



**November 2023**

FINAL LEARNING EXERCISE

# Lessons on the 3rd Open Government Plan of the city of Madrid



**MADRID**

vicealcaldía,  
portavoz,  
seguridad y  
emergencias





Report prepared by RED2RED

Anabel Suso Araico (coordinator)

Álex González Ruiz

# Index

Introduction.....	3
1 Successes and areas of opportunity .....	4
1.1 In the design of commitments .....	4
1.2 On transparency and public information.....	4
1.3 In community building.....	7
1.4 In collaboration with stakeholders .....	7
1.5 In support of evidence-based decision-making .....	9
2 Challenges in implementation and proposals for overcoming them .....	11
2.1 In the design .....	11
2.2 In the implementation .....	11
3 Methodological proposals for monitoring.....	13
4 Recommendations towards a new action plan .....	14

# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to identify and analyse general lessons learned after the completion of the implementation cycle of the 3rd Open Government Plan of the City of Madrid. Especially, this conclusive learning exercise aims to reflect on the achievements and areas of improvement of the plan as a whole, from the co-creation stage to the implementation phase. Its purpose is to go beyond the evaluation of the activities implemented to encourage a deeper reflection on the transformations and outcomes resulting from the reforms and the collaborative process, and to identify the obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Plan's commitments, offering solutions and approaches to address these situations in future interventions.

Within this framework, the first chapter will focus on reviewing the most positive and transposed lessons learned from the successes achieved during the design and implementation of the Plan. It is not so much a question of detecting the specific achievements of each action, but rather of extracting those elements that are more or less transversal to the entire implementation of the Plan that should be taken into account for future projects.

The second chapter, on the other hand, will address the difficulties that have been detected in the design and implementation of the four commitments, as well as proposals for changes that may be useful both for the continuation of the activities and for consideration in the next action plan.

Related to this, the third chapter presents a proposal for means by which to follow up in case of continuity of the initiatives.

Finally, the fourth chapter, by way of conclusion, lists a series of key proposals useful both for addressing similar challenges in the future and for the design and implementation of future action plans.

# 1 Successes and areas of opportunity

## 1.1 In the design of the commitments

One of the most noteworthy characteristics in the process of designing and approving the Plan is the **participation of inclusive forums, representative of civil society and plurals**. Firstly, before its approval, the DGPC presented the outline of the 3rd Open Government Plan at meetings of the **City Social Council (CSC)**, the **Sectoral Council of Associations and other Citizen Entities (CSAYOEC)** and the **Sectoral Council of Older People (CSPM)**. At these meetings, **the different members were able to make observations and proposals on the content**, developed up to that point by the CSC's Technical Innovation Commission. Subsequently, between May and June 2022, **the Plan was approved in its entirety by the CSC and the CSAYOEC**. The CSPM, on the other hand, played a consultative role in the process, specifically in relation to the content of one of the commitments.

The involvement of spaces such as these, which are certainly representative of the civilian population, **allows for richer and more diverse perspectives to be incorporated into the design of OGP-related challenges**, as well as to take advantage of the expertise that forums may have around specific issues in accordance with their functions and composition, as in the case of the CSPM in relation to citizen participation by the older population.

Complementarily, and increasing the levels of citizen participation in the design process, an **online citizen consultation was organized through "Decide Madrid" prior to the drafting of the Third Plan**, through which the population of Madrid of legal age could contribute to the general content and part of the more specific content (the five commitments initially proposed, for example) by responding to a questionnaire with 13 questions for debate, 6 of them with open answers, in which a total of 2,022 people took part.

This process of shaping the Plan from plural perspectives and around issues directly related to the people and agents who participated lays the basis for **a more focused design to respond to priority needs in terms of participation and transparency** among the population of Madrid and, therefore, for **greater guarantees of success in terms of the objectives**. First and foremost, because the possibility of participating in this first process is already transparency and participation *in motion*.

In the same vein, this also seems to have contributed to **a formal approach to the commitments and the component actions and activities closely linked to OGP values**.

