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The CitizenUnited Project:

Empowering Inclusive Citizenship Engagement

in Digital Public Governance

in Higher Education

WP2: National Needs Assessment Report **GREECE**

Project Partners



UNIVERSITÀ
DI TORINO





The CitizenUnited Project: Empowering Inclusive Citizenship Engagement in Digital Public Governance in Higher Education

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Table of Contents

1. Data Collection Overview	4
2. Quantitative Analysis: Questionnaires	5
2.1. Faculty Members	5
2.2. Student Assessment	21
2.3. Stakeholder Assessment	38
2.4. Barrier Identification	48
3. Qualitative Analysis: Focus Groups	56
4. Synthesis of Findings and Educational Needs	73
5. Strategic Indicators and Contributions	76



1. Data Collection Overview

In Greece, the data collection process was carried out by Social Nebula and Bluechain from February 2026 to May 2026. The questionnaires were developed and distributed through Google Forms, allowing participants to complete them easily and remotely. The research targeted different groups, including faculty members, university students, external stakeholders and focus group participants from vulnerable backgrounds. In total, the Greek data collection reached:

- Faculty Members: 52
- University Students: 80
- External Stakeholders: 50
- Focus Group Participants: 6 (2 focus groups)



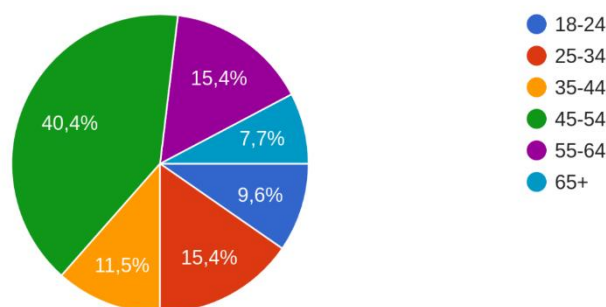
2. Quantitative Analysis: Questionnaires

2.1. Faculty Members

A total of 52 faculty members participated in the questionnaire. Their demographic and professional profiles are summarized below:

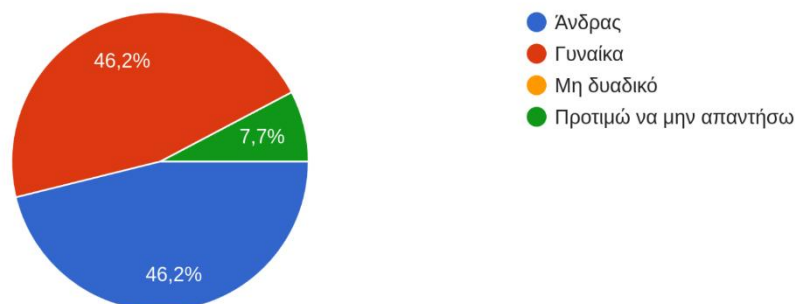
Age: The majority of faculty members were aged 45-54 (40.4%), followed by those aged 25-34 (15.4%), 55-64 (15.4%), 35-44 (11.5%), 18-24 (9.6%) and 65+ (7.7%).

Ηλικία (σε έτη):
52 απαντήσεις



Gender: Among the 52 participants, an equal number identified as women (46.2%) and men (46.2%), while 7.7% preferred not to disclose their gender.

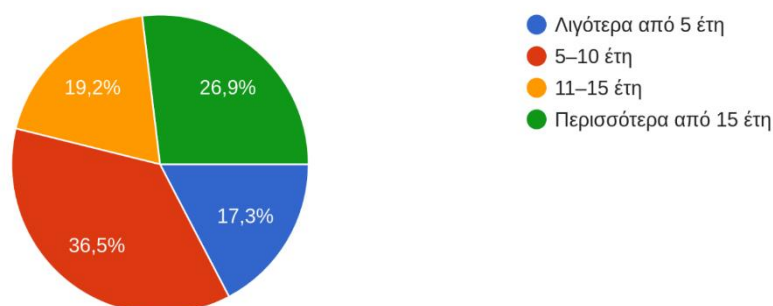
Φύλο:
52 απαντήσεις



The faculty sample is mainly composed of mid-career and senior academics, with the largest group aged 45-54. Gender distribution is fully balanced between men and women, while a small proportion preferred not to disclose their gender. This gives the faculty dataset a relatively balanced demographic profile, with strong representation from experienced academic staff.

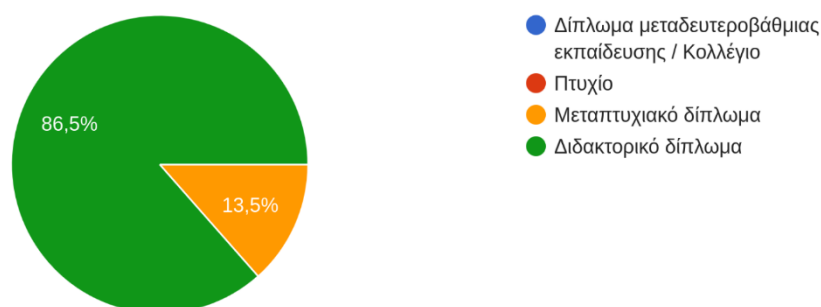
Years of teaching experience: 36.5% of the respondents reported having 5–10 years of experience, 26.9% had more than 15 years of experience, 19.2% had 11–15 years of experience, and 17.3% had less than 5 years of experience.

Έτη διδακτικής εμπειρίας:
52 απαντήσεις



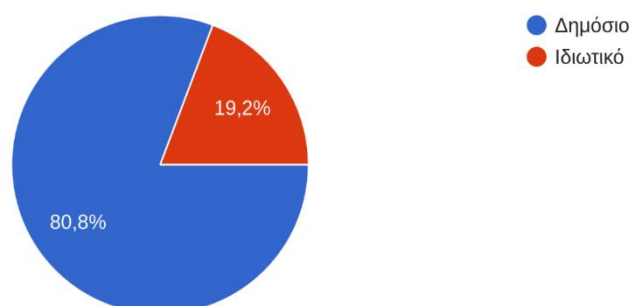
Educational Background: 86.5% of the participants possess a PhD, whereas 13.5% hold a master's degree.

Εκπαίδευση (ανώτατος ολοκληρωμένος τίτλος σπουδών):
52 απαντήσεις



Type of Institution: 80.8% of respondents were affiliated with public institutions, while 19.2% were affiliated with private institutions.

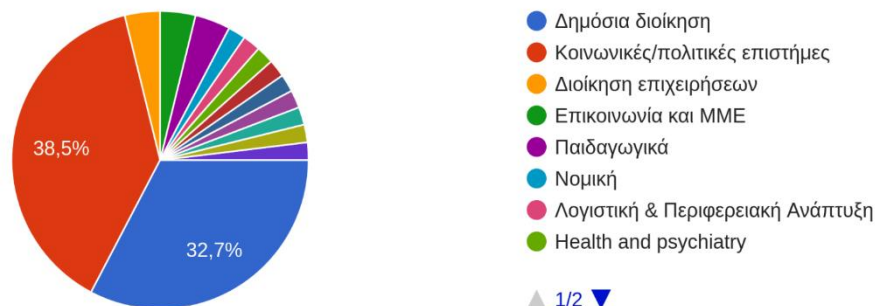
Τύπος ιδρύματος εκπαίδευσης:
52 απαντήσεις



The majority of respondents are affiliated with public institutions, which makes the findings particularly relevant for public higher education in Greece. The sample is strongly concentrated in Social and Political Sciences and Public Administration, meaning that many respondents are professionally close to themes such as citizenship, governance, public policy, and democratic participation.

Primary Field of Teaching/Specialization: 38.5% of the respondents specialized in Social and Political Sciences, while 32.7% specialized in Public Administration. Smaller proportions reported expertise in Business Administration (3.8%), Communication and Media Studies (3.8%), Education Sciences (3.8%), Accounting and Finance (3.8%), Law (1.9%), Accounting and Regional Development (1.9%), Health and Psychiatry (1.9%), Organization and Business Management (1.9%), Sustainable Communication Strategies (1.9%), International Relations (1.9%), and Nursing (1.9%).

Το κύριο γνωστικό σας αντικείμενο διδασκαλίας ανήκει στην περιοχή:
52 απαντήσεις

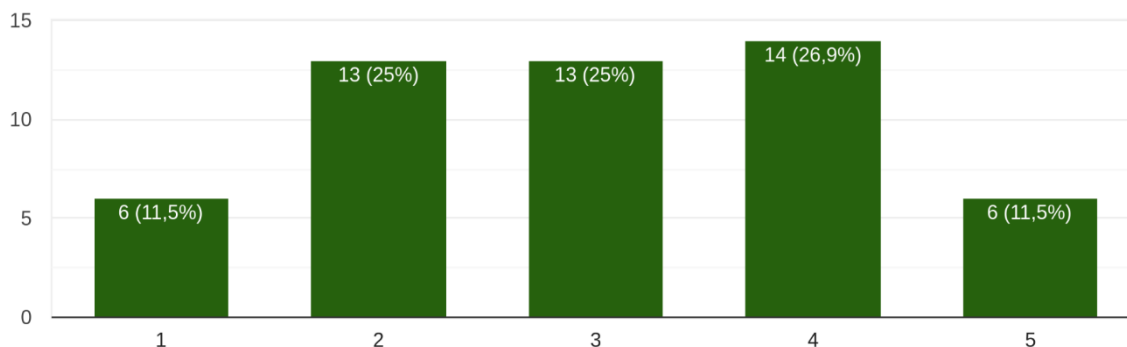


GDPR: All participants accepted the GDPR and data protection terms of the questionnaire, meaning that 100% of respondents provided their consent for the processing of their personal data.

Awareness and Use of E-Participation Tools: Assess the level of familiarity, use, and perceived effectiveness of e-participation tools among faculty members.

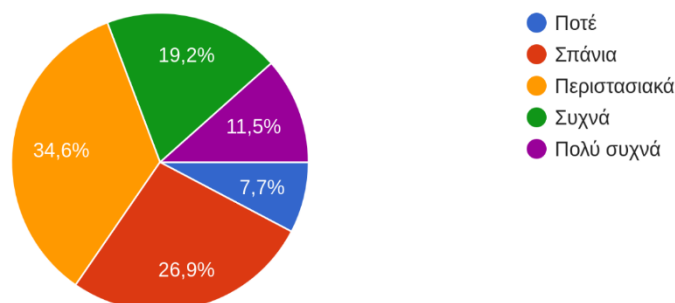
For the question “To what extent are you familiar with the concept of “e-participation” and its tools (e.g., online petitions, student forums, digital feedback platforms)?”, 20 faculty members (38.4%) reported that they were above average in terms of familiarity, 13 faculty members (25%) indicated a moderate level of familiarity and 19 faculty members (36.5%) considered themselves below average.

Σε ποιο βαθμό είστε εξοικειωμένος/η με την έννοια της «ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής» και τα σχετικά εργαλεία (π.χ. ηλεκτρονικές υποβολές ...συζήτησης, ψηφιακές πλατφόρμες διαβούλευσης);
52 απαντήσεις



Regarding the question, “**How often do you use digital platforms or tools to participate in academic or public discussions and decision-making?**”, 36.4% of respondents reported using digital platforms occasionally, while 26.9% stated that they used them rarely. Additionally, 19.2% indicated frequent use, and 11.5% reported using them very frequently. In contrast, 7.7% of respondents stated that they never use digital platforms for such purposes.

Πόσο συχνά συμμετέχετε, μέσω ψηφιακών πλατφορμών ή εργαλείων, σε ακαδημαϊκές ή δημόσιες συζητήσεις και διαδικασίες λήψης αποφάσεων;
52 απαντήσεις

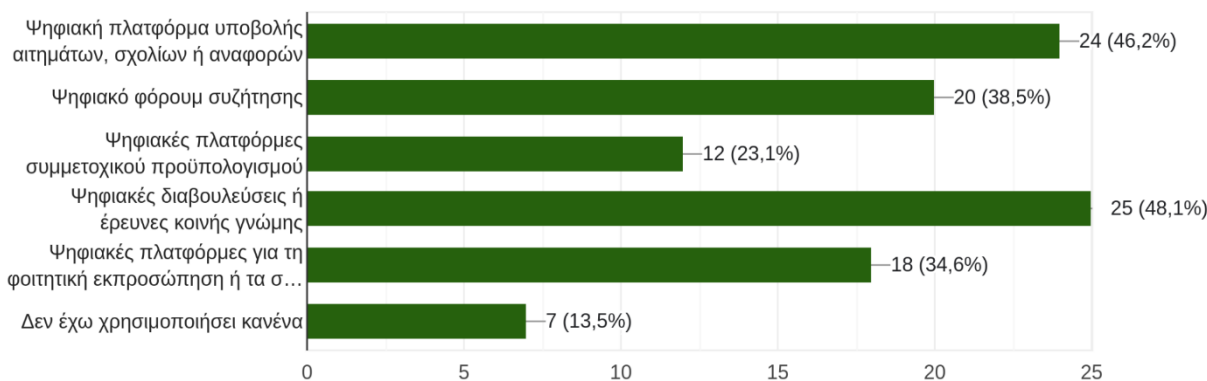


Faculty members show mixed familiarity with e-participation. While a considerable group reports above-average familiarity, more than one third place themselves below average. This suggests that e-participation is known among academics, but it is not yet consistently understood or embedded across the responders.

Regarding the question, **“What types of e-participation tools have you used?”**, the most commonly used tools among faculty members were online consultations and public opinion surveys, reported by 48.1% of respondents. Additionally, 46.2% indicated that they had used online petitions, while 38.5% reported participating in online discussion forums. Furthermore, 34.6% had used digital platforms for student governance or faculty councils and 23.1% reported using digital platforms for participatory budgeting. Finally, 13.5% of respondents stated that they had never used any type of e-participation tool.

Ποια είδη εργαλείων ψηφιακής συμμετοχής έχετε χρησιμοποιήσει; (Μπορείτε να επιλέξετε περισσότερες από μία απαντήσεις.)

52 απαντήσεις

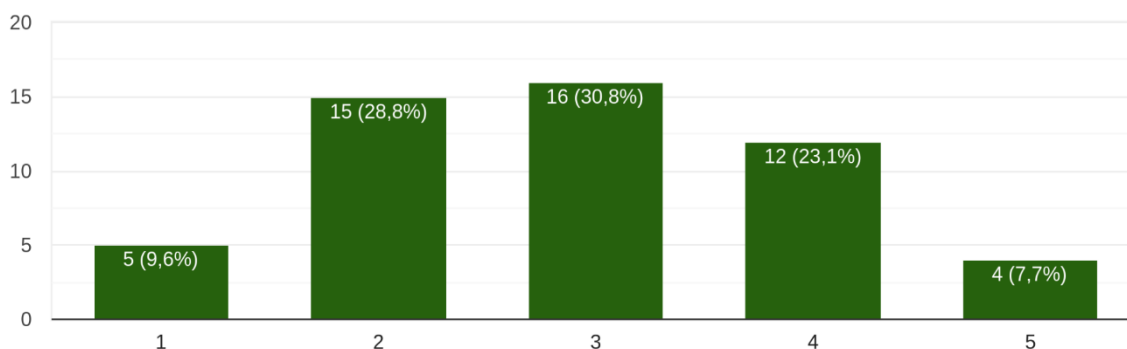


Faculty members mostly use online consultations, public opinion surveys, online petitions, and discussion forums. More institutionally specific tools, such as platforms for student governance, faculty councils, or participatory budgeting, are used less

often. This suggests that faculty members are more familiar with general participation tools than with formal institutional e-participation mechanisms.

