

Citizen Foresight EU: Inclusion, Sustainability and Participation in dialogue

Future Scenarios for Citizens Driven
Climate Action and Resilience

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Shaping the Future through Citizens Debates



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The booklet was edited and published in the Frame of the CERV-CIV project
CitizenForesightEU - CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV 101147270



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Executive Summary

This deliverable documents how citizens and local stakeholders in Graz co-created future-oriented scenarios for climate action and urban resilience around the **“House of the Future” (HdZ)** — a civic hub that blends meeting, learning, experimentation and circular services to make sustainable living accessible in the city centre. In line with the WP5 concept, the process began with a media signal scan to understand how inner-city transformation, vacancy and sustainability are framed in the local discourse; this scan was carried out by **StadtLABOR** following guidance from IFJ and used to shape the workshop’s narrative and facilitation choices.

On 23 October 2025, the team delivered a **participatory foresight workshop in Graz** that combined four thematic discussion tables and a Futures Wheel exercise. The event drew 81 participants, including 50 women, 28 men and three non-binary participants, with people present **from ten countries:** most from Austria, a smaller group from Germany and Slovenia, and one participant

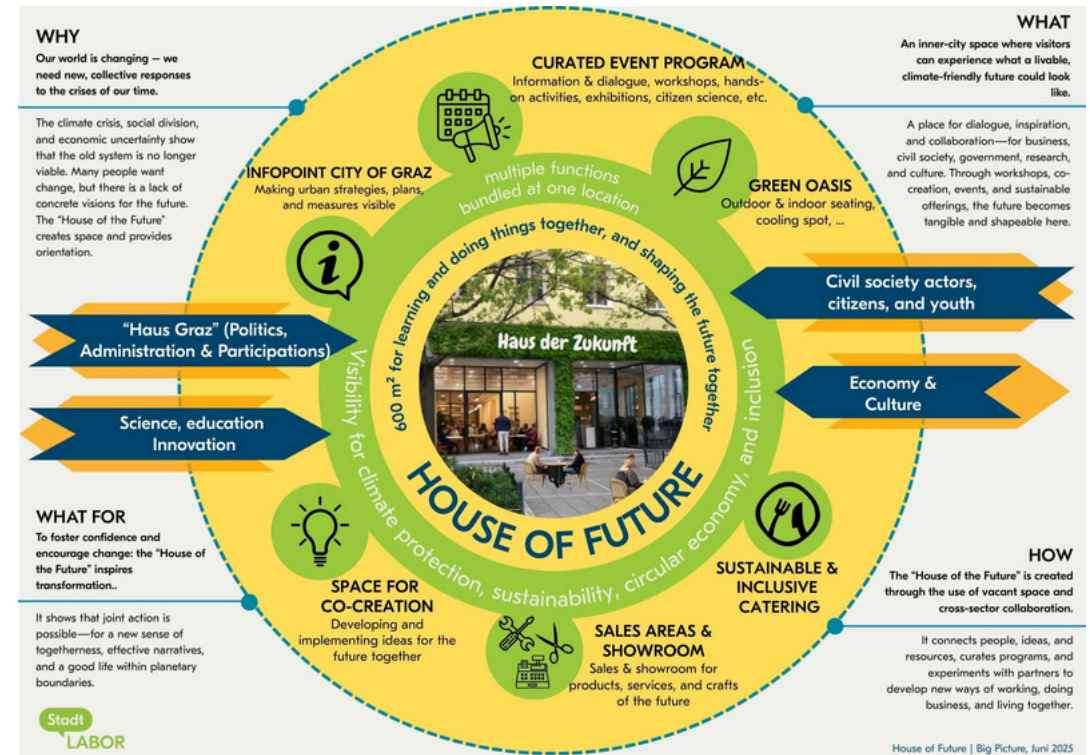
participant each from Spain, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, France, Poland and Croatia.

The stakeholder mix was balanced, bringing together citizens, NGOs, municipal administration, academia, media and business.

Key outcomes include: (1) a validated set of civic functions for the HdZ (third-place qualities; innovation and experimentation; circular consumption services; and an information-to-action hub), (2) a 2035 Futures Wheel articulating first-, second- and third-order effects (social cohesion; entrepreneurial diversification; measurable reductions in resource use; and co-governance), and (3) recommendations focused on cooperative governance, one-stop support, circular services, and impact-aligned communications. The **EU added value** lies in the transferability of the approach, the cross-border participation (ten countries), and alignment with **CERV objectives** to promote democratic participation, inclusive debates and citizen-driven policy inputs.