## 1.2 On transparency and information to the public

The Plan's actions as a whole - and especially those related to the commitments 1, 3 and 4- enable **wider access to public information for the population with certain obstacles** (lack of knowledge, age, etc.) to participate in the matters subject to community participation and/or publication on the different participation and transparency portals of

the City Council, which is essential for democratising this access and for the evaluation of public activity. This contributes in this way to **going beyond a merely formal accountability on the part of the institutions**, which ends up contributing to a passive understanding of the citizen's role in this fundamental democratic activity, with experts, public institution workers and, in the best of cases, the media being the ones who usually attend to the day-to-day activity of the Administration. However, to the extent that actions such as those implemented democratise access, understanding and the usefulness of this information by improving the channels theoretically intended for this purpose, while at the same time deploying new means of participation, **a much more active role is encouraged on the part of the citizenry**. On the one hand, because **the intensification of transparency provides the population with a knowledge base** from which to assess activity, in this case municipal activity, and relate it to their needs and interests. On the other hand, because the development of opportunities to concretise in a proactive way the means to satisfy these needs and interests gives **a more practical and tangible sense to the use of the transparency tools** made available by the City Council.

A great example of this can be found in the combination of **the redesign of the Transparency and Open Data portals, the improvement and expansion of the available data and the development of visualisations** (Commitment 1), insofar as they facilitate the consultation and understanding of the information by citizens, regardless of their level of technical knowledge in terms of information management and analysis. A more intuitive and attractive operation of the portals thanks to visualisations manages to promote greater interest by citizens in the information available, showing them that the combination of datasets allows them to quickly access a large amount of information. This, as we said, has in turn transcendental implications in terms of transparency and accountability, providing the population with a knowledge base for decision-making, whether for public authorities or for the citizenry as a whole.

A detail to which special attention should be paid has to do with the criteria that have guided from the beginning the improvement and introduction of visualisations in both portals (citizen interest, public service, transparency and accountability) and which, when selecting data for visualisation, have been translated into **a triple criteria that tries to correspond to the "citizen interest"**:

- 1) **Selection of the information most in demand by citizens**. It is estimated that between 60% and 70% of the data and information that directly affect citizens is managed by local entities. This requires continuous interaction with the population and the existence of permanent communication channels, which are essential to know how citizens perceive municipal management. These include the suggestion and complains system, the citizen notices system, what citizens request in the procedure for access to public information or the petitions and e-mails that citizens send to the different municipal offices, demanding actions by the Administration. Likewise, the Transparency and Open Data Portals also include sections on queries and petitions and also measure which information is the most frequently downloaded or which pages are most visited by citizens.
- 2) **Selection of the information most directly related to accountability to citizens**. This information, within the framework of the current Plan, would have been specified in

the visualisation of municipal budgets, subsidies granted by the City Council and its autonomous bodies and administrative contracting.

- 3) **Strengthening of permanent communication channels with the public and what the public itself demands from them**, so that information more directly related to specific public services can also be used by the public. Examples of this are requests for access to public information, citizen notices about incidents on public roads and suggestions and complaints received and completed.

Although the Commitment 1 and some of the activities of the Commitment 3 focus, above all, on the usability and optimisation of the channels of citizen participation -in this case, "Decide Madrid"-, **the implementation of the Commitment 4 highlights the importance of paying attention to the content around which citizen participation is to be articulated**, beyond technical improvements and the availability of information, more focused on the accessibility, usability and functionality of the transparency and participation channels themselves. This commitment shows, with the implementation of participation programmes aimed at children and young people, as well as others aimed at the elderly and other vulnerable groups, the **convenience of incorporating certain social sectors with greater obstacles to participating in these channels, based on their own needs and limitations**. For example, the design of activities and means to increase the participation of the underage population (such as a specific web space for them in "Decide Madrid") has been based on the concern for those issues about which they are most aware or concerned, their conception of participation, their knowledge of what the City Council is, etc.

This shows, in short, the potential to raise awareness of citizen participation and transparency based on the immediate interests of those strata of the population that find it most difficult or reluctant to exercise it. Ultimately, however, this will depend on the degree to which this citizen activity is actually addressed by the competent authorities and translated into tangible policies and actions.