For the question, **“How do you rate the effectiveness of e-participation tools in influencing academic policies or public decisions?”**, 30.8% of faculty members rated these tools as moderately effective. In contrast, 38.4% perceived them as ineffective to very ineffective, while the remaining 30.8% considered them effective to very effective. Faculty members are divided regarding the effectiveness of e-participation tools. A substantial share considers them moderately effective, but many also perceive them as ineffective or only weakly influential. This points to uncertainty about whether digital participation genuinely affects academic policies or public decisions.

Πώς αξιολογείτε την αποτελεσματικότητα των εργαλείων ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής ως προς την επιρροή που μπορούν να έχουν στις ακαδημαϊκές πολιτικές ή στις δημόσιες αποφάσεις;
52 απαντήσεις



For the question, **“What do you consider to be the main advantages of e-participation?”**, the responses indicate that faculty members perceive accessibility, broad participation and efficiency as the primary advantages of e-participation. Many respondents emphasized that digital participation tools enable wider involvement by

reaching larger and more diverse groups of participants, thereby promoting greater inclusiveness and equal access to participation opportunities.

Another frequently mentioned advantage was the flexibility offered by e-participation. Faculty members highlighted that digital tools remove geographical barriers and allow individuals to participate regardless of their location, while also providing greater flexibility in terms of time and scheduling. This was viewed as particularly beneficial for increasing engagement and reducing obstacles to participation.

Efficiency and speed also emerged as central themes. Participants noted that e-participation facilitates faster communication, quicker feedback and more immediate engagement in decision-making processes. In addition, several respondents emphasized the time saving and cost effective nature of digital participation compared to traditional face-to-face methods.

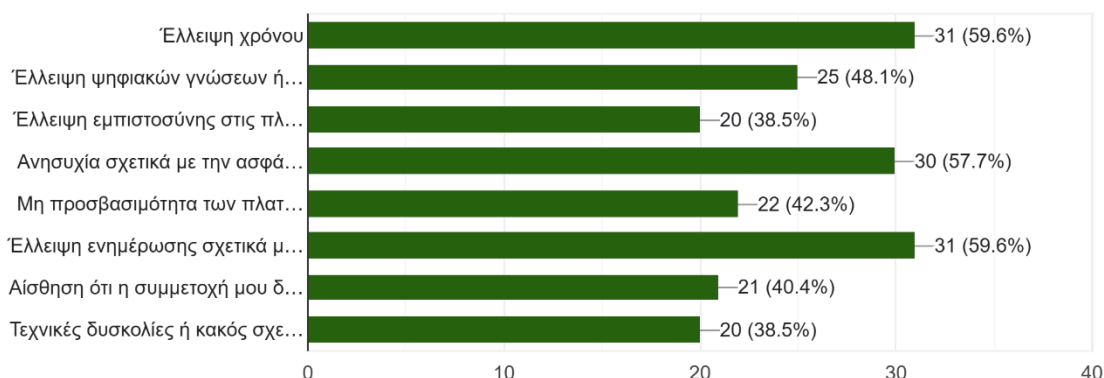
Transparency was another important advantage identified by faculty members. Several participants suggested that digital platforms can enhance transparency in decision-making processes, facilitate the dissemination of information and opinions and contribute to greater accountability among participants and institutions.

Lastly, some respondents highlighted additional benefits such as anonymity, the ability to engage large numbers of participants simultaneously and the enhanced dissemination of knowledge and viewpoints. However, a small number of faculty members indicated that they were not sufficiently familiar with available e-participation tools to assess their advantages.

Barriers and Motivation: Identify the main barriers that prevent faculty members from engaging more actively, as well as the factors that would encourage stronger participation.

Regarding the question “**What are the main barriers that prevent you from participating more actively in e-participation?**”, the results show that the main barriers preventing faculty members from engaging more actively in e-participation are primarily institutional, practical, and trust-related. The most frequently reported obstacles were lack of time and lack of information about participation opportunities, both identified by 59.6% of respondents. Data security and privacy concerns were also highly significant, reported by 57.7% of faculty members, indicating that trust in digital participation processes remains a key challenge. Almost half of respondents identified lack of digital knowledge or skills as a barrier, while platform accessibility, technical problems, poor design, and doubts about whether their contribution would be heard further limited engagement. Overall, the findings suggest that stronger faculty participation requires clearer communication, safer and more transparent platforms, accessible and user-friendly design, digital skills support, and stronger evidence that participation can influence institutional decision-making.

Ποια είναι τα βασικά εμπόδια που σας αποτρέπουν από το να συμμετέχετε πιο ενεργά στην ηλεκτρονική συμμετοχή; (Μπορείτε να επιλέξετε περισσότερες από μία απαντήσεις.)
52 responses





Faculty members would be more likely to participate actively in e-participation processes if digital platforms were easy to use, reliable, and fully accessible. The responses indicate that accessibility should not be limited to technical availability, but should include user-friendly interfaces, clear navigation, compatibility with different devices, and inclusive design for different age groups and people with disabilities.

Another key factor is security and trust. Faculty members would be more encouraged to participate if platforms clearly guaranteed the protection of personal data, privacy, and transparent management of participation processes. Trust appears to depend not only on technical data protection, but also on whether users understand how their input and personal information are handled.

A further motivating factor is the visible effectiveness and impact of participation. Faculty members are more likely to engage when their contribution is connected to concrete outcomes and when e-participation results are integrated into official decision-making procedures. Participation should therefore not be perceived as symbolic, but as a process that can influence institutional or public decisions.

Finally, stronger participation would be supported by systematic information, training, and institutional support. Faculty members need clear guidance on the purpose and function of participation platforms, technical assistance when using them, and appropriate training to increase confidence and effective use. Overall, the findings suggest that faculty engagement would increase if e-participation tools were accessible, secure, transparent, institutionally recognised, and accompanied by practical support.

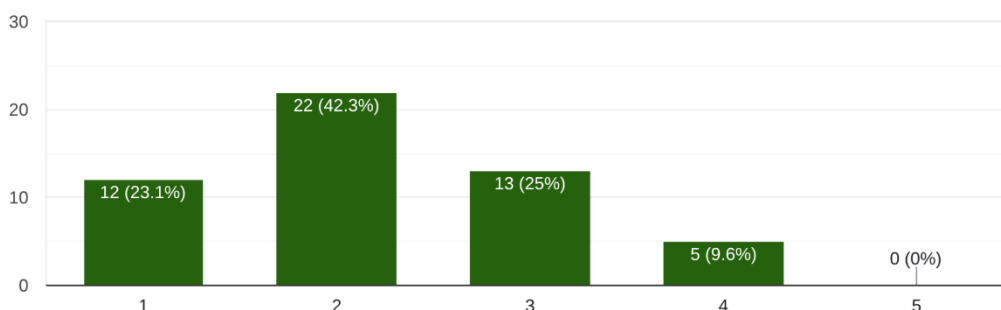


Accessibility and Institutional Readiness: Analyse faculty perceptions regarding the accessibility of existing digital tools, educational materials, and institutional platforms.

Regarding the question **“What measures could academic institutions take to promote more inclusive e-participation?”**: Faculty members emphasised that improving accessibility requires more than simply introducing new digital tools. The most common recommendations included the use of assistive technologies, the development of clear inclusion policies, accessible platforms, staff and student training, and regular awareness-raising activities. Respondents also called for stronger technical infrastructure, universal design, inclusive language, and interfaces adapted to people with visual and other disabilities. Particular attention should be given to ease of use for older people, access to suitable equipment, and the availability of technical support. Faculty members further highlighted the importance of open dialogue between students, teaching staff, and university management, so that participation leads to visible and meaningful institutional outcomes.

“Do you believe that the existing educational materials and digital platforms in your institution adequately serve the needs of students and colleagues with various disabilities or from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds?”

Σε ποιο βαθμό θεωρείτε ότι το υφιστάμενο εκπαιδευτικό υλικό και οι ψηφιακές πλατφόρμες του ιδρύματός σας καλύπτουν επαρκώς τις ανάγκες...πό μειονεκτικό κοινωνικοοικονομικό υπόβαθρο;
52 responses



The results show that faculty members generally believe that the institution's existing educational materials and digital platforms do not adequately meet the needs of students and colleagues with disabilities or from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Specifically, 65.4% of respondents selected the two lowest ratings, with 23.1% choosing level 1 and 42.3% choosing level 2. A further 25% selected the middle rating, while only 9.6% gave a rating of 4 and no respondent selected the highest rating. The average score was 2.21 out of 5, indicating that accessibility and inclusion are currently perceived as limited. These findings highlight the need for more accessible platforms, adapted educational content, assistive technologies, user-friendly design, and stronger technical and institutional support.

“Can you provide specific examples of educational materials, digital platforms, or practices at your institution that you believe either support or hinder accessibility and inclusive participation?”: Faculty members identified several concrete examples of digital tools and practices that may hinder accessibility and inclusive participation. The most frequently mentioned problems concerned institutional websites that are not compatible with screen readers, Moodle platforms without appropriate accessibility adaptations, eClass systems with limited accessibility, and educational videos without subtitles. Outdated digital interfaces and the limited availability of multilingual support were also highlighted as barriers, particularly for users who do not speak English or Greek fluently. At the same time, some respondents referred to existing institutional services and platforms as positive efforts, although they felt that these initiatives remain fragmented and do not yet meet all accessibility needs. A notable number of participants were unable to provide specific examples, which may also indicate limited awareness of the accessibility measures currently available within their institutions. Overall, the responses suggest that institutions need more consistent accessibility standards, better assistive-technology compatibility, subtitles and alternative formats, multilingual support, and clearer communication about available inclusive services.

“What specific barriers (systemic, technological, attitudinal) have you observed or do you assume hinder the full civic participation of students or colleagues with disabilities/from disadvantaged backgrounds through digital or educational tools?”:

Faculty members identified a combination of institutional, technological, economic, and attitudinal barriers that restrict the full participation of students and colleagues with disabilities or disadvantaged backgrounds. The most frequently reported issue was the lack of accessible design in digital platforms, educational materials, and learning activities. Respondents also highlighted the absence of clear institutional inclusion policies, inadequate technical infrastructure, and insufficient training for both staff and users. Economic difficulties and unequal access to appropriate equipment or services were seen as additional obstacles. At the same time, stereotypes, stigma, and negative attitudes can discourage participation and reinforce existing inequalities. Some faculty members also referred to physical accessibility problems, limited digital familiarity, and the lack of educational materials adapted for people with visual impairments or learning difficulties. Thus, the responses show that meaningful inclusion requires accessible technology and materials, improved infrastructure, staff training, dedicated support services, and stronger institutional action against stigma and exclusion.

“What educational or digital interventions could be developed or improved to promote greater accessibility and empowerment for these groups in academic and civic contexts?”:

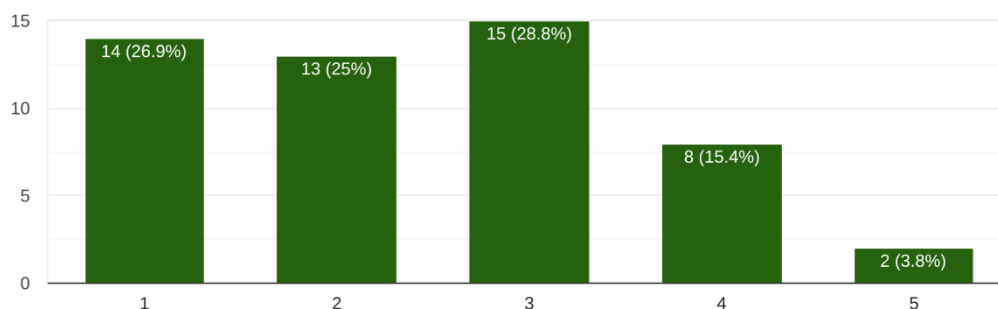
Faculty members proposed a range of educational and digital initiatives to improve the participation of students and colleagues with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds. The most common suggestions included the use of assistive technologies, the development of multilingual and inclusive educational materials, and the design of platforms and learning activities based on accessibility and universal design principles. Respondents also highlighted the importance of training academic staff so that they can create more accessible content and respond effectively to diverse needs. Practical support measures, such as helpdesks, webinars,

access to suitable equipment, and dedicated guidance services, were also considered necessary. In addition, participants stressed the value of closer cooperation between faculty members, students, and university management, as well as inclusion and team-building activities that help people from different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds feel more connected and confident in academic and sociopolitical participation.

“How would you rate your level of knowledge regarding the specific national laws, regulations, or policies that govern civic participation and e-participation in your country (e.g., access to information, digital rights)?”: The findings indicate that faculty members generally have a low to moderate level of knowledge about the national laws, regulations, and policies governing civic participation and e-participation. The largest group of respondents, 28.8%, rated their knowledge as moderate. However, more than half of the participants reported either no knowledge (26.9%) or only basic knowledge (25%). In comparison, 15.4% considered their knowledge advanced, while only 3.8% reported an expert or professional level. With an average rating of 2.44 out of 5, the results suggest a clear need for further information, guidance, and training on issues such as access to information, digital rights, and the legal framework surrounding civic and digital participation.

