

# PUBLIC MAKERS

**Digital democratic participation**  
***Public Makers for the Environment***



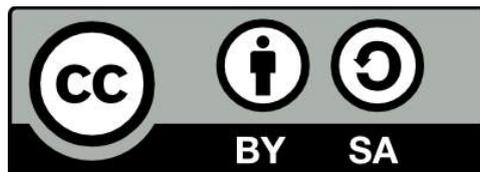
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# Digital Democratic Participation

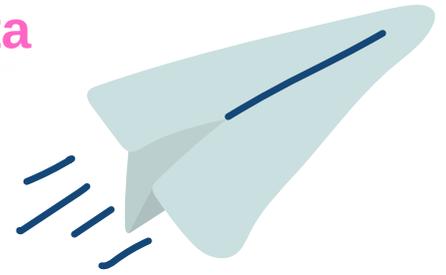
## *Public Makers for the Environment*

### Contents

- Introduction
- Statements
- Open Data Portals & Uses
- Data & Citizens Participation
- Using data for advocacy & raising awareness campaigns
- Let's practice!



# Introduction to Open Data



## What is this toolkit about?

This toolkit is a short guide for open data portals and uses, crowd-sourcing practices and advocacy tools that can be applied by young people in order to promote sustainability and advocate for environmental justice. It is directly linked to the intellectual outputs of the Public Makers project and aims to give a taste of the power of Open Data by testing the tools developed within the project while focusing on environmental challenges, one of the most important issue of the younger generations at the moment.

## What does Open Data mean?

“Open data is data that can be freely used, re-used and redistributed by anyone – subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and sharealike.”

This means that you can use them in any way you want, extend them, transform them, alter them, build commercial applications, and whatever else you want!

## Who uses Open Data?

Researchers, students, policy advisors, NGO representatives, business and industry representatives, etc.

## Possibilities for visualisation of data

- Charts
- Tables
- Graphs
- Maps
- Infographics
- Dashboards

## Challenges

- Non-user friendly presentation of data
- Not updated / Old lists
- Data lists might not be connected
- Some repositories do not operate well (bugs)
- Data fragmentation
- Types of files that you can not modify



## Statements about Open Data

**"We are Gong, a civil society organization from Croatia active in the fields of government transparency, good governance, civic education and fostering citizens' participation, since 1997. We observe elections (when they happen), but in the meantime, we do our best to contribute to standards of openness, transparency, and accountability, as well as improving citizens' competencies to actively participate in decision-making. You could say we work on improving democracy in the day-to-day functioning of the state, both in terms of quality institutions and democratic political culture.**

We use Open Data to make more information about decision-making available, even as the institutions where those decisions are made – including the Croatian Parliament – fail to provide them. We open up the processes and actors involved to public scrutiny, making it easier for citizens to join public consultations, ask questions and participate.

In our view, Open Data helps democracy in a multitude of ways. First, the more data is available to citizens, journalists, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, that means that the less information is withheld from the public. More publicly available information means more possibility for citizens to have their say about what the decision-makers intend to do. This contributes directly to the amount of citizens' participation in decision-making – the processes by which binding decisions are made are no longer opaque affairs left to politicians alone but become that they are meant to be – processes open to the democratic public – a sphere of interested stakeholders, down to the very last citizen. Interestingly, in many ways, the ability to open up data and make it publicly available expands our sphere of democratic participation in practice. Further, Open Data fuels development. As knowledge (i.e., the capacity to work with information) becomes the basis of entire economies, more and more value comes from the interaction and organisation of data. As abstract as it may seem today, work without large amounts of data, and the models making sense of it, will be unthinkable tomorrow.

All stakeholders can use the information available to ask for more information. In important ways, Open Data itself is generative – it opens up new possibilities for stakeholders to use it to request more information, more transparency, and open up the space for more participation in decision-making. Of course, not all citizens are going to be equally interested or involved in opening data, but those who are, are going to be setting the stage in important ways, making it impossible for decisions to be made in a more secretive fashion down the line. Once established, open data practices are hard to dismantle or denigrate, and the way opens up further for exciting new uses of data.

As for young people...well, all we know is that they will be using public data in new ways, ways that we have not even conceived of today. Since opinion polls have shown us that sustainable development and the environment are hot topics for young people, we expect that data on air and water quality or pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, usage of renewable energy sources and the like are going to be the direction in which Open Data develops as young people take the steering wheel of new industries.