In a similar vein, the Commitment 2 consists of **workshops and/or support groups where affected people can participate directly**, which, together with awareness-raising and training events for professionals and entities that share the ambitions of the Commitment, are **forms of information provision of higher quality and with greater capacity for outreach and feedback from the citizens themselves**. All of these are opportunities for the administration to gather the opinions of the actors involved and for them in turn to influence the course of the implementation of the commitment. Public policies that attempt to address the issues addressed by the commitment tend to be limited to actions to raise public awareness and direct action on the target population. These forms of passive involvement of the population alone are not enough to boost citizen participation, even if they amplify the information received by civil society. The engagement addressed here, on the other hand, has **succeeded in using these forms of public intervention in favour of a process of greater citizen participation in improving the health of the community**.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the **dissemination efforts** made in relation to the 3rd Plan in general and through the implementation of each Commitment. On the one hand,

“Decide Madrid” has been sharing information on the process of drawing up the Plan (consultation carried out, plan approved and implementation monitoring reports). In addition, the Madrid City Council articulated an additional space to publicise this local OGP process through the community of practice *The Participatory Group*. On the other hand, the implementation of the four commitments has included dissemination and awareness-raising actions through [open events, conferences, workshops, training, social networks and press releases](#), deploying a variety of channels that have increased the possibilities of information and monitoring by citizens.

### 1.3 In community building

**Community feeling** and the **strengthening of neighbourhood residents' capacities** to address collective problems are **key elements for democratic, conscious and socially-oriented participation**. Commitment 2 consists precisely of actions aimed at **promoting a citizen attitude more inclined to community involvement in issues of social relevance**. The "generation of compassionate communities", in this case, based on the observation and awareness of situations of loss and mourning, or the development of activities for the prevention of childhood obesity, in direct collaboration with the educational community of schools, [although they may not be immediately tangible in the field of transparency and participation, may transcend them](#). Although there may be many reasons why people want to influence public policies and know the results of their government's management, initiatives such as these help to **put the community and preventive perspective at the centre as** opposed to individualistic and continually reactive visions, providing a more solid basis for the democratic involvement of citizens in public affairs.

Another potentially useful way to contribute to the generation of community can be found in **actions to promote activities through the associative network dedicated to participation**, either among the young population or among the elderly, within the framework of the 4th Commitment. More specifically, **subsidies for activities** aimed at these sectors for the improvement of coexistence, territorial balance and community development through the promotion of participation and associationism among them helps to **promote or economically maintain civil society initiatives that encourage participation and the community approach to the problems and needs** of the aforementioned sectors. These initiatives can also [contribute as expert agents](#) in the design of public policies in processes such as the one evaluated here, as well as [develop new practices](#) that can inspire the Administration or other interested agents.

### 1.4 In collaboration with stakeholders

By stakeholders, we refer to those people and organisations that, from their particular background and knowledge of the challenges addressed in the 3rd Plan, can contribute to its development in its different phases, as well as be influenced in their own daily practice by the progressive implementation of the Plan. These can be internal and external.



During the implementation of the Commitment 1, for instance, collaboration - beyond the contracting of an external company for data analysis, profiling and filtering - has taken place almost exclusively with the autonomous body of the City Council's IT department and with the units responsible for the data. For its part, the fourth commitment has involved the creation of a working space between civil servants from the Directorate General for Citizen Participation of the City Council and other areas of government. **This type of internal collaboration can contribute to building bridges between organisations within the same administration** (or in relation to a higher one, such as the Community of Madrid) with a view to the **socialisation of information and good practices and the optimisation of internal resources, giving rise to a new organisational substratum from which to promote public innovation.**

Similarly, **collaboration with external stakeholders may favour the deployment of certain actions or facilitate the channels for such deployment - for example**, by contacting new actors or the public itself. Commitment 2 shows us the example of the pilot project "*COLES con ALAS*" (*Schools with wings*), which has allowed us to count on the educational community of various schools to carry out awareness-raising actions on the target population and preventive interventions in the school environment.

On the other hand, **this symbiosis can also result in a more realistic and accurate definition of the challenges and possible solutions** if they are closely related to the public problem to be addressed, either through their direct practical work to address the issue or as experts. Throughout the latter engagement, for example, an alliance has been forged with the Official College of Psychology of Madrid, which provides expert advice to Madrid Salud for the development and updating of activities related to the field of prevention.

An even more interesting case, on the other hand, can be found in the THIVIC social innovation community, whose birth has involved a participatory process of co-creation between experts and stakeholders, focused on the definition of public policy problems and the prototyping of solutions, resulting in a great way for all the actors involved to gather information on public problems in depth, enabling new tools and ways to disseminate it.