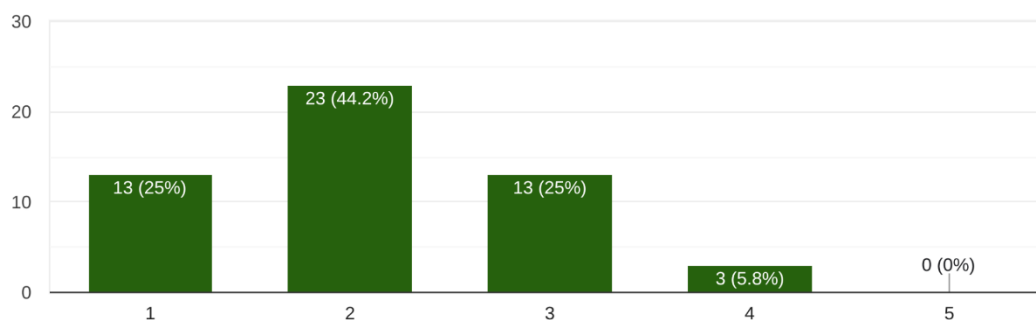
Πώς θα αξιολογούσατε το επίπεδο των γνώσεών σας σχετικά με τους εθνικούς νόμους, κανονισμούς ή πολιτικές που αφορούν τη συμμετ...όσβαση στην πληροφορία, ψηφιακά δικαιώματα);

52 responses



“To what extent are you confident that the existing institutional and legal framework in your university/state effectively guarantees the protection of your rights when using e-participation tools?”: The results indicate that faculty members have limited confidence in the ability of the existing institutional and legal framework to protect their rights when using online participation tools. More than two-thirds of respondents selected the two lowest ratings, with 25% choosing level 1 and 44.2% choosing level 2. A further 25% selected the middle rating, while only 5.8% expressed a relatively high level of confidence and no respondent chose the highest rating. With an average score of 2.12 out of 5, the findings suggest uncertainty about whether rights such as data protection, access to information, fair administration, and legal safeguards are effectively protected in practice. This highlights the need for clearer institutional policies, stronger legal guidance, greater transparency, and better communication about users’ rights and available protection mechanisms.

Σε ποιο βαθμό αισθάνεστε βέβαιος/η ότι το υφιστάμενο θεσμικό και νομικό πλαίσιο στο πανεπιστήμιο/κράτος σας διασφαλίζει αποτελεσματική υλοποίηση εργαλεία ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής;
52 responses





Training and Support Needs: *Summarise the main knowledge, skills, and support needs that should inform the Faculty Members Training Package and the Faculty Training Workshop.*

Faculty members need practical training that combines legal knowledge, digital skills, and inclusive teaching methods. The training package should strengthen their understanding of national laws, digital rights, data protection, accessibility requirements, and the procedures available for safeguarding users' rights in online participation. It should also provide practical guidance on creating accessible and multilingual educational materials, applying universal design principles, using assistive technologies, adding subtitles and alternative formats, and adapting platforms for people with visual, hearing, learning, or mobility difficulties. The workshop should include practical demonstrations, real institutional examples, and opportunities for cooperation between faculty, students, technical staff, and university management. Ongoing support through clear guidelines, helpdesks, technical assistance, and follow-up sessions would also help faculty members apply the acquired knowledge confidently in their daily work.

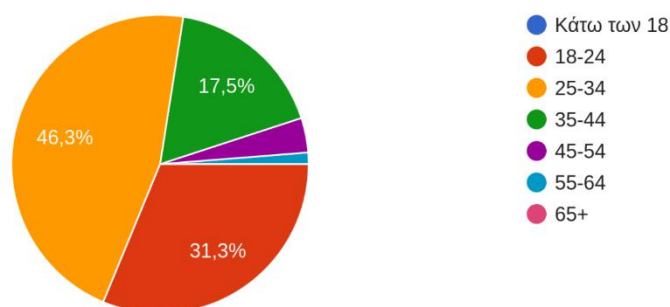


2.2. Student Assessment

A total of 80 students participated in the questionnaire. Their demographic and professional profiles are summarized below:

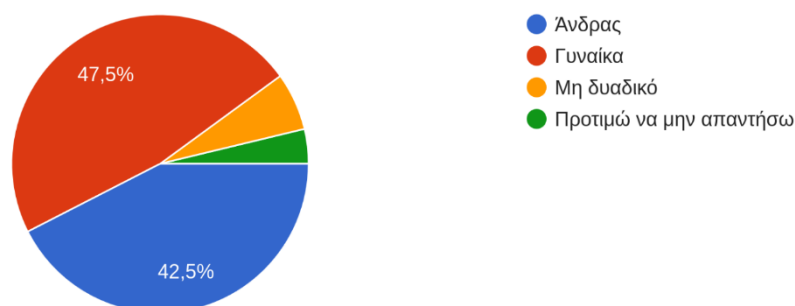
Age: The majority of students were aged 25-35 (46.3%), followed by those aged 18-24 (31.3%), 35-44 (17.5%), 45-54 (3.7%) and 55-64 (1.2%).

Ηλικία (σε έτη):
80 απαντήσεις



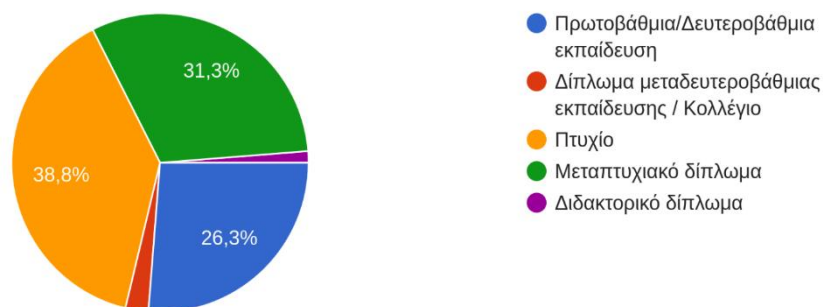
Gender: 47.5% identified as women, 42.5% as men, 6.3% as non-binary and 3.5% preferred not to say.

Φύλο:
80 απαντήσεις



Educational Background: Most participants held university-level qualifications (bachelor's degree 38.8%, master's degree 31.1%), 26.3% were from the field of primary and secondary education, 2.5% from college and 1.2% were Phd students.

Εκπαίδευση (ανώτατος ολοκληρωμένος τίτλος σπουδών):
80 απαντήσεις



The student sample is mainly composed of young adults, especially those aged 25-35, followed by the 18-24 group. We also observe a relatively balanced gender distribution, with a slight majority of women respondents and a small but visible presence of non-binary participants. In terms of education, the sample is strongly university-oriented, with many respondents holding either a bachelor's or master's degree, which suggests that the answers reflect a relatively educated student population.

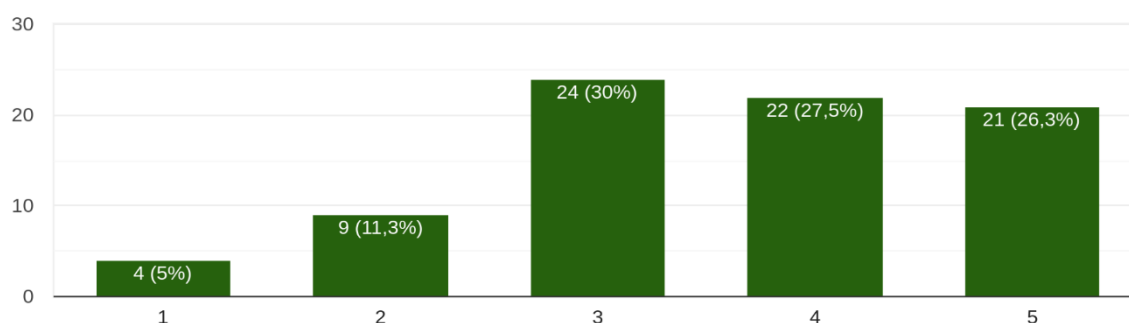
GDPR: All participants accepted the GDPR and data protection terms of the questionnaire, meaning that 100% of respondents provided their consent for the processing of their personal data.

Awareness and Participation Experience: Assess students' familiarity with e-participation and their previous use of digital tools in university or public contexts.

For the question "To what extent are you familiar with the concept of "e-participation" and its tools (e.g., online petitions, student forums, digital feedback platforms)?", out

of the respondents, 43 students (53.8%) reported that they were above average in terms of familiarity, 24 students (30%) indicated a moderate level of familiarity and 13 students (16.3%) considered themselves below average.

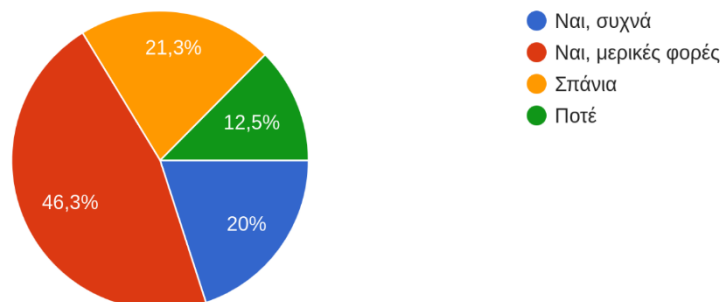
Σε ποιο βαθμό είστε εξοικειωμένος/η με την έννοια της «ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής» και τα σχετικά εργαλεία (π.χ. διαδικτυακές αναφορές,...όρουμ, ψηφιακές πλατφόρμες ανατροφοδότησης);
80 απαντήσεις



Regarding the question “**Have you ever used digital platforms or tools to participate in student councils, university initiatives, or public campaigns?**”, most students (46.3%) reported occasional use of digital platforms, while 21.3% indicated rare use. In addition, 20% reported frequent use, whereas 12.5% stated that they had never used digital platforms.

Έχετε χρησιμοποιήσει ποτέ ψηφιακές πλατφόρμες ή εργαλεία για να συμμετάσχετε σε φοιτητικά συμβούλια, πανεπιστημιακές πρωτοβουλίες ή δημόσιες εκστρατείες;

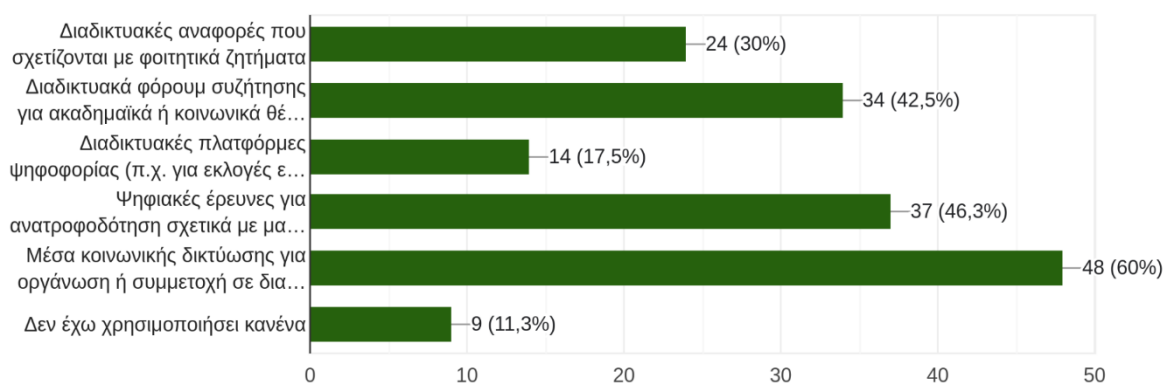
80 απαντήσεις



For the question **“What types of e-participation tools have you used?”** the majority of students (60.0%) reported using social media to organize or participate in protests and campaigns. Additionally, 46.3% used digital surveys to provide feedback on courses or university services, 42.5% participated in online discussion forums on academic or social topics and 30% used online petitions related to student issues. A smaller proportion (17.5%) reported using online voting platforms (e.g., for representative elections), while 11.3% stated that they had never used any type of e-participation tool.

Ποια είδη εργαλείων ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής έχετε χρησιμοποιήσει; (Μπορείτε να επιλέξετε περισσότερες από μία απαντήσεις.)

80 απαντήσεις

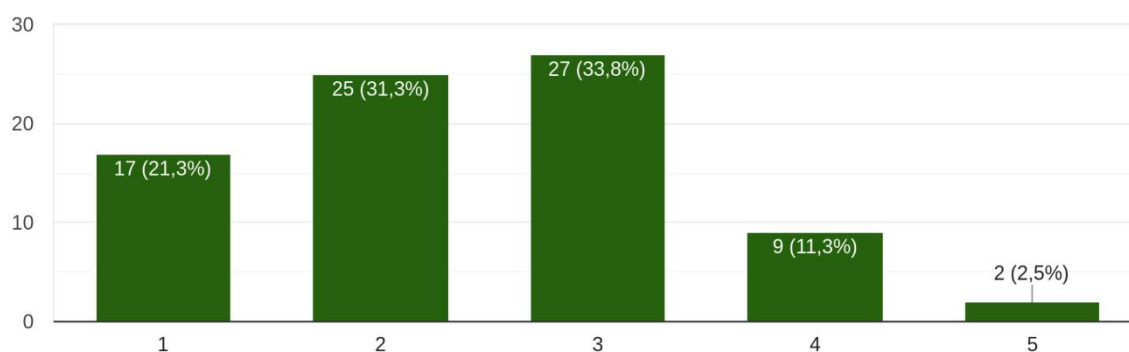


Students appear to engage more with informal or familiar digital environments, especially social media, surveys, forums, and petitions. More formal mechanisms, such as online voting platforms, are used less frequently, suggesting that institutional e-participation tools may be less visible, less accessible, or less integrated into student life.

For the question **“How would you rate your level of knowledge regarding the specific national laws, regulations, or policies that govern civic participation and e-participation in your country (e.g., access to information, digital rights)?”**, more than

half of the students (52.6%) reported having little to no knowledge of specific national laws, regulations, or policies governing civic participation and e-participation. In contrast, 33.8% indicated a moderate level of knowledge, while only 13.8% stated that they possessed good knowledge or considered their understanding to be at a professional level.

Πώς θα αξιολογούσατε το επίπεδο των γνώσεών σας σχετικά με τους εθνικούς νόμους, κανονισμούς ή πολιτικές που αφορούν τη συμμετ...όσβαση στην πληροφορία, ψηφιακά δικαιώματα);
80 απαντήσεις



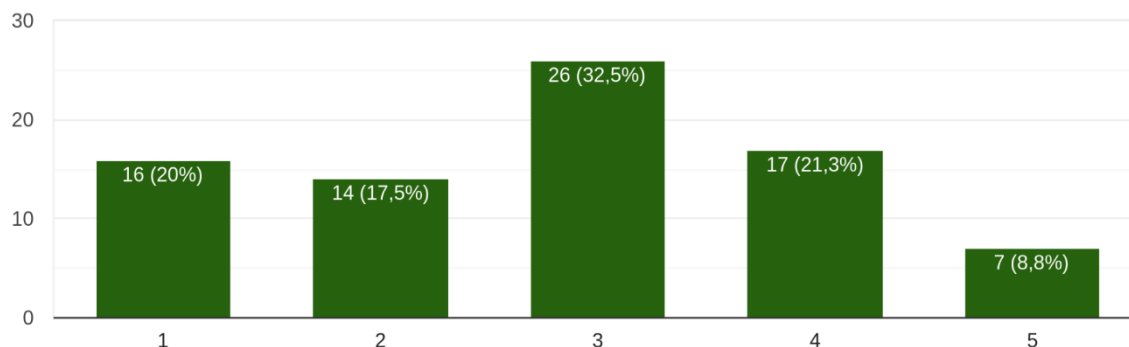
The low level of knowledge regarding national laws, digital rights, and civic participation policies shows a clear educational gap. Students may use digital tools in practice, but many do not fully understand the legal and institutional framework that governs participation, access to information, and digital rights.