It is worth remembering: the purpose of Open Data is not in itself. It is creating new possibilities for development on smarter, better, more sustainable, more equitable terms."

**"I am Antonella Milanini and I have been dealing with active citizenship work for over 30 years now.** For me open data is not just technical hacking or the usage of technical tools. I have always been very interested in making open data understandable from the point of critical thinking, through the organisation in a team, for example, of transparency campaigns on the rights of people in the hospitals. Nowadays, thanks to the massive digitalisation, many civic initiatives can take advantage of public information released in open data, so it is easier to make data available and immediately accessible. In fact, I have been supporting local groups to access and reuse information to monitor the quality of public services, or for the protection of social rights and of common goods. In this way, every citizen can have the tools and the basic knowledge in terms of vision, aspects, problems and political and economic choices that concern both their own territory and more complex situations at a global level. Currently, I am an activist in a collective group focused on the health access rights of citizens, fighting against the shutdown of the first emergency line of the local hospital – we share graphics, we keep up media attention, we run online activities to gather attention from locals and local authorities. Plus, I am a member of the Polygonal team in which I run digital education activities for the youngest as a basis of civic education in the digital world. Finally, I collaborate within the Open Government Forum in the debates, decisions and so on.

On one hand, it is crucial to have open public information, as an objective aspect of the democratic debate and informed decision-making towards citizens – that's what we call open government, right? On the other hand, the accessibility of data allows you to critically think about the foundations of you being a citizen – what are the changes we envision? What do we do to implement that change? More and more, the availability of data has been a driver of social innovation. Without open data, I think, we cannot even question exactly what is going on.

Knowledge of open data for young people and NGOs allows them to become actors of change within the domain of public policies. By training their critical thinking and above all having fun, they can introduce new issues and new aspects to public agendas – coaching is the key! In this historical moment, in which an ecological transition for the future of the planet has been seeded, the environmental data of each territory connected to the system of health services become fundamental – in this sense the lobbying capacity that youth movements and non-profits has shown its strength of showing data, of making data more popular and to democratise data evidence! Towards whom? To the rest of the people and above all towards policy makers.

From my side, I was a coach for a few years in a row in different high schools on open data education as part of the Ministry Programme called "ASOC" – Open Cohesion School Education. With the students we had fun investigating databases on different aspects they selected as important for their local communities, so we discussed them, and we learned many interesting things. Plus, open data education means interacting with the local territory, so students had the opportunity to interview people covering different jobs and seats. Youth must definitely have fun using open data, not only consulting them, but being makers of their communities! Bringing that experience back to a wider policy level, with Polygonal and other entities, we have developed a Telegram channel bot to allow citizens to know in real time the information of the local public administration, increasing the possibility of citizens of being information gatekeepers – and they can either be adults or young people."

**"My name is Maria Sdraka and I am a Phd candidate at the National Observatory of Athens in Greece.** My research focuses on the monitoring of natural disasters through a partnership of remote sensing and AI techniques. Timely and accurate monitoring and damage assessment of natural disasters, such as wildfires, floods, draught, volcanic eruptions, etc, help local authorities and agencies to react in an efficient and effective way. They are able to better understand the progression of the disaster and estimate the economic and ecological losses in order to plan future actions as well as the necessary environmental restoration for safeguarding flora and fauna. To that end, my team focuses on the design of new and robust algorithms based on AI which process data coming mainly from satellite sensors. We use open data from space agencies such as ESA and rely on their continuous and near real-time availability. Having large amounts of data as quickly as possible is an important factor for the development and evaluation of AI models, and enables the resulting system to be integrated in real-world operations. But openness and availability is not an intrinsic characteristic of satellite data only. Especially with the advent of AI more and more large scale datasets are becoming publicly available. Platforms such as Kaggle and DrivenData offer an abundance of datasets and resources and have built strong communities for the advancement of scientific research. Young people or NGOs in the tech field can surely benefit from this paradigm shift and exploit the openness of both data and knowledge in order to develop novel methods for the common good. In addition, it is also important to contribute back to the community by carefully curating and publishing new data for free public use."