In short, many of the actions combined collaboration with actors representing civil society (professional organisations, NGOs, businesses and other public entities), public and expert stakeholders, workshops and trainings where participants could contribute their views, and the creation and development of group spaces. All of these are **opportunities for the administration to gather the opinions of the participating actors, who in turn can influence the course of the implementation of the commitment.** In fact, these are actions that open up possibilities for local government to **create community networks from which to draw new lessons about policies and services implemented and to channel information and citizen participation.**

Now, it is just as important to detect potential allies from the Administration as it is to do so together with these same agents in order to **carefully prioritise contact with some agents or others depending on the specific needs posed by the challenge to be solved.** The *Mapping of Health Assets* of the Commitment 2 is, in this sense, an example of good practice. Framed within the suicide prevention actions, they were carried out through the

participation of the community in workshops in which citizens pointed out spaces that are a source of wellbeing in their daily environment, which makes it possible to identify the city's health assets in order to subsequently connect them and [weave more cohesive community networks that are open to citizen participation for the improvement of community health](#). This, in turn, can lead to the potential optimisation of municipal resources and the [sharing of good practices](#).

## 1.5 In the commitment to evidence-based decision making

One of the main keys to the implementation of the 3rd Open Government Plan of Madrid City Council lies in the different pilot experiences deployed in all the commitments, except the Commitment 1. Unlike in other actions where the application of policies can occur in a more general and direct way, the relevance of pilot activities does not necessarily lie in the improvements achieved in the area of their involvement, but in the horizon of possibilities it opens up to ensure these improvements based on the improvement and scaling up of previous activities on a small scale. In other words, they have an experimental nature that allows for greater guarantees of success in resolving the challenges to be faced. These experiences therefore allow local authorities to test new strategies, approaches and technologies before they are fully implemented. More specifically, they have the following [strengths](#):

- **Minimising risks.** Before implementing policies or programmes on a large scale, pilots provide an opportunity to identify potential problems, mistakes or challenges. This helps to minimise the risks associated with full implementation.
- **Learning and continuous improvement.** They also allow local authorities to learn from successes and failures in a controlled manner, feedback that facilitates continuous improvement of initiatives related to transparency and citizen participation.
- **Public acceptance.** By involving the community in pilot experiences, a sense of participation and ownership is created among citizens. This can increase public acceptance of related policies and programmes.
- **Efficiency and resource savings.** If well designed and implemented according to objectives, pilots are more resource efficient, as they allow problems to be identified and addressed before large sums of money are spent on full implementations.

As can be deduced, pilot activities require evaluative actions in order to be scaled up in an improved way or, in the worst case, discarded. Nevertheless, evaluation of all institutional activity is desirable as it can provide evidence-based information to improve governmental decision-making and accountability to society. This principle has been applied in all commitments, although not in every single activity, and not always in relation to pilot experiences, but mostly. We find examples of this in the elaboration of surveys and tests on the new "Decide Madrid" interface to users (Commitment 3), as well

as around the design of the web space of this portal aimed at underage youth (Commitment 4). These are forms of *in media res* evaluation that allow the design of the initiatives to be fine-tuned from the most general approaches to the challenge faced and the proposed solution to its progressive concretion and materialisation.

## 2 Challenges in implementation and proposals for overcoming them

### 2.1 In the design

Although it has only been detected in two cases, the approach of some of the objectives and specific actions for their achievement would have required a more defined internal relationship. On future occasions, activities such as, for example, the 'development of a specific web space for children's participation in "Decide Madrid"' and the 'development of specific initiatives and new attractive technological tools' (Commitment 4) should be linked to more concrete goals, instead of being limited to the word 'development', which can be interpreted as 'impulse' or 'progress' (as has finally been the case), but also that the projects were intended to be completed within the framework of the Plan itself. The solution to this is therefore to state more specifically what minimum level of development is sought to be achieved during the stated period.

This will be useful both for those responsible for implementing the commitments in order to adjust the means to achieve realistic concrete objectives, but also for evaluation during and after implementation.