Perceived Impact and Benefits: *Analyse how students evaluate the impact and usefulness of digital participation tools.*

For the question “**How do you rate the impact of your participation through digital tools on decision-making at the university or in society?**”, among the respondents, 37.5% perceived their participation as having little or no impact, 32.5% perceived it as having a moderate impact and 30.1% considered it to have a significant to very significant impact.

Πώς αξιολογείτε τον αντίκτυπο της συμμετοχής σας μέσω ψηφιακών εργαλείων στη λήψη αποφάσεων στο πανεπιστήμιο ή στην κοινωνία;

80 απαντήσεις



Students are divided regarding the impact of their participation. While some perceive digital tools as influential, a large share believes that their participation has little or only moderate impact, indicating a weak sense of political efficacy and a need for clearer feedback from institutions.

Regarding the question “**What are the main advantages of e-participation for you as a student?**”, the majority of students perceived accessibility and convenience as the primary advantages of e-participation. Many students emphasized the ability to participate remotely without requiring physical presence, allowing them to engage in university activities and events from home or any location. This flexibility was considered particularly beneficial for students with work commitments, family responsibilities, geographical limitations, or other barriers to in-person participation.

Another commonly reported advantage was time efficiency. Students noted that e-participation reduces travel time, saves financial resources associated with transportation, and allows for quicker access to activities and information. Many participants also highlighted the immediacy and speed of digital communication and participation processes.

Additionally, several students identified increased accessibility and inclusivity as important benefits, suggesting that electronic participation enables greater involvement of a wider range of students and promotes more democratic participation opportunities. Collaboration and easier dissemination of information were also mentioned.

Anonymity emerged as another recurring theme, with some students stating that online environments allow them to express their opinions more freely and with less concern about criticism or social influence.

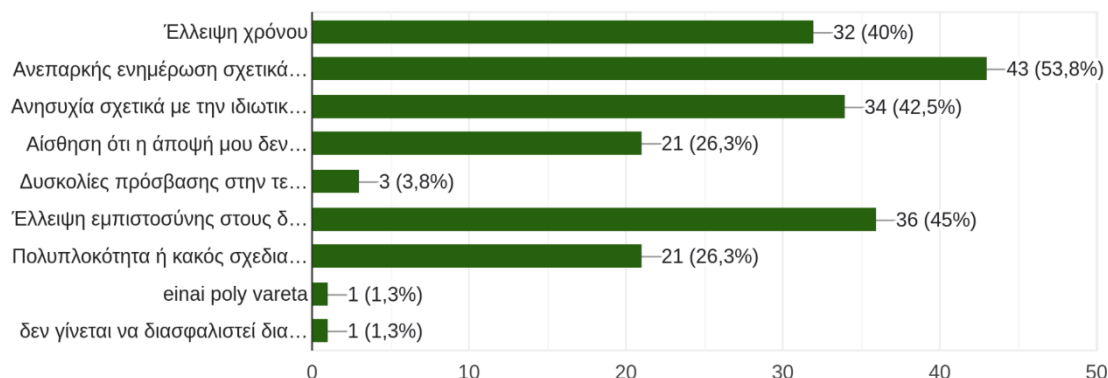
A smaller number of respondents emphasized practical aspects such as easier organization, effectiveness, creativity, and improved access to information and feedback mechanisms. However, some students reported a lack of awareness or experience with e-participation tools and therefore could not identify specific advantages.

Barriers, Accessibility, and Inclusion: *Identify the main obstacles students face, including accessibility, usability, trust, privacy, discrimination, and lack of visible impact.*

For the question “**What are the main barriers that prevent you from participating more actively in e-participation?**”, most students (53.8%) reported having insufficient information about available opportunities for participation. Additionally, 45.0% indicated a lack of trust in platform organizers, while 42.5% expressed concerns regarding data privacy. Lack of time was reported by 40% of students. Furthermore, 26.3% identified platform complexity or poor design as barriers and felt that their opinions would not be heard or taken into consideration. A smaller proportion of respondents (3.8%) reported difficulties related to access to technology or the internet, while 1.3% stated that they perceived e-participation as boring and believed that transparency cannot be adequately ensured through electronic participation.

Ποιοι είναι οι βασικοί παράγοντες που σας αποτρέπουν από το να συμμετέχετε πιο ενεργά σε διαδικασίες ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής;

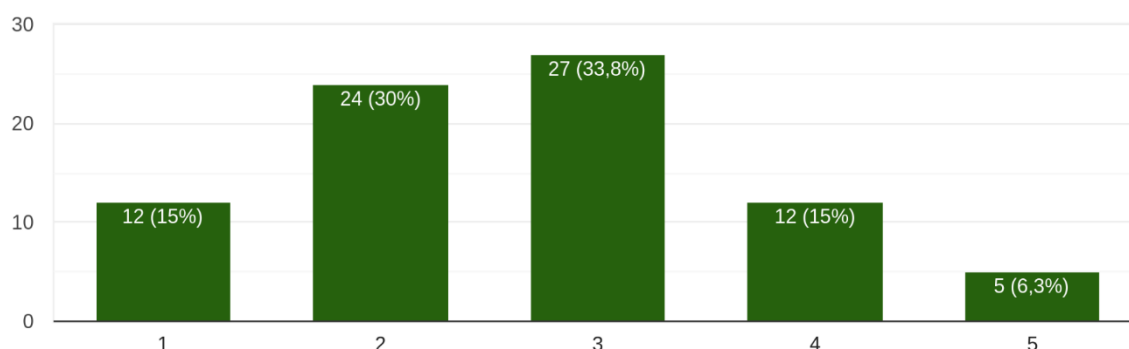
80 απαντήσεις



For the question **“Do you believe that university e-participation platforms are accessible and inclusive for all students, including those with disabilities or from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds?”**, among the participants, 45% reported that accessibility and inclusivity for all students were limited or not accessible at all, 33.8% indicated a moderate level of accessibility and inclusion, while only 21.3% perceived them as good to highly developed.

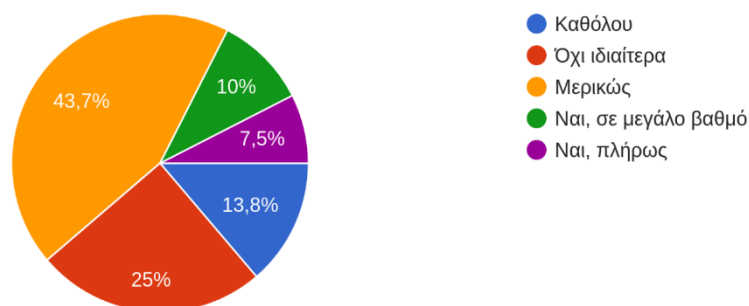
Σε ποιο βαθμό θεωρείτε ότι οι πανεπιστημιακές πλατφόρμες ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής είναι προσβάσιμες και συμπεριληπτικές για όλους του...πό διαφορετικό κοινωνικοοικονομικό υπόβαθρο;

80 απαντήσεις



Regarding the question “**Do you feel protected from discrimination and secure regarding the privacy of your data when expressing your opinion through university digital platforms or civic tools?**”, the majority of students (43.7%) reported that they felt only partially protected regarding the privacy of their personal data. Additionally, 25.0% indicated that they did not really feel safe, while 13.8% stated that they did not feel safe at all. In contrast, 10% reported feeling safe to a large extent, and only 7.5% stated that they felt completely safe regarding the privacy of their data.

Σε ποιο βαθμό αισθάνεστε ασφαλής από διακρίσεις και ως προς την προστασία των προσωπικών σας δεδομένων όταν εκφράζετε τη ...ηφιακών πλατφορμών ή εργαλείων συμμετοχής;
80 απαντήσεις



Students do not feel fully secure when expressing opinions through digital platforms. The high share of respondents who feel only partially protected or not safe highlights the importance of stronger privacy communication, anti-discrimination safeguards, and transparent platform governance.

Student Needs and Recommendations: Summarise student suggestions for improving university e-participation tools, participation opportunities, and inclusive digital environments.

For the question “**Which topics or issues would most motivate you to actively participate through e-participation tools?**”, the majority of students believed that



improved communication, awareness and accessibility of e-participation opportunities could significantly enhance student engagement. Many participants emphasized the need for better and more organized information regarding available platforms, participation opportunities and the outcomes of previous participation processes. Students indicated that insufficient awareness often limits their involvement.

Another recurring theme was the improvement of the design and functionality of digital platforms. Several students highlighted the importance of user-friendly, simple, and well-organized systems with improved technical infrastructure, shorter questionnaires, and more efficient procedures. Security concerns were also mentioned, with some participants emphasizing the need for stronger data protection measures and safer platform use.

Students also indicated that participation would increase if the topics addressed were directly relevant to their daily lives and university experiences. Frequently mentioned areas included academic and student-related issues such as housing, food services, quality of education, study programs, university facilities, student representation and campus safety. Social issues, including gender equality, LGBTQI+ visibility, violence against women and broader societal concerns, were also commonly mentioned.

Additionally, participants expressed interest in local community matters, including city and university infrastructure, environmental concerns, recycling initiatives and the protection of stray animals. Some students also referred to professional and work-related issues as areas that could encourage greater engagement.

A smaller number of respondents noted that increased transparency, improved organization, online student elections and opportunities for seminars and conferences could strengthen participation. However, a few students stated that they did not believe their engagement depended on the topics discussed, while others expressed





reluctance toward increased use of electronic participation due to already extensive digital involvement in everyday life.

For the question **“How can the university improve its e-participation tools and processes to encourage greater student engagement?”**, the majority of students believed that increased information and awareness regarding electronic participation opportunities would significantly enhance student engagement. Many respondents emphasized the need for more frequent, timely and detailed communication about available tools, participation processes and opportunities. Better promotion and visibility of these services were also commonly mentioned, suggesting that many students feel insufficiently informed about existing e-participation options.

Another major theme was the improvement of platform design and usability. Students frequently highlighted the importance of creating simpler, more user-friendly, and modern digital platforms that are easy to navigate and accessible to all users. Several participants suggested the development of mobile-friendly applications or dedicated mobile apps to facilitate easier and more convenient access. The need for a unified platform that centralizes participation processes and relevant information was also repeatedly emphasized.

Students additionally identified the importance of improving technical infrastructure and accessibility. Participants suggested better technological support, upgraded systems, provision of software and technological resources, and training opportunities for students with lower levels of digital literacy. Inclusivity and accessibility for all students were also identified as important considerations.

Transparency and trust emerged as another recurring theme. Several respondents emphasized the need for clearer communication regarding participation outcomes, greater transparency in decision-making procedures, and stronger protection of personal data and privacy. Students also highlighted the importance of ensuring that



their opinions and participation genuinely influence decisions and lead to practical implementation of outcomes.

Furthermore, some participants stressed the importance of greater interaction and dialogue between students and university administration, including involving students in the development and design of participation platforms. Suggestions such as reward mechanisms for participation, integration of digital tools into educational processes, and interactive communication features were also mentioned.

A smaller number of respondents expressed uncertainty regarding improvements, while a few questioned the effectiveness of electronic participation itself and suggested that it may not necessarily increase student engagement.

Regarding the question **“Do you have preferences for certain types of digital tools or platforms for expressing opinions and participating?”**, the responses indicate that most students did not report a strong preference for specific digital tools or platforms for expressing opinions and participating. Many respondents explicitly stated that they had no particular preference and emphasized that they were willing to use any platform as long as it was easy to use, accessible, and user-friendly.

Ease of use emerged as one of the most important factors influencing preferences. Students frequently highlighted the importance of simple interfaces, quick access, minimal registration requirements, and uncomplicated participation procedures. Several participants also expressed a preference for platforms that do not require account creation or lengthy registration processes.

Anonymity was another recurring theme, with some students indicating that they preferred anonymous platforms for expressing their opinions, as anonymity may increase comfort and willingness to participate.

Among students who identified preferred tools, social media platforms and online participation tools were the most frequently mentioned. Examples included social networking platforms, online forms and surveys, petition websites, and communication platforms. Some respondents specifically mentioned tools such as Google Forms, social media applications, online petition platforms, and virtual communication platforms.

Additionally, a small number of participants indicated limited familiarity or knowledge regarding available digital participation tools, while others stated that their preference depended more on functionality and accessibility rather than on a specific platform itself.

For the question **“What specific functionalities or design elements would make digital participation platforms (university or public) easier to use and more accessible for you, especially if you have specific needs related to disability or access to technology?”**, the responses indicate that the majority of students considered simplicity and ease of use to be the most important characteristics of digital participation platforms. Many participants emphasized the need for user-friendly interfaces with simple designs, easy navigation, clear instructions and uncomplicated participation procedures. Students highlighted that platforms should minimize complexity and reduce the time required for participation.

Another frequently mentioned theme was mobile accessibility. Many respondents expressed a preference for mobile-oriented platforms or dedicated applications that could be easily accessed through smartphones. Students also suggested minimizing registration barriers by allowing access through university email accounts, avoiding repeated account creation processes and reducing lengthy registration procedures.

Inclusivity emerged as particularly important theme. Several students emphasized the need for design features that support individuals with disabilities and diverse user



needs. Suggested features included voice commands, audio guidance, subtitles in videos, audio-based materials, multilingual support, accessible layouts, readable fonts, proper color contrast and customized sections or instructions for users with specific accessibility requirements. Inclusive and gender-neutral language was also highlighted by some participants.

Participants additionally expressed a preference for more structured and efficient participation formats. Many suggested reducing open-ended questions and instead using multiple-choice formats to make participation easier and less time-consuming. Clear guidance and step-by-step instructions before and during participation processes were also viewed as important for improving usability.

