adapted, and implemented by the local authorities based on the specific needs and local issues, e.g., <i>centralized distribution of vaccines among the population can be shifted to the local authorities.</i></li> </ul>
-------------	--



#### Legislation and constitution

- Re-evaluate and adapt the legislation in accordance with the new remote working conditions.
- Re-evaluate the compliance of measures and restrictions with the constitution.

#### Preventive measures

- Ensure psychological assistance in schools both for children and staff.
- Introduce preventive measures and management of crisis programmes in public education (adults and children), e.g., "*people have information about how to behave in case of a fire but are not prepared to react during a pandemic.*"
- Create outdoor and sport activities for pupils' recreation.

#### Minority and disadvantaged groups

- Provide protection measures for disadvantaged groups such as ageing people, more exposed to isolation and loneliness. Encourage, for instance, volunteering.
- Provide security and monitoring measures for the homeless who are more likely to be exposed to the contamination and spreading the virus due to lack of understating of the situation.

#### Expertise and science

- "*Mobilize the potential of bottom-up support e.g. community, organizations, clinics, hospitals.*"
- Envisage multidisciplinary expertise to be included in the process of authorities' decision-making. Include experts, academics, and specialists from different areas "*...divide the rules of the game with the health authorities.*"
- Keep the balance of multiple-voices expertise, both health service and social care experts: **doctors, psychologists, sociologists, economists, educators** that might have a valuable insight when the measures are formulated and implemented for different categories of population, based on the objectives evaluation of issues in different sectors.
- Expand the group of advisors and experts such as analysts, mathematicians who could contribute to the management of the pandemic.

#### Medical assistance and services

- Facilitate easier access of the population to the covid screening.
- Re-organize the provision of health care services to better address the particular needs of people suffering from different illnesses and chronic diseases.
- Ensure reliable medical services. Keep the balance between online and in-person assistance in order to be sure the medical prescriptions are matching to the patient's health condition.

#### International cooperation

- Enable and take advantage of the international consultation groups as a measure of good practice exchange.
- Create groups of debate and intervention measures at the European Union level.

#### NGOs and other organizations

- Facilitate/enable the network of community/civil society/NGOs organizations in order to support local communities.

#### Information and communication policy

- Enable **multiple perspective debates** envisaging some possible scenarios if the vaccine does not protect people enough.
- Adopt a **coherent, positive manner of distribution of public information** in order to avoid as much as possible the negative emotions, fear, and panic among people.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– <b>Balance the political decision-making when adopting measures in the favour of the</b> expertise assistance and cooperation.</li><li>– Reconsider the communication strategies to the public in the favour of people understanding and cooperation rather than a <b>public panic and fear induction</b>.</li><li>– <b>Advocate the official source of information</b> and make sure that information distributed publicly is accurate <i>There are no attempts to fights fake news or to clarify fake information.</i></li><li>– Monitor better the distribution of information in mass media and <b>shift the focus from the opposing perspective, e.g., dead, coffins, funerals</b>.</li></ul> <p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Introduce <b>post-pandemic-effect monitoring and support programmes</b> for children who have dropped out of the education system due to different pandemic reasons e.g., no appropriate hardware or internet connection needed to attend the online classes, domestic violence, psychological consequences of isolation.</li><li>– Include <b>healthy lifestyle programmes</b> for overweight children who put on weight during the pandemic time.</li><li>– Re-evaluate the organization of schools. The schools should not be completely closed. A hybrid teaching might be examined.</li><li>– <b>Declaration of a state of emergency</b>, stipulated by the Polish Constitution which enables the implementation of extraordinary measures (considered not legal otherwise).</li><li>– Humanitarian contribution of the Polish government to other countries such as Africa, e.g., vaccines, medication, etc. No agreement was reached, but it sparked emotions and was an important topic of the participants' discussion.</li></ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Hybrid education</li><li>– Lawful decision-making, which increases trust, legitimacy, acceptance</li><li>– Greater cooperation between the central and local governments for the common good</li><li>– Official debunking of fake news, attention to accuracy and truthfulness of information</li></ul>

## 4. Participants' Feedback

### 4.1 Participants' Feedback

The profile of the PaCE Local Democracy Lab in Poland participants is very diverse: living in different geographical locations, leading different lifestyles, and shared different experiences; yet the participants shared similar opinions towards the questions. They had a diverse range of experiences regarding the Polish authorities' response and management of the situation during the pandemic. Both positive and negative opinions emerged from the post-event evaluation. Among the participants' statements, there are a few to be highlighted:

- *After listening to all the people, I had the pleasure to discuss with while working in particular groups, I became convinced that the Polish public administration was not up to the task in preparing the society and the economy for the next waves of the pandemic (the second and the third). While some of the actions taken during the first coronavirus outbreak can be forgiven and understood due to the lack of experience and the urgency of the situation, the subsequent ones that were taken during the next waves, were chaotic and ill-considered. Besides, in a group of several people in a 3-hour-long meeting, everyone presented many interesting and, in my opinion, good ideas to fight the pandemic and to prepare the society for a possible next wave. This leads to the question of what our authorities really care about, since they were not able to carry out any action from start to finish, and their decisions were not based on rational grounds.*
- *There have been no restrictions in Belarus, because the virus is not visible and that means it does not exist. The lack of any information is misleading. People should come up with something themselves. In Poland, the situation was reversed, you cannot do anything, and people also started playing tricks. There was panic, stress and depression in both countries. It should be well thought out and understood.*
- *Our discussion showed me how important it is to deliberate on important social issues, especially threats such as pandemics.*
- *Bans and commands are of no use if we do not get people to believe / accept them - education, collaboration instead of scaremongering.*
- *Interdisciplinary teams should tackle social problems, crises. Greater trust in scientists and experts' knowledge, and promoting this knowledge.*
- *The pandemic and the restrictions have exposed the weaknesses of the central government, who are responsible for chaos, panic, contradictory decisions. Undemocratic and illegal decisions. There is a need for less centralism and more constitutional action. The worst effects have come from remote learning and the fuss over vaccines.*
- *Fear and making people afraid never work. At the beginning of this pandemic, I was more frightened by people's fears than by the pandemic itself. That is the worst counsellor. The media amplified this fear. People are disengaging and isolating themselves from life instead of living it. Human beings are herd animals and community relationships are very important. It is impossible to live in isolation. Let's take care of each other and our relationships with people.*
- *The government has let the citizens down. The restrictions, although partly justified, were illegal and no one was held accountable for them. On the pretext of CoVid-19, a number of regulations were introduced that were completely unrelated to the pandemic battle. Although some of the restrictions were appropriate, the way in which they were implemented left a lot to be desired. Moreover, our civil rights and freedoms, such as the right to assembly, were violated. The pandemic has shown that the mechanisms for protecting the rule of law in our country leave much to be desired, and that the political class is more concerned with its own interests than with the nation's welfare. The last remaining hope lies in local governments, much closer to the ordinary citizen.*

## 4.2. Learning from Event

### Learnings on the event participants

- Participants were very keen to take part in this type of research. They believe that talking about what happened during the pandemic is very important and should not end with this single event. This type of research should continue, and lessons should be learned from it.
- Despite the wide variety of participants, their responses were aligned and generally expressing a critical view towards the actions taken by public authorities.
- The group worked proactively; participants were engaged and willing to share personal experiences about the pandemic. A significant challenge for the facilitators was to ensure a suitable time for each participant to express their opinion.
- The remote format did not disrupt the group's work.

### Learnings on the process

Positive outcomes to be considered for further up events:

- For efficiency reasons and to improve the flow of the meeting, the **lead facilitator** should not play the role of **group facilitator** at the same time.
- Time was adequately and fairly allocated to each section of the meeting to enable experience and opinion sharing of each participant.
- Distribution of 5-7 people in each breakout session has been considered as an optimal solution. A fewer number of people would break the dynamic of discussion and exchange of ideas among participants. In contrast, a larger group might impede the chance of opinion exchange among participants.
- Positively appreciated the clear information provided at the beginning of the online event - introducing the objective, programme, guidelines, and checking if everyone is familiar with using the online communication platform, Zoom.
- One break during the meeting - useful both for participants and facilitators.
- The Jambord used for capturing the participants' opinions have been considered very effective. This solution enables both the **facilitators** to present the summary of the breakout group's discussion and the **participants** with an overview of the main discussion points so it was easier to come up with further conclusions.
- The World Café method has been evaluated as beneficial considering the opportunity of mixing/shuffling participants in different virtual rooms and keeping the discussion dynamic, and sharing ideas each time with different people.

Some suggestions for improvement:

- Recording in breakout rooms should be delegated to the technical staff (facilitators found it difficult to remember to record).
- After returning from the break - checking the presence of all participants first and only splitting into groups when everyone is present.