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1. Contents

1. Contents.....	2
1. Introduction.....	3
3.1. Individual report of external expert Dimitra Kanellopoulou (POLITOPIA, France)...	6
3.2. Individual report of external expert Thanos Andritsos (CommonSpace, Greece)....	8
5. Annex A: External expert review reports.....	13

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Reviewer list

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List of abbreviations

DEMo4PPL	Digital Education Modules 4 Participatory Planning
ModPPC	Modular Participatory Planning Curriculum

1. Introduction

The purpose of Activity 3.4: “Focus group on ModPPC overall assessement (with external expert contribution)” is the assessment of the appropriateness and relevance of the Modular Participatory Planning Curriculum (ModPPC) and the corresponding Modules, as well as the Digital Toolkit, developed by DEMo4PPL in the context of WP3: “Digital education and training modules” (Activities 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 respectively). The leader of Activity 3.4 is the partner University of Lodz.

More specifically, the Deliverable Report O.17: “ModPPC assessment report” aims to summarize the findings of Activity 3.4 by presenting the process and results of the ModPPC assessment. The report contributes towards the optimisation of ModPPC, educational material and digital tools in view of the pilot implementation of ModPPC in WP4. The assessment is based on the work of two external experts, who reviewed the ModPPC, the Digital Toolkit, and representative educational material and coordinated a Focus Group with the representation of educators, students and practitioners from the partner institutions.

The Deliverable Report is structured as follows: The next section describes the methodology and process of the assessment. Then, the main findings and recommendations of the external experts’ reports are presented, followed by the description of the DEMo4PPL approach to address these recommendations. The external experts’ reports are included in the Annex of the present Deliverable Report.

2. Methodology and process of ModPPC assessment

According to the DEMo4PPL methodology for Activity 3.4, the following steps were implemented:

- a. Recruiting and engagement of external experts,
- b. Provision to the external experts of material for the assessment,
- c. Organisation of an on-line Focus Group on ModPPC assessment,
- d. Conduction of assessment reports by each one of the external experts,
- e. Synthesis of the ModPPC assessment report.

Regarding the recruitment and engagement of external experts, two external experts with extensive knowledge and experience in participatory planning were selected, i.e.: Mrs. Dimitra Kanellopoulou, Architect/engineer, POLITOPIA (France) and Mr. Thanos Andritsos, Architect-Urban and Regional Planner, CommonSpace (Greece). The external experts were contacted by the Activity Leader and the Project Leader. An online meeting was organised among the above to discuss and agree upon the scope, purpose, criteria, guidelines and timeline of the assessment and the external expert contribution. Then, Activity Leader and Project Leader shared with the external experts the ModPPC report, the Digital Toolkit report and representative educational material, i.e. two fully developed Modules. In order to ensure independence, transparency and neutrality of the assessment, it was commonly agreed that the external experts will be

in charge of the methodology and format of both the Focus Group and their individual reports, on the basis of the commonly agreed scope, purpose and criteria.

The invitation and programme of the Focus Group as well as a link to an unimised version of the ModPPC and the Digital Toolkit reports were disseminated by the Activity Leader and the Project Leader, before the planned date of the on-line Focus Group meeting. The Focus Group meeting took place on-line on November 5, 2024 between 4PM and 6PM. A total of 73 educators, practitioners and students, representing the DEMo4PPL main target group, from the four partner countries participated in the event. In the framework of the event, the participants were divided into two virtual rooms (one for educators and practitioners and one for students), with one external expert coordinating the assessment process in each room. A member of the consortium also participated in the meeting as technical support in case of any problems. The main findings from the discussions in each room were discussed in a common session which concluded the Focus Group. In order to better document opinions and assessments in the work with Focus Group participants, Mentimeter and Teams tools were used.

Collecting the feedback from the Focus Group in addition to the the ModPPC report, the Digital Toolkit report and representative educational material provided by the partners, each external expert conducted an individual assessment report. Then, the two reports from the external experts were compiled into the present ModPPC assessment report (O17).