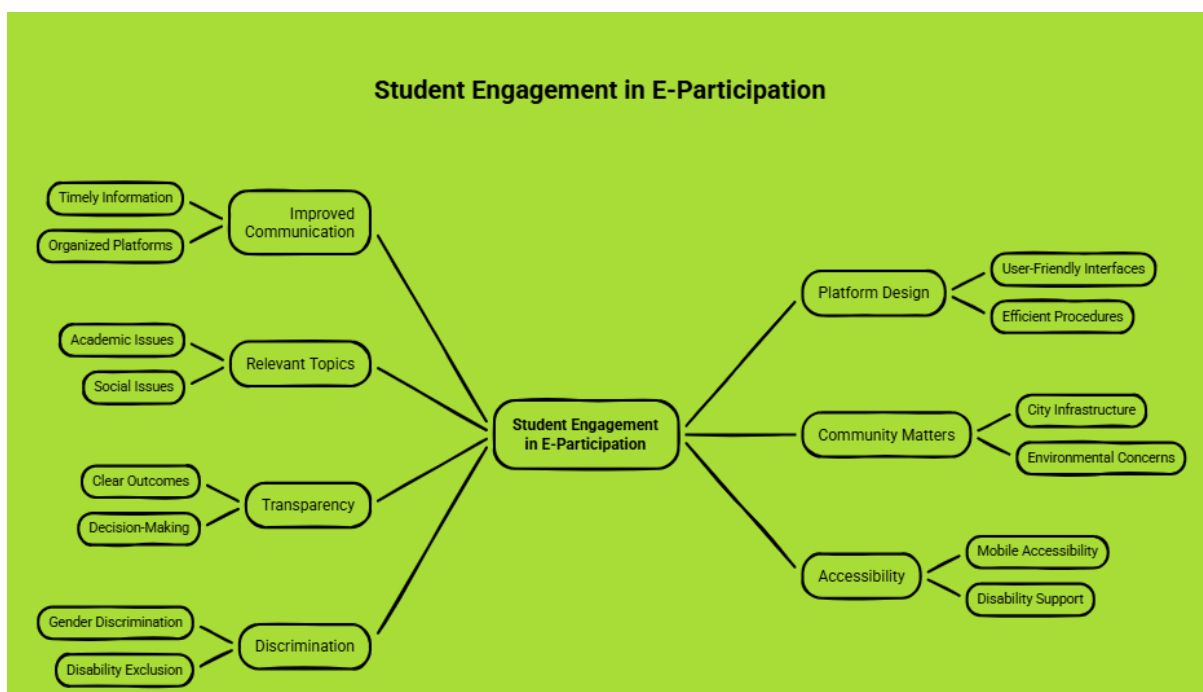
Some students also mentioned the importance of reliable technical infrastructure, adequate technological resources and supportive features such as advisory assistance. However, a smaller number of respondents reported having no specific suggestions or indicated that they had not encountered difficulties with current platform designs.

For the question **“Have you encountered discrimination, prejudice, or a lack of understanding when trying to engage in civic or political activities, which has affected your desire to participate?”**, the majority of students reported not having experienced discrimination, prejudice, or a lack of understanding that affected their willingness to participate in civic or political activities. Many respondents explicitly stated that they had never encountered such situations or had not experienced barriers that discouraged their participation.

However, a smaller group of students reported having experienced such issues either occasionally or rarely. The experiences described were related to several forms of exclusion and discrimination. Some participants reported experiences associated with gender, including discomfort resulting from non-inclusive language, gender

stereotypes, or receiving offensive comments during public discussions. Others highlighted concerns regarding insufficient consideration of gender diversity and the lack of inclusive communication practices.

In addition, some respondents referred to exclusion related to disabilities, particularly situations where invisible disabilities were not adequately recognized or understood. A few participants also mentioned age-related exclusion and political factors that negatively influenced their motivation to engage.



For the question **“What changes should be made in the way the university or society provides information and opportunities for participation to make you feel more empowered and included?”**, most students believed that better communication and more effective dissemination of information would significantly increase their sense of empowerment and inclusion. Many participants emphasized the need for more frequent, timely, continuous and well-organized communication regarding participation opportunities. Students suggested that information should be distributed



through official and accessible channels, such as emails, social media and centralized university communication structures, ensuring that all students receive equal access to information.

Transparency emerged as another major theme. Several respondents highlighted the importance of open processes and visible outcomes, emphasizing that participation should lead to observable results and practical implementation of decisions. Students expressed a need for greater transparency regarding previous participation outcomes and clearer evidence that their contributions and opinions are genuinely taken into consideration.

Many participants also stressed the importance of increasing active student involvement in decision-making processes. Rather than serving only as respondents, students suggested that they should be given opportunities to participate in shaping discussions, creating topics, designing questions and contributing to decision-making procedures. Open dialogue and stronger collaboration between students and university authorities were frequently identified as important factors for improving engagement.

Inclusivity and accessibility also emerged as recurring themes. Respondents emphasized the need for respect for diversity, inclusive practices, accessible participation opportunities and the use of simple and understandable language that avoids technical terminology. Some students also highlighted the importance of protecting personal data, ensuring safe participation environments and preventing discriminatory or racist behaviors.

Furthermore, several students suggested structural improvements such as free access to technological resources, better educational support, stronger organizational structures and easier access to participation opportunities. A smaller number of





respondents indicated that they did not have specific suggestions or believed that their current needs were already adequately addressed.

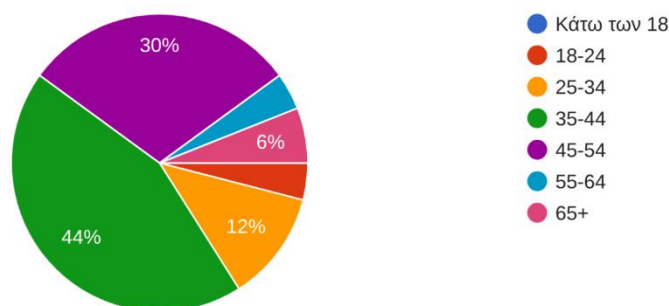


2.3. Stakeholder Assessment

A total of 50 external stakeholders participated in the questionnaire. Their demographic and professional profiles are summarized as follows:

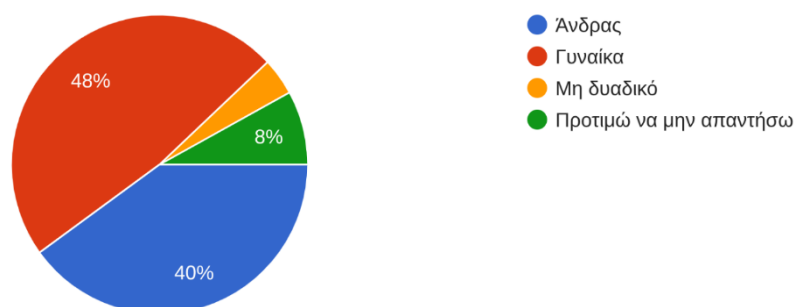
Age: The majority of participants were aged 35-44 (44%) followed by those aged 45-54 (30%), 25-34 (12%), 65+ (6%), 18-24 & 55-64 at (4%).

Ηλικία (σε έτη):
50 responses



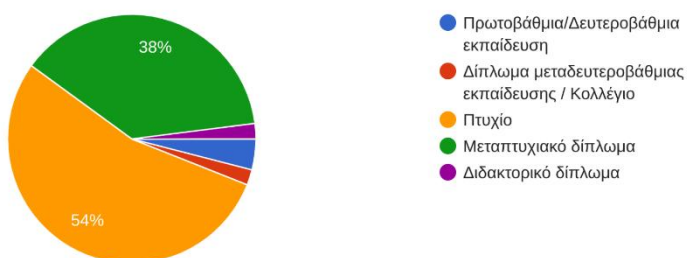
Gender: 40% identified as male and 48% as female also have 4% at non-binary and 8% who chose not to answer.

Φύλο:
50 responses



Educational Background: Most participants had higher education backgrounds 54%, mainly Master's 38% and Bachelor's 2%. Also an additional 4% in primary/secondary education and 2% post-secondary diplomas/college.

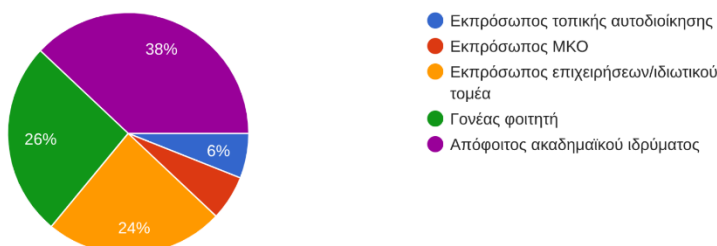
Εκπαίδευση (ανώτατος ολοκληρωμένος τίτλος σπουδών):
50 responses



Your current position/status:

- Local government representative: 6%
- NGO representative: 6%
- Business/private sector representative: 24%
- Parent of a student/pupil: 26%
- Graduate of an academic institution: 38%

Η τρέχουσα ιδιότητα/θέση σας είναι:
50 responses

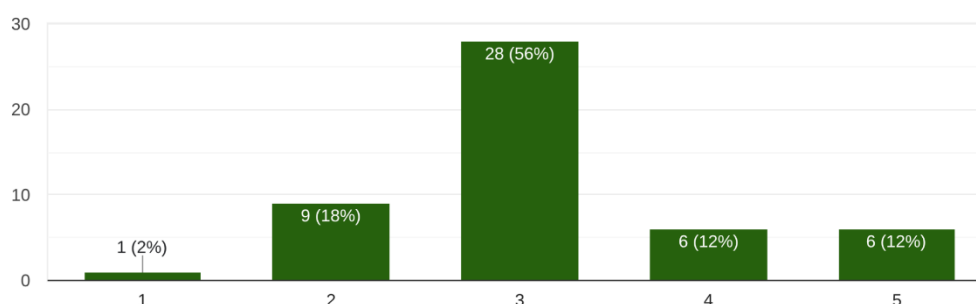


GDPR: All participants accepted the GDPR and data protection terms of the questionnaire, meaning that 100% of respondents provided their consent for the processing of their personal data.

Awareness and Experience with E-Participation: Assess stakeholder familiarity with e-participation and their experience using digital tools to interact with academic institutions or public authorities.

Regarding the question “To what extent are you familiar with the concept of “e-participation” and how it is applied by academic institutions or local authorities?”, the majority of participants (56%) it was reported that they are Moderately Familiar, at (12%) we have the same number of familiarity “Familiar” and “Very Familiar”. While the percentage is below average (18%) about “Slightly Familiar” and (2%) about “Not Familiar”.

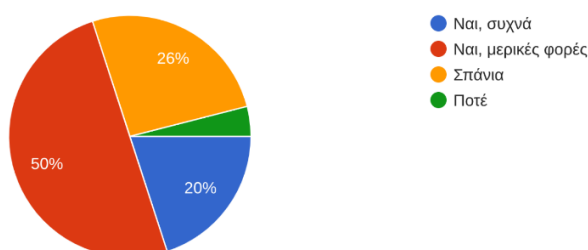
Σε ποιο βαθμό είστε εξοικειωμένος/η με την έννοια της «ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής» και με τον τρόπο που εφαρμόζεται από ακαδημαϊκά ιδρύματα ή τοπικές αρχές;
50 responses



Most stakeholders report at least moderate familiarity with e-participation, showing that the concept is not unknown among external actors. However, the relatively small percentage of highly familiar respondents suggests that e-participation is still not fully mature or widely internalised as a regular democratic practice.

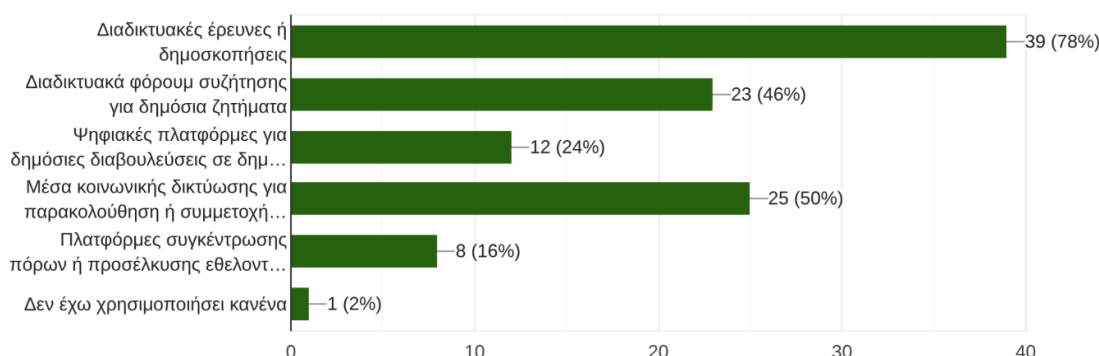
Regarding the question **“Have you ever used digital platforms or tools to interact with academic institutions (e.g., for feedback, consultations, participation in projects)?”**, most participants (50%) replied “Yes, Sometimes” (26%) replied “Rarely”, (20%) replied “Yes, Frequently” and only (4%) replied “Never”.

Έχετε χρησιμοποιήσει ποτέ ψηφιακές πλατφόρμες ή εργαλεία για να αλληλεπιδράσετε με ακαδημαϊκά ιδρύματα (π.χ. για παροχή ανατροφοδ...οχή σε διαβουλεύσεις ή σε έργα/πρωτοβουλίες);
50 responses



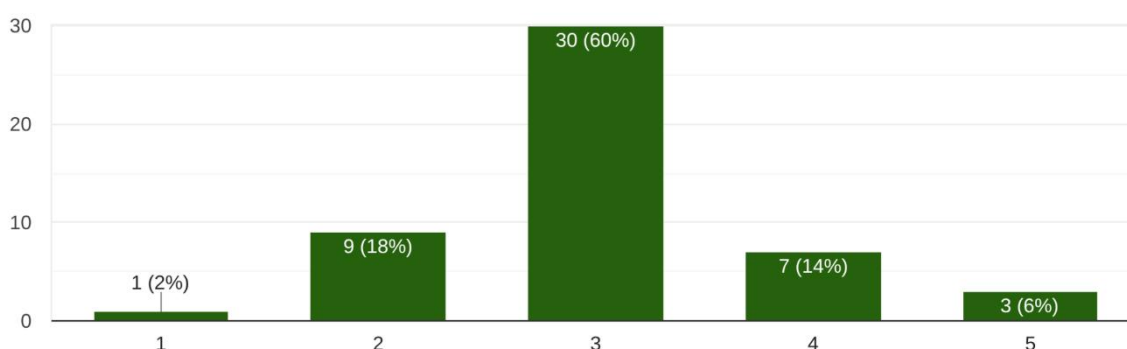
For the question **“What types of e-participation tools have you used related to academic or public life?”**, most participants (78%) replied “Online surveys or polls”, (50%) replied “Social media for monitoring or participating in education-related initiatives”, (46%) replied “Online discussion forums on public issues”, (24%) replied “Digital platforms for public consultations at municipal or national level”, (16%) replied “Fundraising or volunteer recruitment platforms” and only (2%) replied “I have not used any”.

Ποια είδη εργαλείων ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής έχετε χρησιμοποιήσει σε σχέση με την ακαδημαϊκή ή δημόσια ζωή; (Μπορείτε να επιλέξετε περισσότερες από μία απαντήσεις.)
50 responses



For the question “**How do you rate the effectiveness of e-participation in influencing the decisions of academic institutions or local authorities?**”, most participants replied “Moderately Effective” (18%) replied “Slightly Effective”, (14%) replied “Effective” and only (6%) replied “Very Effective” and (2%) replied “Ineffective”.