Introduction

WP5's purpose is to **activate citizen foresight for climate action and resilience** and to convert insights into concrete local pathways. In Graz, this has crystallised around the **House of the Future (HdZ)**: not merely a venue, but an everyday civic operating system for sustainable living — a place to meet (third place), to learn and co-create (innovation driver), to access circular offers (repair, borrowing, swaps, pop-ups), and to move from information to action through a one-stop sustainability and participation hub. This report covers the pre-workshop media signal scan, the design and facilitation, the results and recommendations, consistent with the Description of the Action and CERV reporting requirements.



Pre-Workshop Media Signal Scan

Purpose and scope.

Before engaging citizens, the team examined how Graz's media ecosystem frames inner-city transformation, vacancy and sustainability — topics central to the HdZ concept. The scan aimed to identify **dominant narratives, tones and framings**, so that the workshop could counter resignation and prime constructive engagement. Signals were collected by **StadtLABOR** on the instruction and guidance of IFJ and focused on 2025 coverage by key local/regional outlets with high reach and relevance (e.g., Kleine Zeitung, ORF Steiermark, Der Grazer, MeinBezirk/Woche, as well as alternative voices such as Annenpost).

Method in practice.

Articles were reviewed for headline framing, tone, attribution of responsibility, and problem/solution balance. Particular attention was paid to pieces on inner-city vacancy, a recurring gateway topic for broader sustainability transitions (e.g., circular use of spaces, pop-ups, maker culture, and social infrastructure).

The scan compared how outlets construct the storyline around vacancy and city centre change, noting when coverage amplifies emotion (crisis, blame, nostalgia) versus when it opens possibilities (actionable initiatives, learning, participation).

Core pattern #1 — Competing master-frames.

Two high-level frames were consistently visible:

- A crisis/attribution frame, common in high-reach and boulevard-leaning outlets, where vacancy was portrayed as a symptom of failure, often linked to political decisions (e.g., parking, mobility) and expressed through dramatic headlines and conflict-forward storytelling. This frame can mobilise attention yet risks learned helplessness by casting actors as culprits rather than partners.
- A solution/participation frame, more present in local/alternative media, where vacancy is treated as a design and collaboration problem. These stories showcase initiatives (e.g., testing new concepts, bottom-up activation,

research/municipal partnerships), foreground agency, and invite readers to engage. Such framing lowers entry barriers and complements hands-on civic methods like repair cafés and pop-ups.

Core pattern #2 — Tone and granularity.

The tonality ranged from problem-centric and emotive to analytic and pragmatic. Where outlets reported with study references, actor quotes, or practical next steps, readers were more likely to see their role in the transition. Conversely, highly emotive pieces provided clear urgency but obscured actionable levers, leaving citizens and SMEs with few cues beyond frustration. The scan thus confirmed the need for formats that convert attention into micro-action: e.g., visible demonstrators, “how-to” cards, and on-site municipal help.

Illustrative observations from 2025 coverage.

Across the sampled period, several items exemplified these contrasts: some pieces used dramatic headlines and selective causality, centring on parking policy as the presumed core driver of decline; others responded with balanced,

study-informed narratives that acknowledge complexity and offer concrete avenues (new initiatives, calls to action). Alternative outlets highlighted students and local actors who prototype solutions and reactivate spaces, actively countering fatalism with participatory examples. (These patterns were used internally to calibrate our workshop’s emphasis.)

Implications for WP5 facilitation and messaging.

1.) Start from possibility, not from crisis alone.

The workshop storyline foregrounded doable pathways (repair, borrowing, swaps, pop-ups, “mini-pilots”), providing immediate entry points for citizens and SMEs.

2.) Make policy legible.

People often hear about plans or funding but lack practical “how to” steps; the HdZ’s one-stop desk and best-practice exhibits were positioned to translate policy into action.

3.) Normalise participation as culture.

Communications should routinely show “people like me” acting — not only decision-makers — to reinforce self-efficacy and collective agency.

4.) Reframe vacancy as a resource.

Treat central emptiness as civic capacity (for testing, learning, circular entrepreneurship), connecting city performance to citizen-powered practices rather than pure retail nostalgia.

Risks and mitigation.

The crisis frame remains salient and can dominate public memory. To avoid rebound effects (e.g., “nothing changes”), the HdZ should sequence visible wins: early pop-ups, repair volumes, borrowing activity, and grant-desk assists — all promoted with constructive narratives and face-level stories. In parallel, media briefings can share metrics and citizen quotes so coverage naturally converges on outcomes over time.



Event Overview

The in-person workshop **“Haus der Zukunft – Workshop zum Mitgestalten”** took place on 23 October 2025 at Gösser Bräu, Neutorgasse 48, 8010 Graz (1st floor). After a welcome and framing of objectives and ground rules, a compact vision segment introduced the HdZ concept.