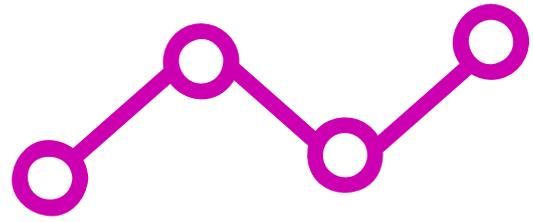
**"My name is Amerissa Giannouli and I am an educator and project manager at Inter Alia NGO.** I was familiar with Open Access before working on the Public Makers project and I had used open data for doing research in university assignments. With the Public Makers project I discovered a new world of possibilities for using and creating open data for advocacy. This should be a breakthrough for the organisations that work on advocacy and care about the needs of their target groups. The tools and methods we identified and practiced could be an essential part of the NGOs. On the one hand, organisations can have access and, otherwise, demand to have access to open data from public and private institutions. On the other hand, there are different ways to collect information from the public and work collectively using different crowd sourcing tools. These are important for achieving the goals of any advocacy plan. Moreover, for the youth organisations that aim to understand and respond to the needs of the young people crowd sourcing can be a great asset. Open data might sound scary and too complicated but, in fact, we are already using them during our everyday life actions in order to take decisions and promote our interests. As citizens, we should aim for more openness and access to reliable information. It is our right and a prerequisite to participate in democratic processes as conscious and well-informed citizens."

# Open Data Portals & Uses

## Main Open Data Repositories

### World

- OECD, <https://data.oecd.org>
- World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org>
- Data World, <https://data.world/datasets/world>



### Europe

- EU Open Data Portal, <https://data.europa.eu/en>
- Eurostat, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

**National Open Data Portals** - Simply, search on the internet using as keywords “the country of your interest” and “open data portal”

### Local Open Data Portals

Some Municipalities have locally focused Open Data Portals that include data information divided to specific thematic categories such as environment, education, social care, financial, ect. This data can be also linked to Geo Portals that present data using maps. Check with your local municipality. If there is no open data portal, you could propose to your mayor to have one! Here is an example from the Municipality of Gortynia (Greece), <http://opendatagortynia.gr/en/> and another example from the City of Rijeka (Croatia), <http://data.rijeka.hr/>

## Open Data Repositories on Environmental Data

### World & Europe

- World Resources Institute, <https://datasets.wri.org>
- UN Environment Open Data, <https://open.unep.org>
- Global Footprint Network, <https://data.footprintnetwork.org/>
- Climate Watch, <https://www.climatewatchdata.org>
- Global Resource Information Database - Geneva, <https://unepgrid.ch/en/platforms>
- Climate Data Store, <https://cds.climate.copernicus.eu/>
- European Environment Agency, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/>



### National Repositories

If you did not find what you are looking for at the national or the local open data portal, you can go to the website of the national Ministry of Environment or any Ministry dealing with environmental issues. Look for your national meteorological data portal or your national observatory data portal. Usually the open data is connected with geospatial information presented with different kinds of maps. Of course, do not forget to check the available environmental statistical data on your national statistics portal. These data can also be presented using graphs and charts.