### 2.2 In the implementation

As concluded in the previous stages of the evaluation, none of the commitments appear to have the potential for binding or institutionalised change. This is not negative *per se*, but offers less certainty in relation to the anchoring, development and extension of many of the achievements made during the year of implementation. This, in turn, if some of the actions undertaken continue to be implemented, may end up discouraging the participation of actors who have been involved or interested up to now. We refer, for example, to the results of the THIVIC pilot. The fact that this is not an established and definitively institutionalised space may discourage future experiences by requiring a certain investment of time and effort from the participating actors to develop proposals for public intervention which, in the end, may not find real translation from the executive.

It is also necessary that experiences such as these, if scaled up, have a certain "guarantee" (whether legal or factual) that the effort invested by the people and organisations involved will be reflected in municipal public policies.

Specifically, THIVIC is a laboratory where the definition of solutions to public problems is envisaged, not so much the implementation of these solutions. This would go beyond the remit of a laboratory, without prejudice to the fact that in the prototyping of the solution, it is so perfectly programmed at all levels (opportunity cost and necessary credit). On the other hand, THIVIC has institutional backing through the Agreement of the plenary session of the Social Council dated 22 June 2022, and it is planned that the work of THIVIC (first pilot experience) will be validated by the Agreement of the plenary session of the Social Council, which is currently in the process of renewal.

On the other hand, despite the positive consideration that the application of means of evaluation in the development of the commitments deserves, there is little systematisation between them. It is necessary that both within and between the teams responsible for each commitment, there be minimally defined criteria regarding the place that is to be given to evaluation processes, the methodologies that are considered most appropriate, what is to be obtained from them in terms of each action, etc. To this end, it may be useful to address these issues in the design of all commitments. This will be explained later on this paper.

### 3 Methodological proposals for monitoring

The following are a series of proposed actions to follow up on the progress made so far in implementing the commitments of the Third Plan:

- **Establish or continue driving groups** to drive and be primarily responsible for monitoring the implementation of the solutions developed.
- **In the event that the pilot experiences are finally scaled up** - as is the intention according to the Final Monitoring Report and the persons responsible consulted - it is advisable to **apply continuous evaluation methods throughout the process**, as has already been done in some actions during the development of pilot projects.
- If this is not already an ongoing practice, **monthly reviews of the audience of the Transparency, "Datos Abiertos" (Open Data) and "Decide Madrid" portals** may be useful to contemplate the evolution of their use and detect possible variables that determine it. To this end, more specific questions such as the most visited contents, the views with the greatest impact, etc. may be useful.
- In addition, the **launch of surveys of users of these portals** can also contribute to improving the progress achieved so far.
- Although initially, the specific teams of the City Council and its autonomous bodies have been responsible for its implementation, the deployment and management of some of the initiatives developed in this 3rd Plan (such as those within the framework of THIVIC) should **progressively involve different areas and municipal services, as well as close coordination with agents outside the City Council** to promote and disseminate the initiatives in order to reach the target groups in the best possible way.
- **Give the forums a greater role in follow-up work.** For example, by addressing the progress of actions relevant to the nature of each forum on the agenda of their plenary or relevant internal bodies from time to time.

## 4 Recommendations towards a new action plan

The evaluation process in the context of this report has identified a number of issues that could be of interest for consideration in the definition of a future action plan or commitments:

- **Scaling up of activities piloted during the 3rd Plan.** Many of the actions of the last plan have generated a sufficiently solid experimental base to be continued in an amplified manner, i.e., to be generalised as public intervention by Madrid City Council wherever appropriate. Examples of this are the pilot workshops in the educational field by Madrid Salud (Commitment 2), the new THIVIC social innovation space, the prototyping of the “Decide Madrid” space for minors (Commitment 3) or the prototyping of the “Decide Madrid” space for minors (Commitment 4). All of them offer **great opportunities to design new actions in the short-medium term on the review of the strategies that guided the different actions and the impact achieved so far by each of them.**

In relation to this, as suggested in the previous section, “the deployment and management of some of the initiatives developed in this 3rd Plan should **progressively involve different municipal areas and services**, as well as **close coordination with agents outside** the City Council to promote and disseminate the initiatives in order to reach the target groups in the best possible way”.