Πώς αξιολογείτε την αποτελεσματικότητα της ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής ως προς την επιρροή της στις αποφάσεις ακαδημαϊκών ιδρυμάτων ή τοπικών αρχών;
50 responses



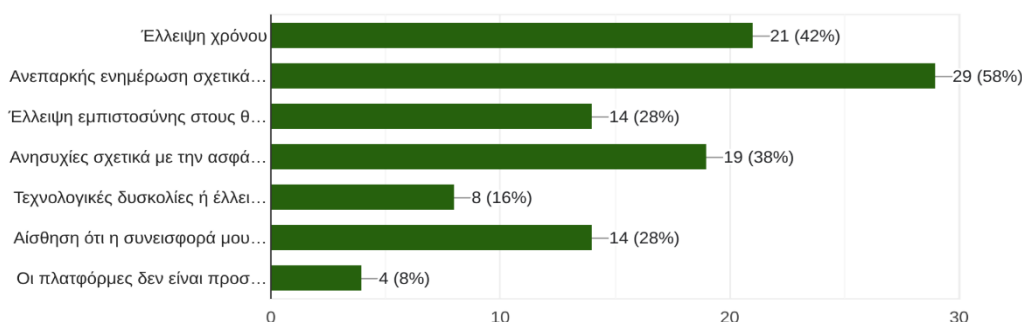
Online surveys, polls, social media, and online forums are the most widely used tools among stakeholders. More formal participation tools, such as municipal or national consultation platforms, are used less frequently, suggesting that official e-participation mechanisms may need stronger promotion and easier access.

Barriers and Engagement Factors: *Identify the main barriers that limit stakeholder participation and the factors that would encourage stronger engagement.*

Regarding the question, “**What are the main barriers that prevent you from participating more actively in e-participation related to academic institutions?**”, the most frequently reported barrier was insufficient information about existing opportunities, selected by 58% of participants. This was followed by lack of time (42%) and concerns about data security and privacy (38%). Lower percentages of participants identified feeling that their contribution would not be valued or heard and lack of trust in institutions or processes, both at 28%. Technological difficulties or

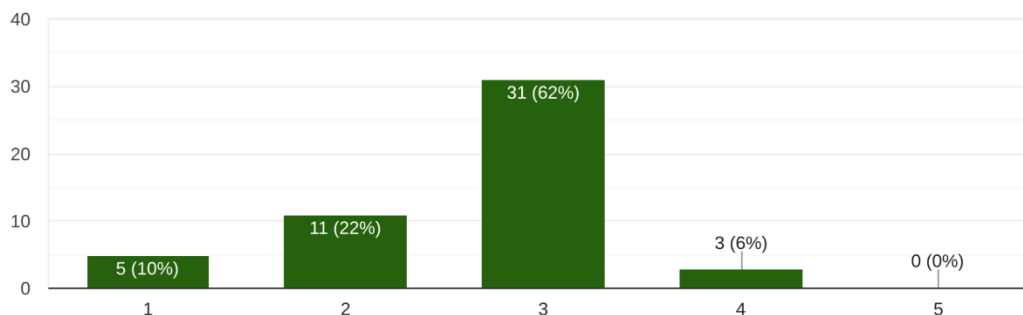
limited digital literacy were reported by 16% of participants, while only 8% indicated that platforms are not accessible or easy to use.

Ποια είναι τα βασικά εμπόδια που σας αποτρέπουν από το να συμμετέχετε πιο ενεργά στην ηλεκτρονική συμμετοχή που σχετίζεται με ακαδημ...α επιλέξετε περισσότερες από μία απαντήσεις.)
50 responses



Regarding the question, **“Do you believe that e-participation tools used by academic institutions are inclusive for people with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds?”**, the majority of participants indicated that these tools are inclusive to a moderate extent (62%). A further 22% reported that they are inclusive to a small extent, while 10% stated that they are not inclusive at all. Only 6% of participants considered them to be inclusive to a large extent.

Πιστεύετε ότι τα εργαλεία ηλεκτρονικής συμμετοχής που χρησιμοποιούνται από ακαδημαϊκά ιδρύματα είναι συμπεριληπτικά για άτομα με αναπηρία ή άτομα από μειονεκτικό υπόβαθρο;
50 responses





Inclusive Participation and Policy Gaps: Analyse stakeholder views on accessibility, inclusion, and the weaknesses of current digital or educational programmes.

For the question **“What would most motivate you or other stakeholders to engage more with e-participation?”**, participants would be more motivated to engage with e-participation if they received better and earlier information, if platforms were simple and accessible and if they were confident that their contribution would be seriously considered. Trust, feedback from institutions, data protection and stronger technical support were also seen as important factors for increasing participation.

For the question **“How can academic institutions better communicate their e-participation initiatives to you and other stakeholders?”**, participants suggested that academic institutions should communicate e-participation initiatives through timely and regular updates via social media, emails, newsletters, official websites and awareness campaigns. They also emphasized the need for simple, visual and engaging content, such as short videos, infographics and workshops, to make these initiatives more understandable and accessible.

For the question **“What is your opinion on the potential of digital tools to overcome the crisis of civic engagement and promote a more inclusive democracy?”**, participants believe that digital tools can help overcome the crisis of civic engagement by making participation more accessible, flexible and inclusive. They can reduce barriers related to distance, time and physical presence, while supporting transparency and wider involvement in decision-making. However, respondents emphasized that their success depends on proper design, strong infrastructure, clear communication and real consideration of citizens’ input. They also warned that the digital divide, lack of skills and limited internet access must be addressed to avoid creating new forms of exclusion.



For the question **“Have you interacted with academic institutions or local authorities regarding the development of policies or initiatives aimed at improving accessibility and participation for people with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds? If so, what was your experience?”**, most participants had not interacted with academic institutions or local authorities on accessibility and participation issues. Those who had relevant experience described it as mixed or mostly negative, mainly due to bureaucracy, indifference, limited resources and lack of concrete results. Some noted that collective participation through associations was more effective than individual efforts.

For the question **“What are the main gaps or weaknesses in current digital and educational programs that hinder inclusive civic participation of marginalized groups?”**, overall, participants identified lack of knowledge, low trust, poor technical infrastructure, bad platform design and limited accessibility as the main weaknesses. Many digital and educational programmes are seen as too complex, impersonal, theoretical and not adapted to the needs of marginalized groups. Respondents also emphasized the need for clearer instructions, simpler language, better access to equipment, human support and stronger trust that participation will have a real impact.

Regarding participants’ level of knowledge of the national laws, regulations, and policies governing civic participation and e-participation in their country, including issues such as access to information and digital rights, most participants reported having moderate knowledge (58%). This was followed by basic knowledge (26%) and advanced knowledge (12%), while only 4% indicated that they had no knowledge.

In relation to their interactions with academic or public institutions through digital tools, participants were also asked to assess the extent to which their rights to access, good administration, and legal protection are effectively safeguarded in practice. The majority of participants responded that these rights are safeguarded to a moderate extent (64%), while 22% selected to a small extent. A smaller share of participants

stated that their rights are safeguarded to a large extent (8%), and only 6% reported that they are not safeguarded at all.



Stakeholder Recommendations: *Summarise recommendations for academic institutions and public bodies, especially in relation to inclusive democracy, accessibility, and digital participation.*

For the question “Do you have suggestions for specific e-participation tools or approaches that would be particularly effective for engaging diverse stakeholder groups?”, many participants did not suggest specific tools, but the answers that were provided focused on short polls, micro-surveys, open digital discussions, AI-supported platforms, multilingual tools and accessible platforms for people with disabilities. Respondents also emphasized the need for better information, more promotion, workshops, thematic discussions and official links between e-participation results and public decision-making processes.



For the question **“What specific recommendations would you make to academic institutions and government bodies for developing more effective strategies and tools to promote accessibility and empowerment for these groups in democratic processes?”**, participants recommended technical upgrades, better platform design, clearer information, accessible instructions and adapted content for people with disabilities and disadvantaged groups. They also emphasized the need for training, digital skills support and direct consultation with the groups concerned, including disability associations and local communities, so that democratic participation tools are designed around real needs.

Stakeholders recommend better platform design, clearer information, adapted content, training, digital skills support, and direct consultation with people with disabilities and disadvantaged groups. This shows a strong preference for co-designed participation tools that reflect real user needs rather than top-down institutional assumptions.



2.4. Barrier Identification

Identify the prevalence of **specific barriers** to e-participation:

- **Institutional barriers**

Institutional barriers recognised by Faculty Members: The findings suggest that faculty members face several barriers that may limit their active participation in civic and e-participation processes. One of the most frequently reported obstacles was the lack of time, reflecting the demanding nature of academic responsibilities and competing professional commitments. Participants also expressed significant concerns regarding data security and privacy, indicating that uncertainty about the protection and use of personal information may discourage engagement. In addition, many faculty members reported limited awareness of available participation tools and opportunities, suggesting that communication and dissemination efforts may not be sufficiently effective. Trust-related issues were also evident, as respondents highlighted a lack of confidence in participation platforms and the outcomes they generate. Furthermore, several participants questioned the actual impact of their involvement, expressing doubts about whether their contributions would lead to meaningful change or influence decision-making processes. Additional barriers included limited digital skills, accessibility challenges for users with disabilities, and technical difficulties or poorly designed user interfaces that may hinder participation. Overall, the findings indicate that faculty members' engagement in e-participation is influenced by a combination of practical constraints, technological challenges, trust-related concerns and perceptions regarding the effectiveness and value of participation mechanisms.

Institutional barriers recognised by Students: The findings suggest that students identified several institutional barriers that may limit their participation in civic and e-participation processes. One of the most prominent barriers was the lack of clear and accessible digital pathways provided by higher education institutions and relevant authorities. Many students reported insufficient information and limited awareness regarding available participation opportunities, tools and procedures, indicating weaknesses in communication and outreach strategies. Furthermore, participants highlighted concerns related to the organization and design of participation platforms, emphasizing issues such as fragmented systems, lack of centralized structures and limited user-friendliness. Students also identified a lack of transparency regarding decision-making processes and participation outcomes, expressing uncertainty about whether their opinions and contributions are genuinely considered. Additionally, concerns regarding data privacy, trust in organizers and limited evidence of tangible impact from participation activities were perceived as factors that may reduce engagement and discourage active involvement. These findings indicate that institutional barriers extend beyond technological limitations and also involve issues of communication, trust, accessibility and perceived effectiveness of participation mechanisms.

Institutional barriers recognised by Stakeholders: Stakeholders recognised several institutional barriers that limit effective and inclusive civic participation through digital tools. The most common barriers relate to insufficient and delayed information, lack of trust in institutions, bureaucracy and the feeling that citizens' contributions are not always taken seriously or translated into real decisions. Participants also pointed to weak technical infrastructure, poorly designed platforms, limited accessibility for people with disabilities or disadvantaged backgrounds and the absence of clear guidance and support. Many stakeholders felt that institutions often apply formal procedures without

ensuring meaningful participation, follow-up, or feedback. Overall, the responses show that institutional barriers are not only technical, but also connected to transparency, responsiveness, accessibility and the need for stronger cooperation between institutions and the communities they aim to serve.

- **Technical and accessibility barriers**

Technical barriers recognised by Faculty Members: Faculty members recognised several technical and accessibility barriers that may limit effective participation in digital civic and educational activities. These include poorly designed or complicated platforms, unclear navigation, technical problems, and insufficient compatibility with different devices or assistive technologies. Limited access to suitable hardware, specialised software, and reliable internet connections was also identified as a potential obstacle, particularly for students and citizens from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, some digital platforms do not fully address the needs of people with visual, hearing, mobility, or cognitive disabilities. Faculty members therefore highlighted the need for more user-friendly and accessible platforms, stronger technical infrastructure, clear instructions, technical support, and the provision of appropriate equipment and software to ensure equal participation.

Technical barriers recognised by Students: The findings also revealed several technical and accessibility barriers that students perceived as limiting their participation in civic and e-participation processes. One of the main barriers identified was issues related to platform accessibility and the availability of necessary technological resources. Students emphasized the need for more user-friendly and accessible platforms, highlighting difficulties associated with complex designs, poor usability and fragmented digital systems. Many

respondents expressed a preference for mobile-friendly platforms, simpler interfaces and easier navigation processes, suggesting that current tools may not adequately meet students' needs. In addition, some participants reported challenges related to access to technology and internet resources, while others highlighted the importance of providing sufficient hardware and software support. Accessibility concerns for individuals with disabilities were also frequently mentioned, including the need for voice commands, audio guidance, subtitles, readable fonts, appropriate color contrast and inclusive platform design. These findings suggest that technical barriers are not limited to infrastructure issues alone but also include usability, accessibility, and the extent to which digital tools can accommodate diverse user needs.

Technical barriers recognised by Stakeholders: Stakeholders recognised several technical and accessibility barriers that prevent wider and more inclusive participation in digital civic processes. Many participants referred to weak technical infrastructure, poorly designed platforms, complicated access procedures and unclear instructions as key obstacles. They also highlighted that some users do not have access to the necessary hardware, software, stable internet connection, or sufficient digital skills to participate effectively. Accessibility was also seen as a major issue, especially for people with disabilities, as platforms are not always adapted for users with visual, hearing, mobility, or cognitive difficulties. Overall, the responses show that technical barriers are not limited to the existence of digital tools, but also concern how easy, accessible, user-friendly and supportive these tools are for different stakeholder groups.



- **Social and attitudinal barriers**

Social and attitudinal barriers recognised by Faculty Members: Faculty members recognised several social and attitudinal barriers that can reduce participation in civic and e-participation processes. A major concern is the limited awareness of available opportunities, as many citizens may not receive sufficient information about digital participation tools, consultation processes, or ways to express their views. Faculty members also highlighted low trust in institutions and limited perceived political efficacy, with some individuals believing that their participation will not be valued or have a meaningful influence on decisions. Previous experiences of institutional indifference, lack of feedback, or limited transparency may further discourage engagement. These barriers can be particularly significant for marginalized groups that have experienced exclusion or discrimination. Addressing them requires clearer communication, awareness-raising activities, stronger institutional responsiveness, and visible evidence that participants' contributions are considered and can lead to concrete outcomes.

Social and attitudinal barriers recognised by Students: The findings further highlighted several social and attitudinal barriers that students perceived as influencing their willingness to participate in civic and e-participation activities. One of the most commonly identified barriers was a lack of awareness regarding available participation opportunities and processes, which limited students' understanding of how and where they could engage. In addition, many participants reported a low sense of perceived political efficacy, expressing doubts about whether their opinions and contributions would be genuinely heard, considered, or translated into meaningful outcomes. Several students indicated that uncertainty regarding the impact of their participation reduced their motivation to engage. Furthermore, some respondents reported

experiences of prejudice, exclusion, or discomfort related to factors such as gender, disability, age and political perspectives, while others highlighted concerns regarding non-inclusive language and insufficient respect for diversity. Lack of trust in institutions and organizers also emerged as a factor influencing participation. These findings suggest that social and attitudinal barriers extend beyond practical constraints and include perceptions, beliefs, and experiences that shape students' motivation and confidence in participating in civic processes.