## Good practices for the use of open data for environmental purposes

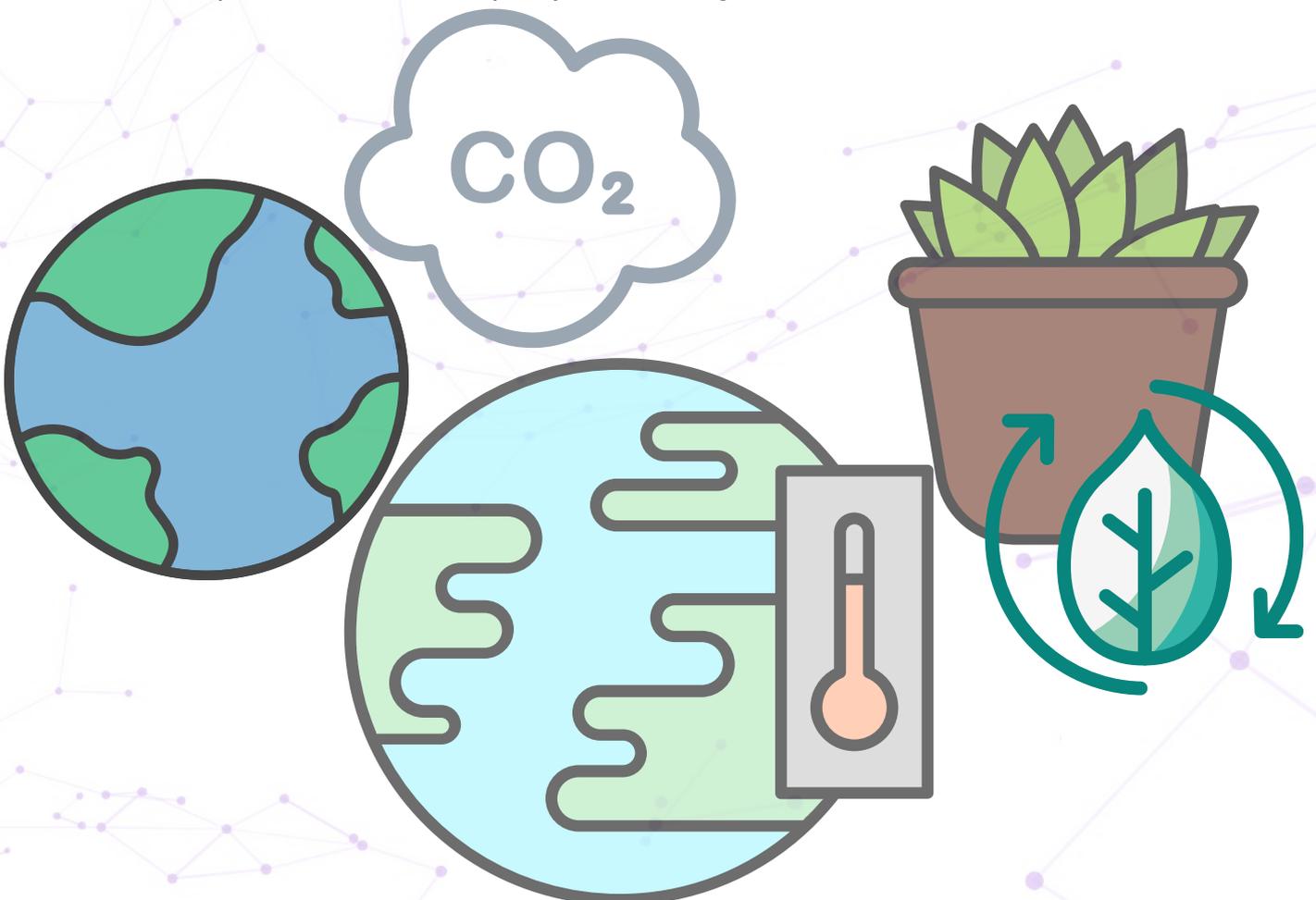
Are you looking for inspiring practices and uses of open data for the environment?

Go to the Open Data portal of the European Union, select your country of interest, choose your sector of interest (in this case, it is the environment) and see what is out there!

**<https://data.europa.eu/en/impact-studies/use-cases>**

Here are a few global and European examples that might be useful for your work:

- Air Pollution Map, <https://aqicn.org/map>
- Interactive Map of Deforestation in EU, <https://digital-dryads.eu>
- OpenTrees, <https://opentrees.org/>  
Municipal street and park trees
- Päästöt, <http://paastot.fi/kaikki-paastot/>  
Shows the magnitude of pollution emissions
- uRADMonitor, <https://www.uradmonitor.com>  
Measures chemical and physical air pollutants in real-time
- GeoFluxus, <https://www.geofluxus.com/>  
Connects regional industrial waste - producers with respective waste treatment facilities.
- Open Air (otvoreni zrak in Croatian), <https://zrak.mozemo.hr>  
Collects open data about the quality of air in large Croatian cities.



# Data & Citizens Participation

## Have you heard about crowdsourcing?

No? Let's start with something easier!

Do you know what outsourcing is?

It is when we assign a task, for example one part of the production process, to somebody else. In crowdsourcing, such an assignment goes to a big group of volunteers or a community.

Crowdmapping is a subcategory of crowdsourcing, where the volunteers or the community does a mapping according to the specific request (eg. map places, businesses, public offices, natural spaces, etc.).