3. Main findings and recommendations of the external experts ' individual reports

The complete individual reports of the external experts are presented in Annex A. The main findings and recommendations of each report for the optimisation of the ModPPC and the Digital Toolkit are presented below.

The two (2) documents titled "Evaluation Report on DEMo4PPL" authored by Dimitra Kanellopoulou and Thanos Andritsos, present an assessment of the Modular Participatory Planning Curriculum (ModPPC) within the framework of the European project "DEMo4PPL - Digital Education Modules 4 Participatory Planning". The reports outline the objectives of the DEMo4PPL initiative, which aims to develop and pilot a modular curriculum for higher education and lifelong learning, supported by a digital toolkit and educational materials.

The evaluation was conducted through a Focus Group held on November 5, 2024, which included discussions with students and external experts. Key findings indicate that the curriculum effectively addresses interdisciplinary cooperation, sustainability, and adaptability in participatory planning education. However, it also highlights areas for improvement, such as the need for clearer explanations of module interconnections and the inclusion of more practical examples.

The evaluation report on the Modular Participatory Planning Curriculum (ModPPC) is structured around nine specific fields of evaluation, each addressing different aspects of the curriculum and the accompanying digital toolkit. Below is an elaboration on these fields as presented in the report:

1. **Overall Assessment**: This field evaluates whether the curriculum and digital toolkit effectively promote interdisciplinary cooperation, particularly in spatial planning and sustainable development. It assesses the curriculum's ability to create flexible learning pathways and its relevance to current educational needs.
2. **Pathways**: This field examines if the curriculum adequately covers four main educational and training dimensions: theoretical background, political/social/ethical implications, participatory methods, and digital participation. The evaluation focuses on the structure and appeal of these dimensions to students.
3. **Coverage**: This field assesses whether the main disciplines included in the ModPPC—such as planning, engineering, development, and management—are sufficiently addressed. It also considers the integration of specific thematic areas and the need for practical examples to enhance understanding.
4. **Modularity**: This field evaluates the curriculum's modular design, determining if it allows for the creation of new targeted courses and supports existing courses through the addition of modules. The focus is on the flexibility and adaptability of the curriculum to various educational contexts.
5. **Flexibility**: This field assesses whether the content and methods of the curriculum and digital tools can support different educational levels, including undergraduate and postgraduate studies, as well as lifelong learning.
6. **Educational Needs and Skills**: This field evaluates how well the curriculum and digital tools address the educational and training needs of various target groups, including undergraduate and postgraduate students, practitioners, and educators. It emphasizes the importance of enhancing digital skills and adapting to contemporary labor market demands.
7. **Learning Outcomes**: This field examines whether the expected learning outcomes can be achieved through the proposed modules and digital toolkit. It also considers the challenges posed by different cultural contexts, particularly in crisis management scenarios.
8. **Overlaps**: This field assesses whether there are any overlaps between the proposed modules and evaluates the clarity of learning outcomes across different educational dimensions.
9. **Digital Transformation - Capacity Building**: This field evaluates the contribution of the curriculum and digital tools to the digital transformation and

capacity building of partner higher education institutions, in line with the identified gaps and needs.

Overall, the evaluation report serves as a comprehensive analysis of the ModPPC, offering insights and recommendations for its optimization and successful implementation in partner institutions.

3.1. Individual report of external expert Dimitra Kanellopoulou (POLITOPIA, France)

The main findings of the evaluation report on the Modular Participatory Planning Curriculum (ModPPC) implemented by expert Dimitra Kanellopoulou, are summarized as follows:

1. **Overall Assessment**: The curriculum and digital toolkit effectively promote interdisciplinary cooperation, particularly in spatial planning and sustainable development. However, there is a need for clearer targeting of thematic modules and better explanations of how they address the diverse needs of specific target groups, such as PhD students and lifelong learners.
2. **Pathways**: The curriculum solidly covers the four main educational dimensions: theoretical background, political/social/ethical implications, participatory methods, and digital participation. Students expressed particular interest in the intersection of political/social implications and digital participation.
3. **Coverage**: The curriculum adequately addresses the main disciplines of Planning, Engineering, Development, and Management. Participants suggested integrating additional sub-domains, such as psychoanalysis and behaviorism, and emphasized the need for more practical examples in thematic modules.
4. **Modularity**: The curriculum's modular design allows for the creation of new targeted courses and supports existing courses. However, some participants expressed uncertainty about the curriculum's customization for various educational levels, suggesting clearer indications of target groups for each module.
5. **Flexibility**: The content and methods described in the curriculum are suitable for supporting undergraduate, postgraduate, and lifelong learning. Specific examples outlining unique requirements for different educational levels would enhance understanding.
6. **Educational Needs and Skills**: The curriculum addresses the educational and training needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students, practitioners, and educators. Suggestions include incorporating hands-on practice and gaming elements to enhance practical training.

7. **Learning Outcomes:** The expected learning outcomes can be achieved through the proposed modules, but challenges related to various cultural contexts, particularly in crisis management, need to be addressed.
8. **Overlaps:** There are no significant overlaps in the curriculum modules, but clarity regarding the distinction of learning outcomes between theory, methods, implications, and digital participation could be improved.
9. **Digital Transformation - Capacity Building:** The curriculum contributes to the digital transformation and capacity building of partner higher education institutions, addressing identified gaps and needs.

The report concludes with several recommendations, including:

- Emphasizing climate change adaptation and mitigation in participatory planning,
- Improving visibility and targeting of modules to better meet specific operational questions,
- Bridging local knowledge with scientific approaches in sustainability,
- Developing qualitative evaluation methods alongside quantitative assessments,
- Integrating crisis-oriented issues into thematic modules to enhance relevance.

These findings collectively highlight the strengths of the ModPPC while identifying areas for improvement to enhance its effectiveness and applicability in participatory planning. In more detail, these suggestions can be summarised as follows:

1. **Climate Change:** The report emphasizes the need for the curriculum to address adaptation and mitigation strategies for climate change. It suggests that while long-term planning is essential, communities often prioritize immediate concerns such as food security and economic sustainability. The report highlights the challenge of reconciling differing stakeholder priorities and recommends clearer explanations of how specific modules, such as the Public Participation in Environmental Impact Assessment (OPT-G7), can address climate change issues during participatory planning processes.
2. **Visibility & Targeting:** The structure of the curriculum is noted to be accessible, but the report suggests enhancing clarity regarding the targeting of modules. It recommends including schematic scenarios that demonstrate how specific module combinations can address operational questions. Additionally, a brief explanation of the logic behind the selection of modules in each section (basic, optional, thematic) would improve understanding of their interconnections and roles.
3. **Sustainable Planning:** The report points out the importance of integrating local, traditional, or indigenous knowledge with scientific approaches in participatory

planning. It suggests specifying how the combination of thematic modules can provide a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability issues, extending beyond mobility to include areas such as food, waste, and energy use.

4. **Evaluation Techniques**: To assess the knowledge acquired through the ModPPC, the report proposes the development of a flexible evaluation framework. It encourages the inclusion of qualitative evaluation methods alongside quantitative approaches, as the final competencies of stakeholders in participatory planning should not be solely based on measurable skills.
5. **Crisis Context**: The report recommends further integration of crisis-related concepts into thematic modules. It suggests delving deeper into issues such as homelessness, job insecurity, urban social exclusion, urban violence, political instability, and post-crisis recovery. This would enhance the curriculum's relevance in addressing contemporary challenges faced by communities.

These suggestions collectively aim to optimize the ModPPC by ensuring it remains relevant, adaptable, and effective in addressing the complexities of participatory planning in various contexts.