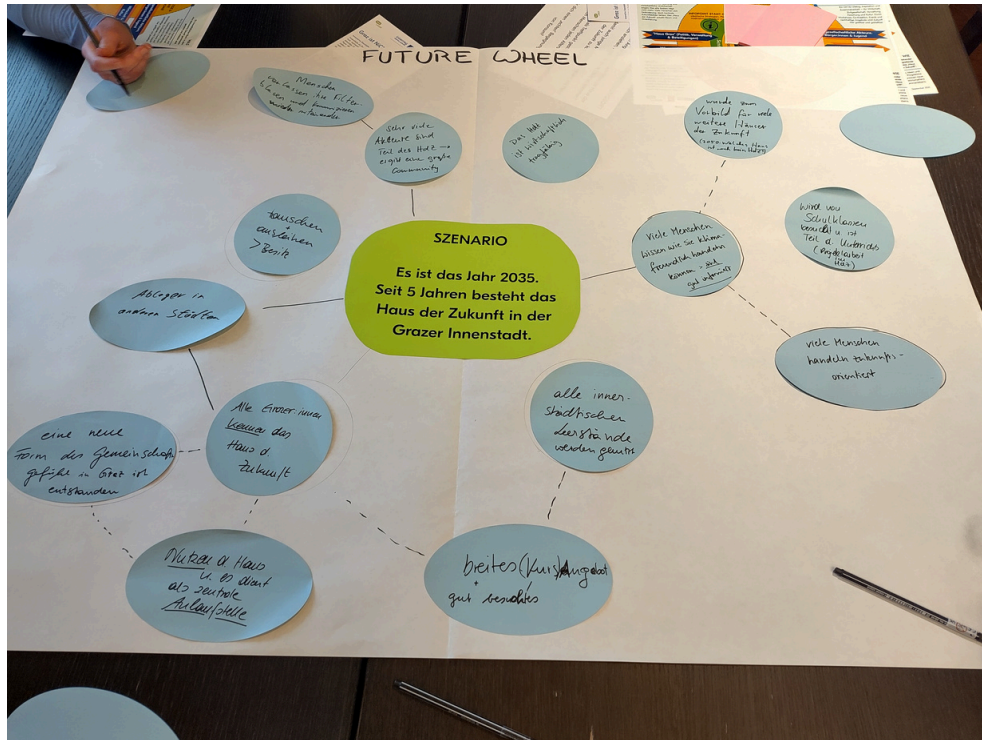
Participants then worked through **thematic discussion tables** (free movement between tables), followed by a plenary synthesis and a **Futures Wheel exercise** exploring Graz in 2035 after five years of HdZ operation. The session closed with next steps and an invitation to stay involved.

Participation was good and diverse, with **81 attendees**: 50 women, 28 men and three non-binary participants. People joined from **ten countries**: the large majority from Austria, a smaller group from Germany and Slovenia, and one participant each from Spain, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, France, Poland and Croatia. The **stakeholder mix** was well balanced, including citizens and community initiatives,

NGOs and CSOs, municipal administration and services, researchers and students, journalists and media, and entrepreneurs and small businesses.



Methodology and Documentation



Participatory foresight design.

The team used accessible methods that invite broad participation and still deliver strategic rigour:

- Thematic discussion tables: the HdZ as social meeting place, innovation driver, home for sustainable consumption and circularity, and central information hub that helps people act. Participants could switch tables to cross-pollinate ideas and avoid silos.
- Futures Wheel: a structured, visual exploration of first-, second- and third-order consequences of a focal change — here: “It is 2035, and the HdZ has operated successfully for five years in the city centre — what happens?”. The exercise connects immediate outputs to systemic effects and supports impact-oriented planning.

Evidence capture. The session was acoustically recorded, a written English summary was produced, and all posters were transcribed so the raw language of participants feeds directly into the results.

Participation- and Outcome-Focused Results

Social meeting place.

Participants articulated a genuinely consumption-free third place: cosy, light-filled and open, with co-working nooks, study corners and club rooms, and inter-generational offerings (language cafés, games, arts & crafts). Outdoors, quick “drop-in” benches and a community garden foster informal exchange; a notice wall invites spontaneous contributions; and extended opening hours, including 24/7 zones, help make the HdZ part of everyday life. The immediate outcome is more frequent, lower-threshold encounters; the longer-term impact is denser social capital and higher participation propensity (people who meet often, act often).

Innovation driver.

The house should tackle concrete challenges — climate, mobility, cohesion — by enabling low-risk experimentation: best-practice demonstrators, maker corners and try-out formats that involve universities, SMEs, the cultural sector and civic groups.

The immediate outcome is visible prototyping and skills activation; the longer-term impact is entrepreneurial diversification and greater attractiveness of the city centre for creative talent and purpose-driven ventures.

Sustainable consumption & circularity.