- This in turn does not preclude the consideration of **further pilots in other fields or areas related to citizen participation and government transparency**. In fact, we recommend a **systematic deployment of these practices** before their generalisation in the form of institutionalised public policy, due to the advantages offered by the implementation of pilot experiences (see section 1.5). Different models of this type of actions in the field of citizen participation that can be carried out are presented below. In fact, the pilots developed within the framework of this 3rd Plan combine their characteristics:

- a) **Specific pilot projects.** A common way of piloting is to select specific projects or initiatives to be implemented on a small scale. This may include participatory budgeting programmes, online transparency portals or citizen feedback systems.
- b) **Pilot public consultations.** Before changing significant policies or regulations, pilot public consultations can be carried out in specific areas or with particular interest groups. This helps to gather feedback and make adjustments before wider implementation.
- c) **Pilot advisory committees.** Establishing pilot advisory committees composed of community members interested in specific issues can provide an avenue for obtaining input and recommendations before final decisions are made.

- d) **Pilot training programmes.** To promote transparency and participation, pilot training programmes can be conducted for municipal officials and interested citizens. This can help develop skills and understanding of the process.
- e) **Partnerships with civil society organisations.** Working in partnership with civil society organisations on pilot projects can provide additional expertise and resources for successful transparency and participation initiatives.

Consider in the design of future commitments the possibility of **extending accessibility measures beyond the specific groups stipulated in the law**. This can be seen in the different variables taken into account when defining the target population of each commitment. For example, while the Commitment 1 paid special attention to the creation of visualisations and adaptation of the forms of navigation and access to information on the Transparency and Open Data portals, the Commitment 4 focused, in part, on the young population. One used as a main (though not exclusive) criterion accessibility for an average population without specific data processing skills, while the other was primarily aimed at an age group. Both criteria are valid and useful, but they can be nuanced and deepened. For example, within this entire population without specific data processing skills we find a whole sociological spectrum which can be differentiated at the same time by variables such as gender, age, social class, etc. This last variable was also pointed out after the prospective work among children and adolescents in the framework of the Commitment 4, identifying differences in awareness of civic participation depending on the district of residence.

This is not to say that an immediate extension of accessibility should be addressed in each and every action in an action plan, but it does make it appropriate to question which accessibility objectives may be more urgent and which others can be developed later, if deemed necessary.

- Maintain the flow of information and monitoring through the “Decide Madrid” website.** Until the end of the implementation of the Plan, “Decide Madrid” has been updating the progress achieved during the Plan, allowing for more direct monitoring by the public and, in fact, representing another form of accountability on the part of the City Council.
- Include in the design of the Plan concrete objectives and means of evaluation of each of the actions during and after the implementation of the commitments,** with a view to a **progressive systematisation of its role as a guiding element for effective and sustainable innovation in the field of citizen participation.** Public policy evaluation is a systematic and objective process that aims to analyse and assess the impact, effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of government policies and programmes implemented by the public sector. Its main objective is thus to provide evidence-based information to improve government decision-making and accountability to society. Some of the **public policy evaluation criteria** to be considered for such systematisation are:

  - a) **Impact analysis.** Evaluation looks at how a policy or programme has affected the population or society at large.



- b) **Effectiveness.** This is whether the policy achieves its stated objectives and whether it produces the desired results. It seeks to determine whether the greatest possible benefit is being obtained with the available resources.
  - c) **Efficiency.** Efficiency refers to the relationship between the resources invested in the policy and the results obtained. It assesses whether resources are being used as economically and efficiently as possible.
  - d) **Relevance.** This examines whether the policy remains relevant and adequately addresses current societal problems and needs. In some cases, a policy may need to be adjusted or changed to maintain its relevance.
  - e) **Sustainability.** This looks at whether the policy is sustainable in the long term, both from a financial perspective and in terms of its ability to remain effective over time.
  - f) **Equity.** This considers whether the policy benefits all segments of the population or whether there is any disparity in outcomes. It seeks to ensure that the policy is equitable.
- Giving the **forums a greater role in the implementation monitoring stage.** Despite the role played by the three forums involved in the design of this 3rd Plan, it is worth considering the possibility of stipulating in the very definition of future action plans specific ways of ensuring an effective capacity for monitoring the development of the different actions, so that this does not fall solely on the people and bodies in charge of the City Council, but also on these spaces as representatives of the citizenry, who are primarily interested in the success of the policies of participation and transparency.