## Crowdsourcing for raising awareness particularly on environmental issues

- **Municipality of Xanthi, IMCityXanthi App**, <https://www.cityofxanthi.gr/imc>

This application allows citizens to report daily issues such as litter, public lighting, broken tiles, etc. that are repaired by the Municipality of Xanthi. In this manner the services of the Municipality of Xanthi can manage to address the issues efficiently and on time. Also, citizens participate in the process of tracking problems and thus being active members of the Municipality.

- **Fix my street Brussels**, <https://fixmystreet.brussels/>

It is an application that allows citizens to report incidents within Brussel's public space. Incidents that can be reported are for example broken street lights, fountains, bridges, roads, graffiti or abandoned objects.

- **Followgreen App**, <https://followgreen.gr/>

Citizens create an account and earn points through online educational activities for recycling (such as articles, videos or quizzes) and by registering the recycling they do in their municipality. Citizens redeem reward points for special benefits - discounts on products / services of local and municipal businesses or donate them to schools as part of school recycling competitions.

- **Connect your City App**, <http://www.connectathens.gr/index.php/blog/142-connect-your-city-app>

Young people create an account and earn points through participating into different volunteering, social and environmental activities. Those who have the higher scores win gifts.

- **WWF Greenspaces**, <https://greenspaces.gr>

Although it does not work any more, it used to be an application for citizens to map green spaces that need to be revived and protected.

- **Dentri Project**, <https://www.facebook.com/dentri.project/>

Citizens register information about empty tree logging spaces.

- **Plant a Tree**, <https://bandgdansk.com>

The city of Gdansk has launched a web application allowing its inhabitants to pinpoint the best locations for planting new trees.

- **SynAthina**, <https://www.synathina.gr/el/>

Citizens and organisations register information about their activities, social and environmental actions.

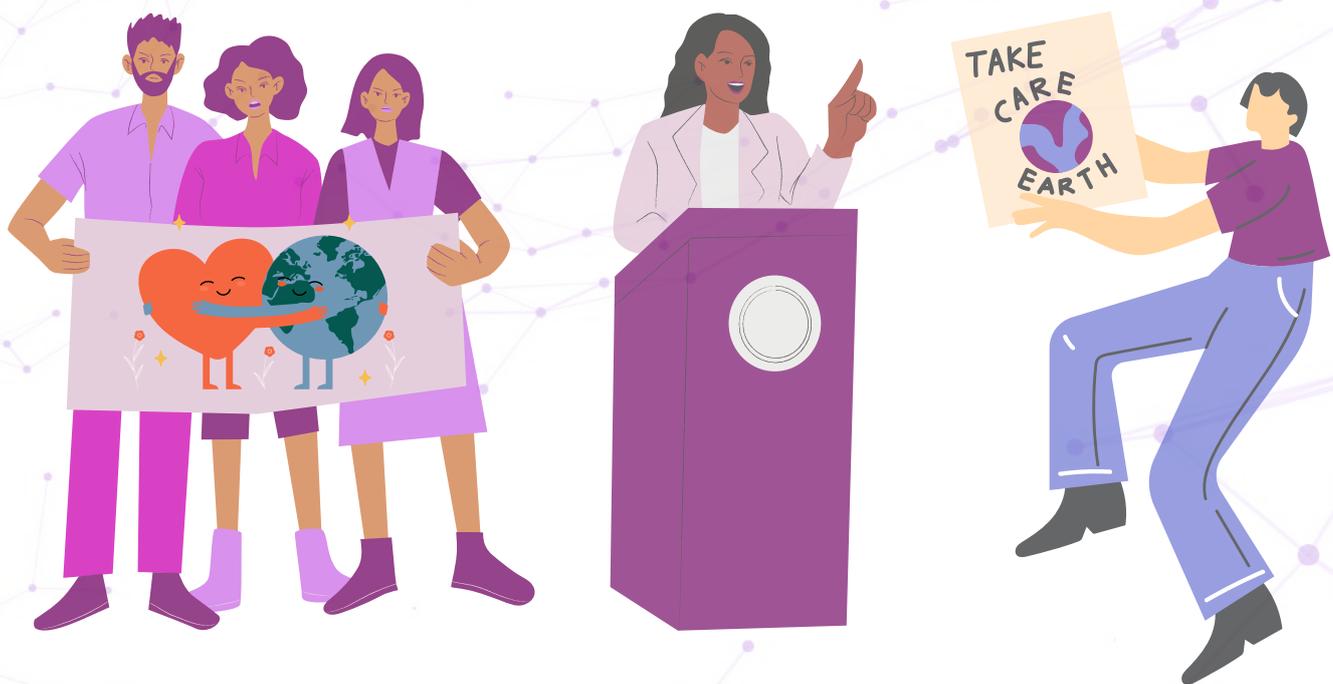
# Using data for advocacy & raising awareness campaigns