3.2. Individual report of external expert Thanos Andritsos (CommonSpace, Greece)

The main findings of the evaluation report on the Modular Participatory Planning Curriculum (ModPPC) implemented by expert Thanos Andritsos, are summarized as follows:

1. **Overall Effectiveness**: The curriculum and digital toolkit are generally effective in addressing the need for interdisciplinary cooperation in spatial planning and sustainable development. However, there is a recognized need for a stronger emphasis on topics such as climate change adaptation, governance, and the application of artificial intelligence in planning.
2. **Pathways**: The curriculum adequately covers the four main educational dimensions: theoretical background, political/social/ethical implications, participatory methods, and digital participation. While the structure is solid, there is room for further development in the political, social, and ethical implications.
3. **Coverage**: The main disciplines of Planning, Engineering, Development, and Management are sufficiently covered. However, the thematic areas of Tourism Management and Rural Development are less developed compared to Land Use and Urban Mobility, indicating a need for greater focus on these areas, alongside climate change.
4. **Modularity and Flexibility**: The curriculum promotes modularity and flexibility, allowing for the design of new targeted courses and the enhancement of existing ones. The presentation of modules is clear, but providing specific

examples of how module selections can meet educational needs would be beneficial.

5. **Educational Needs and Skills:** The curriculum effectively addresses the educational and training needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students, practitioners, and educators. However, there is a strong consensus among participants that hands-on practice in participatory planning projects should be emphasized more.
6. **Learning Outcomes:** The expected learning outcomes are significant and achievable through the proposed modules and digital toolkit. The curriculum provides essential knowledge and skills that are currently underdeveloped in educational programs in Greece.
7. **Overlaps:** There are no obvious overlaps between the proposed modules, but clarity in module content could be improved to avoid potential redundancies. Careful selection and sequencing of modules are necessary to maintain a coherent knowledge framework.
8. **Teaching Methods:** The evaluation highlights a preference for complex and alternative teaching methods, including digital tools, on-site learning, and audiovisual demonstrations. There is a generational difference in the perception of digital tools, with younger individuals taking their use for granted.
9. **General Suggestions:** Key recommendations include a stronger integration of climate change topics, improved visibility and targeting within the curriculum, an emphasis on interdisciplinary perspectives, and the importance of lifelong learning and retraining for both students and educators.

These findings collectively indicate that while the ModPPC is a robust framework for participatory planning education, there are areas for enhancement to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in addressing contemporary educational needs. The evaluation report also includes several suggestions aimed at enhancing the curriculum and its implementation. These suggestions are categorized into specific areas and are detailed as follows:

1. **Climate Change Integration:** The report emphasizes the necessity of integrating climate change topics more robustly into the curriculum. It highlights that adaptation and mitigation strategies for climate change require long-term planning, and communities often prioritize immediate issues such as food security and economic sustainability. The report suggests that reconciling diverse stakeholder priorities can pose challenges in participatory planning processes.
2. **Visibility and Targeting:** The structure of the curriculum is deemed accessible, but the report recommends enhancing clarity regarding the presentation of modules. It suggests including schematic scenarios of module combinations to address specific operational questions. Additionally, a brief explanation of the logic behind the selection of modules for each section (basic, optional, thematic) would improve understanding of their roles and facilitate better targeting of educational needs.

3. **Interdisciplinarity and Variety of Skills:** The report notes that participatory planning is inherently interdisciplinary, connecting to various fields such as spatial planning, governance, and climate change, as well as disciplines like anthropology, psychology, and economics. It suggests that while the curriculum cannot cover every aspect, it could benefit from a stronger emphasis on interdisciplinary perspectives. Furthermore, the report highlights the importance of soft skills—such as collaboration, communication, and community engagement—alongside theoretical and practical skills, which should be acknowledged in the curriculum.
4. **Lifelong Learning and Retraining:** The report underscores the need for continuous retraining and familiarization with new tools and methodologies for both students and educators. It suggests that the curriculum's flexibility and modularity should allow for ongoing updates and modifications to adapt to evolving thematic scopes and educational needs.

These suggestions collectively aim to enhance the relevance, effectiveness, and adaptability of the ModPPC, ensuring that it meets the contemporary challenges and educational requirements in the field of participatory planning.