Social and attitudinal barriers recognised by Stakeholders: Stakeholders recognised that social and attitudinal barriers play an important role in limiting inclusive civic participation. A key issue is the lack of awareness, as many participants reported that citizens are often not properly informed about existing e-participation opportunities or how these tools can be used. At the same time, several responses showed low trust in institutions and a weak sense of political efficacy, meaning that stakeholders are not always convinced that their contribution will be heard, valued, or lead to real change. This creates reluctance to participate, especially among people who have previously experienced exclusion, discrimination, or lack of institutional responsiveness. Overall, the answers suggest that improving participation requires not only better digital tools, but also stronger communication, trust-building, feedback from institutions and clear evidence that citizens' voices can influence decisions.



Common Obstacles

The analysis of responses from students, stakeholders, and faculty members reveals a high degree of consistency regarding the barriers that hinder participation in civic and e-participation processes. The most frequently reported obstacle across all three groups is the lack of awareness and information about available participation opportunities, digital tools, and participation procedures. Participants repeatedly emphasized that insufficient communication and outreach efforts limit their understanding of how, when and where they can engage.

The second most common barrier concerns trust-related issues, including low trust in institutions, participation platforms and decision-making processes. Respondents from all groups expressed doubts about the transparency of participation mechanisms and questioned whether their contributions are genuinely considered by decision-makers. Closely related to this is the third most frequently identified barrier: low perceived political efficacy and limited evidence of impact. Many participants felt that their involvement would not lead to meaningful change, reducing their motivation to participate actively.

The fourth major obstacle involves technical and accessibility challenges. Students, stakeholders and faculty members all highlighted problems associated with poorly designed platforms, complex navigation, limited usability, accessibility barriers for people with disabilities and insufficient technical infrastructure. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of participation tools depends not only on their availability but also on their ease of use and inclusiveness.

The fifth common barrier relates to insufficient digital skills, training and support. Although this issue was more strongly emphasized by faculty members and stakeholders, students also identified the need for greater digital literacy and guidance





to facilitate participation. Limited familiarity with digital tools can reduce confidence and create additional obstacles to engagement.

Finally, institutional and organizational shortcomings emerged as a recurring challenge. Participants reported fragmented participation systems, bureaucratic procedures, lack of centralized structures, insufficient feedback mechanisms and limited institutional responsiveness. These factors contribute to perceptions that participation processes are symbolic rather than meaningful, further discouraging engagement.



3. Qualitative Analysis: Focus Groups

Across the two focus groups, a total of 6 participants took part, with 3 participants in each group. The sample included 3 men and three women, representing both persons with disabilities and individuals from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

The first focus group consisted of 2 men and 1 woman: one man with a visual impairment, one man with hearing loss, and one woman with multiple sclerosis. The discussion was conducted orally, with the moderator taking notes, and lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The second focus group also included 3 participants: one long-term unemployed man, one long-term unemployed woman, and one woman with a physical/mobility disability. This discussion was likewise based on oral responses recorded by the moderator through notes.

Overall, the participant group reflected a small but relevant qualitative sample of people with lived experience of disability, accessibility barriers, long-term unemployment, digital participation challenges, and social vulnerability. No identifiable personal information was included in the analysis or in our transcripts.

Barriers to Democratic Participation

Across the two focus groups, participants described democratic participation as something that is formally available but often difficult to exercise in practice. The main barriers were not limited to one issue, such as digital skills or disability access. Instead, they emerged as a combination of institutional, informational, technological, accessibility-related, socio-economic, and trust-related barriers.

1. Limited perceived influence and weak feedback mechanisms



A recurring barrier was the perception that participation does not always lead to visible change. Participants did not reject democratic participation; on the contrary, they recognised its value. However, they often experienced participation as ineffective when institutions failed to respond meaningfully.

In Focus Group 2, a long-term unemployed participant explained that citizens may submit comments, complete forms, or send applications but “rarely receive a meaningful response”. This creates a sense that participation is formal rather than substantive. Similarly, participants in Focus Group 1 stated that individual voices are often ignored unless expressed through collective organisation, such as an association.

This suggests that one of the strongest barriers is not simply lack of opportunity, but lack of feedback loops. Participants want to know whether their contribution was received, considered, accepted, rejected, or translated into policy. Without such transparency, democratic engagement risks being perceived as symbolic.

2. Institutional distrust and the gap between rights and implementation

Participants repeatedly distinguished between rights “on paper” and rights in practice. In Focus Group 1, participants acknowledged that there have been improvements in Greece and Europe, but stressed that implementation remains incomplete and that public authorities often make promises that are delayed or not fulfilled. They also noted that educational material, policies, and public actions are often designed without sufficient inclusive planning.

This finding is important because it shows that barriers to democratic participation are also governance barriers. Participants are not only asking for access to platforms; they are asking for reliable institutions, accountability, and evidence that public



commitments are implemented. Where commitments are not followed by action, participants experience frustration, distrust, and reduced motivation to participate.

Focus Group 2 made a similar point in relation to good administration. Participants argued that public services should provide clear information, timely responses, understandable procedures, explanations, and appeal options. For the participant with mobility disability, non-discrimination also required reasonable accommodation; if a platform is inaccessible, equal access is not achieved.

3. Fragmented and unclear information

Both groups identified lack of clear, centralised, and accessible information as a major barrier. Participants described public information as scattered across different websites, platforms, agencies, ministries, municipalities, social media channels, and informal networks.

In Focus Group 2, participants said that it is often unclear where to go, which platform is official, what is open for participation, or whether a contribution will be read. They also noted that information about consultations, local councils, participatory processes, and online tools is not always visible to ordinary citizens. Focus Group 1 similarly reported that information on rights and civic participation may exist, but is dispersed, difficult to verify, and not always available in a practical or accessible form.

This barrier particularly affects people who are not already well-connected, digitally confident, or familiar with public administration. Participants stressed that access should not depend on knowing the right person, being part of the right network, or accidentally seeing an announcement online. Informal support from family, friends, communities, and organisations is valuable, but participants also saw this dependence as evidence of systemic weakness.



4. Accessibility barriers in educational material

Participants viewed educational material as a key condition for democratic participation. If citizens cannot understand their rights, available procedures, or digital tools, they cannot participate meaningfully.

In Focus Group 1, participants with disabilities explained that digital availability does not automatically mean accessibility. For persons with visual impairments, material must work with assistive technologies, have clear structure, and include image descriptions. For persons with hearing loss, videos and live presentations need subtitles or alternative formats. For persons with chronic illness or mobility-related limitations, material must also be usable without excessive time, energy, or concentration demands.

Focus Group 2 expanded this issue from the perspective of long-term unemployed participants. Educational material was often described as overly formal, bureaucratic, legalistic, or disconnected from real needs. Participants said that materials must be practical, written in plain language, and connected to real-life procedures such as job applications, public services, training programmes, benefits, rights, and digital participation tools.

5. Poor design of digital public governance platforms

Participants recognised that digital tools can reduce some barriers, particularly the need for physical presence. However, they also stressed that digitalisation does not automatically produce inclusion.

In Focus Group 1, participants said that e-participation helps because it reduces the need for physical attendance, but a platform can be digital and still exclusionary if it is not accessible. They identified complex navigation, lack of compatibility with assistive

technologies, absence of subtitles or alternative formats, too many steps, repeated codes, confirmations, and document requirements as major barriers.

Focus Group 2 reported similar barriers: unclear menus, technical errors, excessive login requirements, confusing document upload procedures, platforms that do not work properly on mobile phones, forms that time out, and systems that do not save progress. These problems are especially serious for people with disabilities, people with fatigue or pain, people with limited devices, and people with low digital confidence.

6. Socio-economic and digital exclusion

For long-term unemployed participants, democratic participation was closely linked to socio-economic vulnerability. They described barriers related to low confidence, limited access to training, lack of stable equipment, lack of reliable internet, and financial constraints.

Focus Group 2 participants noted that some people may have internet but not a suitable device, others may lack digital skills, and others may not know how to resolve technical problems. For long-term unemployed people, even small costs can matter. They also noted that not all platforms work well on mobile phones, which is important because some citizens may rely only on a phone rather than a computer.

7. Physical and mobility-related barriers remain relevant

Although the focus groups discussed digital public governance, participants made clear that physical barriers continue to shape democratic participation. Digital tools were valued partly because they reduce the need to travel, attend inaccessible buildings, or be physically present at meetings.



In Focus Group 2, the participant with mobility disability described transport, inaccessible buildings, fatigue, and practical barriers as factors that can prevent attendance at meetings or civic events. In Focus Group 1, participants also emphasised that equal participation requires access not only to digital platforms, but also to work, education, the city, information, and decision-making processes.

8. Lack of co-design and user testing with affected groups

A strong cross-cutting finding was that platforms, policies, and educational materials are often created without meaningful involvement of the people they are supposed to serve. Participants argued that accessibility must be built in from the beginning rather than added afterwards.

In Focus Group 1, participants said that accessibility is often introduced at the end of the process and that real users with different disabilities should test platforms before they are declared accessible. They also argued that persons with disabilities and their associations should participate in the creation and evaluation of educational material because they can identify problems that others do not see.

Focus Group 2 reached the same conclusion from a broader inclusion perspective: people with disabilities and vulnerable groups should be involved in the design and evaluation of training, platforms, and materials, rather than being treated as passive beneficiaries.

9. Concerns about personal data and digital trust

Trust in digital public governance was also weakened by concerns about personal data. Participants in Focus Group 2 did not reject digital participation, but they expressed uncertainty about where their data goes, who can access it, how long it is stored, and how it is used. This was especially sensitive where platforms request



employment status, income, tax information, health-related information, disability status, benefits, or accommodation needs .

Participants also criticised privacy notices as long and difficult to understand, meaning that users often accept terms without fully understanding them. This shows that data protection is not only a legal compliance issue; it is also a democratic participation issue. Citizens are less likely to engage if they do not understand how their personal information will be handled.

10. Dependence on associations and informal support

The two groups differed somewhat in how they framed collective support. In Focus Group 1, disability associations were described as empowering: individual voices may be ignored, but collective organisation gives people greater visibility and capacity to claim rights. Associations also help people understand rights and participate more actively.

In Focus Group 2, informal support networks were also important, but participants stressed that reliance on friends, family, or organisations should not replace institutional responsibility. Public information and digital tools should be clear and accessible by default.

This creates an important analytical distinction: collective organisations can empower vulnerable citizens, but the state and public institutions should not rely on them to compensate for inaccessible systems.

Accessibility, Trust, and Inclusion

Digital tools were experienced by participants as ambivalent: they were seen as potentially enabling democratic participation, but only when they are accessible, understandable, trustworthy, and supported by meaningful institutional response.





Across both focus groups, participants did not reject digital public governance. Instead, they recognised its value while stressing that digitalisation alone does not guarantee inclusion. The findings therefore point to a central distinction between formal digital access and meaningful inclusive participation.

Digital tools as enabling mechanisms

Participants acknowledged that digital tools can lower some traditional barriers to civic participation. This was especially clear among participants with disabilities and mobility-related limitations. Online tools were valued because they can reduce the need for physical presence, travel, attendance in inaccessible buildings, or participation in fixed-time physical meetings. In Focus Group 2, the participant with mobility disability explained that digital participation made some things easier because physical attendance can be limited by transport, inaccessible buildings, fatigue, and practical barriers.

Similarly, participants in Focus Group 1 stated that electronic participation can be important because it reduces the need for physical presence, which is particularly relevant for people with disabilities. This shows that digital tools are not viewed negatively in themselves. On the contrary, they can expand participation when they provide flexible, remote, and asynchronous ways for citizens to express views, access information, or engage with public procedures.

For long-term unemployed participants, digital tools were also seen as useful because they can provide faster access to employment-related information, training opportunities, public services, benefits, and consultation processes. However, this enabling role depends heavily on whether platforms are easy to find, easy to use, and connected to real-life needs. Participants emphasised that digital tools should help citizens act, not simply present information in abstract or bureaucratic form.



Digital tools as exclusionary when accessibility is weak

Despite recognising the potential of digital tools, participants repeatedly stressed that a digital platform can still exclude people if it is badly designed. In Focus Group 1, one participant explicitly stated that a platform may be digital but not inclusive; if it is not accessible, it continues to exclude people. This was one of the strongest cross-cutting findings.

Participants described several accessibility problems: incompatibility with assistive technologies, complex navigation, lack of alternative formats, absence of subtitles, excessive authentication steps, repeated codes, document upload requirements, time limits, and forms that do not save progress. In Focus Group 1, participants linked exclusion to complex navigation, lack of compatibility with assistive technologies, lack of subtitles or alternative formats, and overly demanding procedures.

Focus Group 2 reached similar conclusions from the perspective of long-term unemployment and mobility disability. Participants described unclear menus, technical errors, poor mobile compatibility, difficulty uploading documents, forms that time out, and low digital confidence as barriers that can prevent participation even when a platform formally exists.

Accessibility as a broad concept, not only technical compliance

Participants understood accessibility broadly. It was not limited to screen-reader compatibility or physical access. It also included plain language, simple navigation, practical instructions, flexible timing, multiple content formats, mobile usability, clear structure, and the ability to pause and return later.

In Focus Group 1, participants with visual impairment, hearing loss, and multiple sclerosis described different accessibility needs. For visual impairment, materials need clear structure, compatibility with assistive technologies, and image

descriptions. For hearing loss, videos and live presentations require subtitles or alternative ways of following the content. For chronic illness or fatigue-related limitations, materials should not require excessive energy, concentration, or time.

Focus Group 2 added that accessible educational material for long-term unemployed people should be practical, written in plain language, and connected to real procedures such as applying for jobs, using public services, understanding rights, and participating in consultations. Therefore, accessibility should be interpreted as functional access: the ability not only to open a platform or document, but to understand it, use it, complete the process, and feel confident while doing so.

Trust and personal data concerns

Trust emerged as a major condition for inclusive digital participation. Participants did not necessarily distrust all digital tools, but they did not feel sufficiently informed about how their personal data is collected, stored, used, or shared. This was especially important for participants whose engagement with public platforms may involve sensitive information, such as employment status, income, tax details, disability status, health-related information, benefits, or accommodation needs.

In Focus Group 2, participants stated that they often do not know where their data goes, who can see it, or how it will be used. They also criticised privacy notices as long and difficult to understand, meaning that users often accept terms without really understanding them. This indicates that data protection is not only a technical or legal matter. It is also a **participation and trust issue**.

For vulnerable groups, unclear data practices may discourage participation. If citizens fear that their personal information may be misused, misunderstood, exposed, or linked to future administrative decisions, they may avoid engaging. This is particularly relevant for unemployed participants, who may be asked to provide income or



employment-related information, and for disabled participants, whose data may include sensitive health or accommodation details.

Feeling respected: partial recognition, but weak administrative responsiveness

Participants' sense of being respected was mixed. They recognised that rights, accessibility, and participation are often mentioned in public discourse, but they also felt that the actual administrative experience does not always reflect these principles.