## Advocacy actions and information campaigns

**What is advocacy?** A process that aims to change something. This could be small, such as your neighbor's point of view on an issue (eg. climate crisis) or something big, such as the environmental law.

## What forms can it take?

- Lobbying
- Running for office
- Participation in political parties
- Public campaigns involving the (social) media
- Sharing posters and leaflets
- Participating in marches, sit-ins, strikes
- **Artivism**, street theater, upcycling, provocative artistic performances, exhibitions
- Boycotting certain products and companies
- Writing letters to the legislators, the local government, the companies...
- Educating others to raise awareness on specific issues, organising events to provide information
- Community service and volunteering for a cause (join an NGO)
- .... and some of these could be transferred online and be in a digital form :)



## How should I start? What should I do?



### **STEP 1** - Gather data to identify and describe the problem

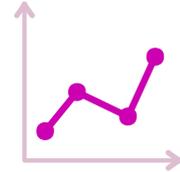
Use different research methods: literature, report and legislation reviews, expert interviews, collect opinions through public surveys, organise focus groups, etc. Remember that you can look up for already existing data or you can create data with your target groups help.



### **STEP 2** - List or map stakeholders, your partner network, possible solutions / good practices



Tip! Stakeholder Analysis can be very useful to see who can help you and who could create obstacles for your actions.



Tip! Problem/Solutions Tree Analysis can be very useful to identify the real problems and changes that need to happen.



### **STEP 3** - Visualize the data to present the problem or suggest solutions

Visualization is very important! Use whatever fits your objectives: charts, tables, graphs, maps, infographics, dashboards.



**STEP 4** - It depends what you want to do with all the collected data, i.e which advocacy activity(ies) you want to undertake. You can make a report, write articles for the media, make a policy proposal, transform the content into a single poster presenting your findings, write a letter to ask for a change, etc. and then use different online and offline methods to distribute them.

# Let's practice!

## Let's create data! Let's make our own map!

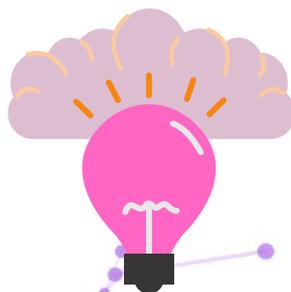
Use a mapping platform to create your map. Such platforms offer to the user the possibility to create free, editable maps. Think about what kind of mapping you wish to make. You can invite other people to help you collect the information (crowdmapping) or do it on your own. You can also add descriptions, links, and pictures to your mappings. Here are some suggestions:

- Map unsustainable / ecological practices in your municipality / community / ecological problems in your community (whether caused by the municipality, businesses or individuals and other agents).
- Map sustainable / ecological practices in your municipality / community (public or/and private).



### See what you've got!

How can you use this map? What does this information tell you about your community? Where do you choose to focus? What is more important to you? What needs to change? How could it change? What kind of message do you want to pass to the world?

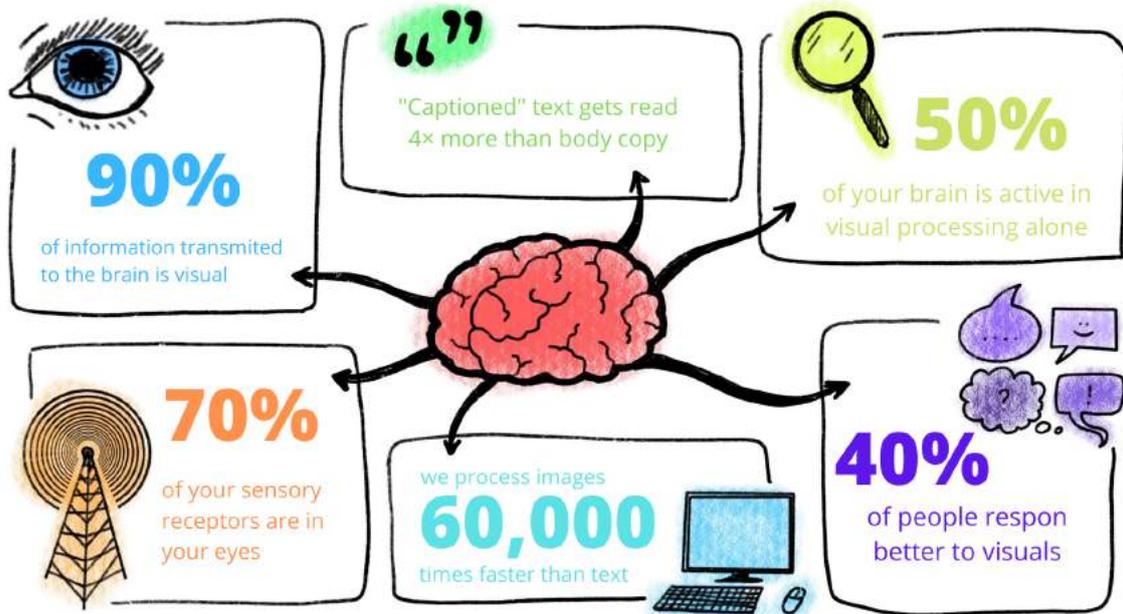


## A picture speaks a thousand words!

If you are a new designer or you do not have any design skills for you, Canva (<http://canva.com>) will be your best friend! Canva is a graphic design platform, used to create social media graphics, presentations, posters, documents and other visual content.



See an example of a infographic produced for the Public Makers project



You may find the editable graphic created in Canva - [here](#)

## Share your campaign!

- **Online website and blog builders** can help you showcase your campaign to the general public. They provide tools to create attractive and informative content, including graphs, videos and statistics.
- **Social networks** help you stay connected with your audiences and interact with them. Keep in mind that each network supports different media formats and attracts different audiences. So, you need to adopt a different approach each time.

*Do you have your campaign ready?*

*Do a **Social Media Marathon** and tell the world about it! Ask your friends, colleagues and followers to share your campaign, including hashtags such as **#opendata #advocacy #environment #publicmakers** .*



- Online platforms that host **virtual meetings** provide the space to interact with your audience. You could use these platforms to collect statements, record virtual presentations and interviews to support you in your campaign and communication strategy.

## Collect signatures for support!



Collect signatories to show that you have people on your side to support your proposals. Check the available online petition platforms:

- openPetition, <https://www.openpetition.eu/>
- Avaaz, <https://secure.avaaz.org/>
- Change, <https://www.change.org/>

## Take action! Ask for a change!

Write a letter or ask a question to the relevant public authorities, policy makers and/or business representatives.

### Tips!



- Address your letter correctly.
- Write to the policy makers for whom you can vote.
- Address only one issue per letter.
- Ask for something specific.
- Keep it short.
- Make it personal.
- Use your institution's letterhead (if available).
- Be polite.
- When appropriate, express your appreciation.
- Include your return address on your letter.
- Have a follow up letter.



## Take action! Ask for a change online!

Public authorities and organisations can simply present open data to increase legitimacy and accountability by providing data such as parliamentary decisions, financial statements, etc. in a user-friendly way. However, digital tools offer the possibility to use open data to increase public engagement and participation requesting from the citizens to contribute in the decision making process.

There are platforms used by public administration and organizations to connect with the community, engaging them in the decision-making process. Such platforms include participatory tools that increase legitimacy for policies developed through direct public consultations. Check if your local municipality or NGO uses one of the following platforms.



- Desidim, <https://decidim.org/>
- CONSUL, <https://consulproject.org/>
- OPIN, <https://opin.me/>
- CitizenLab, <https://www.citizenlab.co/>
- Civocracy, <https://www.civocracy.com/>



Check if your local municipality or government uses another tool! If not, you can either introduce them to the previous ones or suggest them to make one!

**Good luck with your cause!**

Did you like what you just read?

You can practice more Public Makers skills by taking the e-learning course. If you are a youth worker or a person working in the field of youth, you can also practice your skills with the Public Makers non-formal activities. Visit the Public Makers website, <https://publicmakers.eu>

**BECOME A PUBLIC MAKER!**





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