In Focus Group 1, participants stated that everyone speaks about rights "in principle", but in practice there is a gap. They described repeated promises without implementation, which creates frustration and distrust. One participant added that people with disabilities know their rights and try to make them visible in society, but they should not have to constantly prove why they need to be included.

Focus Group 2 expressed a similar concern in terms of good administration. Participants argued that respect means clear information, timely response, understandable procedures, explanations, and appeal options. One participant stated that long-term unemployed people often feel treated as "a case number, not as people" when services are unclear or complicated.

Representation and participation in design

Participants did not feel sufficiently represented in the design of digital tools, educational materials, or public participation processes. A strong shared view was that systems are often designed without the meaningful involvement of the people most affected by them.

In Focus Group 1, participants argued that accessibility often appears to be added at the end rather than integrated from the beginning. They also stressed that platforms should be tested by real users with different disabilities, rather than simply declared



accessible by an institution. This finding is important because it links representation directly to quality: if affected users are absent from the design process, platforms are more likely to reproduce barriers.

Participants also stressed that persons with disabilities and their associations should be involved in creating or evaluating educational material, because they can identify problems that others may not see. In Focus Group 2, the participant with mobility disability made a similar point, arguing that disabled people should not be treated as passive beneficiaries but should be involved in designing and evaluating training.

Representation was also linked to collective voice. In Focus Group 1, participants described disability associations as crucial because individual voices are often ignored, while collective organisation gives people greater visibility and stronger capacity to claim rights. This shows that inclusion is not only a technical design issue, but also a democratic issue: participants want to be part of decision-making, not merely users of systems created elsewhere.

Recommendations for Improvement

Participants across the two focus groups proposed that digital participation should be improved through a combination of accessibility-by-design, clearer information, practical support, stronger accountability, and meaningful involvement of vulnerable groups in decision-making. Their recommendations show that inclusion cannot be achieved only by moving participation online; digital tools must be designed, tested, explained, and governed in ways that respond to the real needs of persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed people, and citizens with lower digital confidence.

1. Design accessibility from the beginning, not as a later correction

A central recommendation was that accessibility should be embedded at the earliest stage of developing educational materials, platforms, and public digital services.

Participants in the first focus group explicitly argued that materials should be designed according to accessibility principles from the start, rather than produced first and corrected later. This was repeated in relation to digital platforms, where participants stated that accessibility often appears to be added at the end rather than integrated into the original design process.

This implies that accessibility should become a mandatory design requirement, not an optional quality improvement. Public bodies and platform developers should ensure compatibility with assistive technologies, clear navigation, accessible forms, subtitles, transcripts, alternative text, structured documents, keyboard usability, mobile usability, and flexible completion options.

2. Provide multiple formats and plain-language materials

Participants recommended that educational and civic participation materials should be available in different formats, including text, subtitles, audio, readable digital documents, and simple visual or step-by-step guidance. Focus Group 1 participants specifically requested different forms of access, including text, subtitles, simple language, listening or reading options, and clear navigation.

Focus Group 2 participants added that accessible material should be practical and written in plain language, especially for long-term unemployed people. They stressed that materials should explain rights, opportunities, procedures, and digital tools clearly, and should be connected to real-life needs such as employment, public services, benefits, and training.

In practice, this means avoiding long legalistic PDFs, bureaucratic terminology, unexplained eligibility criteria, and fragmented instructions. Materials should answer basic user questions: What is this? Who is it for? What do I need to do? What



documents are required? Where do I submit them? What happens next? Where can I get help?

3. Simplify digital platforms and reduce procedural complexity

Participants repeatedly recommended simpler digital participation platforms. They asked for fewer unnecessary steps, clearer menus, better instructions, more intuitive forms, fewer technical obstacles, and the ability to save progress and return later. In Focus Group 1, participants suggested simple design, compatibility with assistive technologies, clear instructions, and use without unnecessary barriers.

Focus Group 2 participants similarly stressed that platforms should not assume high digital skills, fast typing, stable access to devices, or the ability to complete long procedures in one sitting. The summary of the second focus group identifies accessible forms, flexible timing, mobile and keyboard usability, subtitles, transcripts, and the ability to pause and continue participation without losing progress as key accessibility requirements.

This recommendation is especially relevant for people with mobility disabilities, chronic illness, fatigue, limited digital confidence, or limited access to computers. Digital participation should be designed for real users, not ideal users.

4. Create centralised and visible information channels

Both groups recommended better organisation of information. Participants described current information as scattered, difficult to verify, and often discovered only by chance through friends, family, associations, or social media. Focus Group 2 participants suggested a central point of information where citizens could easily find participation opportunities by category, such as employment, education, local government, disability rights, social policy, and environment.



They also recommended clearer public communication through municipalities, employment services, community centres, libraries, civil society organisations, and local support structures. This would reduce dependence on informal networks and make participation more equal for people who are not already well-connected or digitally confident.

A central participation hub could include current consultations, deadlines, plain-language summaries, participation instructions, accessibility information, privacy information, and follow-up reports on outcomes.

5. Offer practical digital skills training and human support

Participants recommended more practical digital skills training, especially for adults, long-term unemployed people, persons with disabilities, older people, and people with low digital confidence. Focus Group 2 participants argued that training should not be generic; it should teach citizens how to use real public services, employment platforms, consultation tools, digital applications, and online learning systems.

They also stressed that digital participation should not replace all human support. Some citizens need guidance through phone support, chat, email, in-person support points, municipal services, libraries, employment offices, or civil society organisations.

This is important because meaningful digital participation requires more than access to a website. It requires confidence, explanation, troubleshooting, and reassurance. Human support remains essential for those who face administrative, digital, linguistic, disability-related, or socio-economic barriers.

6. Involve persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups in design and testing

A strong recommendation across both focus groups was that platforms, educational materials, and participation processes should be co-designed and tested with the



people who will use them. Participants in Focus Group 1 argued that persons with disabilities and their associations should be involved in the creation and evaluation of educational material because they can identify problems that others may not see. They also stated that platforms should be tested by real users with different disabilities, not simply declared accessible by the responsible institution.

Focus Group 2 made the same point more broadly: vulnerable users should not be treated as passive beneficiaries but should be involved in designing and evaluating training and digital tools.

This recommendation directly supports a participatory design approach. Testing should include people with visual impairments, hearing loss, mobility disabilities, chronic illness, low digital confidence, limited devices, and socio-economic vulnerability.

7. Strengthen accountability, feedback, and response mechanisms

Participants emphasised that participation becomes meaningful only when citizens receive feedback. They recommended clear response deadlines, explanations of decisions, appeal options, complaint mechanisms, and visible reports showing how public input was used.

In Focus Group 2, participants asked for clear response deadlines, clear explanations, appeal options, and mandatory accessibility testing before public digital services are launched. Focus Group 1 participants similarly requested accountability procedures, ways to report problems, and responses to accessibility issues or civic input.

This means that platforms should not only collect input. They should close the participation loop by showing what was received, what was accepted, what was rejected, and why. Without this, participants feel that engagement is symbolic rather than democratic.

8. Improve transparency and trust around personal data

Participants, especially in Focus Group 2, recommended clearer explanations of personal data protection. They wanted platforms to explain in simple language what data is collected, why it is needed, who can access it, how long it is stored, and whether participation is anonymous or linked to identity. The second focus group summary notes that all participants expressed concern about personal data protection and felt that platforms often fail to explain clearly how data is collected, used, accessed, and protected.

This recommendation is particularly important for vulnerable users because participation may involve sensitive information, such as unemployment status, income, disability status, health data, benefits, or accommodation needs. Transparent and understandable privacy communication is therefore necessary for trust.

9. Connect digital participation with real social priorities

Participants also recommended that digital participation should not remain abstract or disconnected from everyday needs. Focus Group 1 participants stressed the importance of employment, accessible urban environments, and the involvement of disability associations in decision-making. Focus Group 2 participants similarly connected participation with employment, training, social support, rights, and practical access to public services.

This means that digital participation platforms should allow citizens to engage with issues that directly affect their lives. For vulnerable groups, meaningful participation is closely linked to access to work, education, social protection, mobility, public services, and local decision-making.

4. Synthesis of Findings and Educational Needs

Discrepancy Analysis: *Do faculty members' perceptions of their training needs align with the actual barriers reported by students and vulnerable groups?*

Faculty members frame their training needs primarily in technical and pedagogical terms: digital skills, legal knowledge, accessibility. Students and the focus group participants (persons with disabilities and disadvantaged backgrounds) confirm these gaps but give greater weight to issues that the CitizenUnited project explicitly targets: low perceived impact of participation, distrust in institutions, weak feedback loops, and inaccessible platforms that, as the proposal warns, risk reproducing or intensifying existing inequalities.

The discrepancy is one of scope. Faculty define what they need to teach; students and vulnerable groups describe what the system fails to deliver. The Faculty Members' Training Package (WP2) must therefore combine competence building with the inclusion and democratic-impact dimensions raised by students and persons with disabilities, in line with the project objective of empowering faculty in public administration and social/political sciences to teach inclusive citizenship.

Needs Analysis: *Summarize the core needs identified for faculty members to enhance their capacity to teach inclusive citizenship.*

Faculty members in public administration and social/political sciences need: (a) knowledge of the national and EU legal framework on digital rights, data protection and accessibility; (b) practical competence in inclusive teaching methods and assistive technologies; (c) familiarity with e-participation tools and the ability to integrate them in coursework; (d) capacity to recognise and address bias,



discrimination and exclusion; and (e) institutional time and recognition to embed inclusive e-participation in their teaching.

These needs map directly to the WP2 Training Package modules, in particular Module 3 “Foundations of Inclusive Citizenship Education”, Module 4 “Innovative Teaching Practices for Inclusivity & Active Citizenship”, Module 6 “E-Participation Tools & Strategies”, and Module 7 “E-Tools for Inclusivity”.

Curricular Recommendations: *Propose specific areas where university curricula should be modernized to better address digital democracy and social/political science gaps.*

Public administration and social/political science curricula should be modernised in five interconnected areas: digital citizenship and digital rights; e-participation tools and digital public governance; inclusive and accessible design; data protection and digital ethics; and the critical analysis of power, representation and exclusion in digital democracy.

Curricula should explicitly connect civic theory with applied digital practice, including EU e-participation case studies and structured student involvement in real consultation processes, in line with the pilot logic of the Students’ Coursework and MOOC (WP3) and the project priority of supporting digital and green capabilities of the higher education sector.



Power Asymmetries: *Evaluate if current educational models address the power structures and "softened borders" required for true inclusiveness in digital participation.*

Current educational models do not adequately address the asymmetries identified by vulnerable participants. Accessibility is treated as a late-stage adjustment, vulnerable groups are absent from curriculum and platform design, and the dominant logic remains top-down. To produce the "softened borders" required for inclusive digital participation, HEIs must embed co-design with persons with disabilities and disadvantaged groups, recognise lived experience as legitimate knowledge, and ensure that civic education openly challenges institutional gatekeeping. This directly serves the priority of building inclusive higher education systems.

Stakeholder-Informed Improvements: *Outline how stakeholder feedback will be used to refine the **CitizenUnited+ Platform** and the **Inclusive Democracy Policy Booklet**.*

Stakeholder and focus group input will steer the CitizenUnited+ Platform (WP4) toward simple navigation, mobile-first design, compatibility with assistive technologies, plain-language content, anonymity options, transparent data protection and visible feedback loops. The findings also validate platform features like the audio/video complaint channel for users with speech, visual or hearing impairments and the virtual-assistant chatbot.

The Inclusive Democracy Policy Booklet (WP2) will be refined to prioritise centralised information channels, mandatory accessibility testing, co-design requirements with vulnerable groups, and accountability mechanisms that connect citizen input to documented institutional response.





5. Strategic Indicators and Contributions

Rate the practical applicability of the data for developing the **Faculty Training Workshop**: High.

Multiplier Potential: *Assess whether the sample can support wider dissemination, policy influence, or institutional uptake.*

The Greek dataset (52 faculty, 80 students, 50 stakeholders, 6 focus group participants) directly identifies the knowledge gaps faculty report and the barriers experienced by students and vulnerable groups, providing concrete input for the faculty training workshop, the webinars and the national multiplier events (WP5). Multiplier potential is strong: the sample is concentrated in public institutions and in Social/Political Sciences and Public Administration, the project's primary target departments.

For the Faculty Training Package and Workshop: *Identify the top 3-5 competency areas where faculty require professional development to teach inclusive e-participation effectively.*

Top competency areas for the Training Package modules:

1. National and EU legal framework on digital rights, data protection and accessibility (Modules 2 and 3).
2. Inclusive pedagogy and accessible course design with assistive technologies, multiple content formats and plain language (Modules 3, 4 and 7).



3. Practical integration of e-participation tools in teaching and assessment (Modules 6 and 8).
4. Awareness and prevention of bias, discrimination and exclusion in digital learning environments (Module 4).
5. Co-design with students and vulnerable groups as a cross-cutting competence, linked to platform testing under WP4.

For the Inclusive Democracy Policy Booklet: *Formulate 2-3 policy recommendations for HEIs and public agencies to improve inclusive citizenship engagement at the national level.*

1. HEIs, especially Public Administration and Social/Political Sciences departments, should adopt accessibility-by-design as a mandatory standard for all digital platforms and educational materials, with co-design and user testing involving persons with disabilities and disadvantaged groups.
2. Public agencies should establish centralised, plain-language information hubs with visible feedback loops that close the participation cycle through acknowledgement, decision and justification.
3. National authorities should require transparent data protection communication and structured accountability mechanisms in every e-participation tool used by public and academic institutions, in line with the priority on common values, civic engagement and participation.



For the Students Coursework and MOOC: *Identify the main student-centred topics, learning needs, and accessibility considerations.*

Core topics: digital rights and the national/EU legal framework; practical use of e-participation tools; accessibility and inclusive design; data protection and privacy literacy; recognition and reporting of discrimination. These align with the WP3 coursework for future public administrators and social/political science graduates.

Learning needs: short modular formats on the MOOC, mobile delivery, interactive and case-based content, plain language, and a clear link between theory and real consultation procedures during the pilot phase.

Accessibility considerations: subtitles and transcripts, screen-reader and keyboard compatibility, multilingual support, anonymous engagement options, and flexible timing for users with disabilities or limited digital confidence.

For the CitizenUnited+ Platform: *List technical features or accessibility standards required by local users.*

1. WCAG-compliant design with screen-reader, keyboard and voice-input support.
2. Mobile-first responsive interface with simplified navigation and minimal authentication steps.
3. Plain-language content in multiple formats (text, audio, subtitled video), including a fully functional audio/video complaint channel for users with speech, visual or hearing impairments, as foreseen in WP4.
4. Forms with progress-saving, flexible timing and multiple input options.



5. Transparent data protection notices and privacy controls, including anonymous participation.
6. Visible feedback loop showing the status and outcome of each submitted contribution, and a virtual-assistant chatbot that guides users through participation procedures.