People asked for repair cafés, a borrowing (“things-library”) service, second-hand and swap events, and pop-ups to test retail and service ideas for a few months. They also favoured local food collection points, regional brands and a cultural layer (micro-events, street music) that keeps the centre lively and makes sustainable choices fun. Nearby delivery hubs and reduced exposure to climate-damaging advertising were proposed as systemic nudges. The immediate outcomes include repair volumes, borrowing activity, pop-up occupancy and footfall uplift; the longer-term impact is lower resource throughput per capita and behavioural normalisation of circular practices.

Information hub — from information to action.

A one-stop place makes grants, services and events legible, with interactive visualisations (e.g., heat-island maps), hands-on tools (e.g., energy-generating benches) and on-site municipal hours to help with applications.

Rotating best-practice exhibits pair each display with a how-to card and local providers. The immediate outcome is conversion (from interest to concrete steps); the longer-term impact is higher adoption of climate-positive measures in households and SMEs.

Futures Wheel — 2035 outlook.

Participants linked the above to city-level change: cohesion grows as the HdZ becomes widely known as a meeting and learning anchor; entrepreneurship pipelines and maker spaces diversify the local economy and increase city-centre frequency; repairing, borrowing and urban farming become routine, cutting resource use and boosting neighbourhood resilience; and co-governance builds trust, with participatory co-design becoming standard practice in urban projects. The Wheel also surfaced education

mainstreaming (school projects hosted at HdZ), mental-health co-benefits, international visibility, and a strong net-zero signal. These are directional signposts that guide programme design and indicator selection.



Cross-Cutting Insights and EU Added Value

From venue to vector.

The HdZ acts as a vector that moves people from awareness to micro-actions — meeting, trying, repairing, borrowing, and applying for support — while embedding participation in everyday routines. This directly serves CERV's aim to promote democratic participation through citizen-driven debates and co-creation.

From crisis narrative to co-production.

By curating constructive frames (see media scan) and staging visible wins, the HdZ can shift local discourse from blame to shared problem-solving, increasing trust and civic agency — a core EU public-value outcome.

EU added value and transferability.

With participants from ten countries, the Graz approach demonstrates how a living-lab-like hub can be replicated and adapted in other EU cities facing similar inner-city transformation challenges. It aligns with WPI's intention to consolidate methods, tools and policy insights

across WPs and to feed a summary report for Europe's future — linking local foresight to European-level learning.



Impact-Oriented Recommendations

Cooperative governance.

Establish a cooperative membership model that includes the city, universities, SMEs, CSOs and citizens, to anchor shared ownership and accountability (from Board to programming).

One-stop sustainability & participation desk.

Offer regular on-site municipal hours for grants, permits and advisory support, ensuring that policy translates into citizen action.

Institutionalise circular services.

Schedule repair cafés, run a borrowing service, and host swap events and circular pop-ups that reward social/environmental value creation.

Entrepreneurship pipelines.

Provide 3–12-month try-out slots with mentoring, light criteria and low overheads, tied to circularity and inclusiveness outcomes.

Information-to-action exhibits.

Pair every exhibit with action cards and local providers (e.g., façade greening, PV benches, cooling measures), so visitors leave with steps they can execute.

Participate-first communications.

Routinely show doers (citizens, SMEs) and publish short wins (repairs, grants assisted, pop-ups launched) to reinforce collective efficacy and counter crisis-only narratives.

Inclusive third-place standards.

Guarantee inter-generational programming, quiet nooks, outdoor garden space and extended opening hours, including 24/7 zones.

Education pathways.

Co-create school projects and university labs in the HdZ to normalise climate literacy and co-creation skills.

System nudges.

Pilot delivery hubs near the HdZ and explore reduced exposure to climate-damaging advertising in the micro-area as behaviourally coherent signals.

Outcome monitoring.

Track participation diversity, repair volumes, borrowing activity, pop-up occupancy, grant-desk assists, footfall, satisfaction and simple CO₂-relevant proxies, and publish regular updates.



Follow-Up and Dissemination

Following the workshop, the complete documentation was sent to all participants. In the same mailing we strongly re-promoted **the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values**, placed the survey link prominently, and urged recipients to complete it as part of the project's reporting and learning cycle - as we did at the end of the Workshop as well.

During the event we had set up a dedicated **“Networking for Action”** corner (also referred to as “Ressourcen- und Vernetzungsradar”). At this station, participants who wanted to actively continue working on the House of the Future (HdZ) left their contact details and specified where exactly their interest or expertise lies and which resources they could contribute. After the workshop we consolidated these contacts, documented the stated interests and skills, and stored them for project follow-up in line with consent collected on site.

Building on this list, we initiated targeted follow-ups and will continue to involve these individuals in next HdZ steps (e.g., co-design sessions, feasibility work, pilot activities and task-specific working groups).

All dissemination outputs already issued carried the EU emblem and the funding statement in line with the Grant Agreement.



Conclusion (Impact-Emphasis)

The **Graz process** demonstrates how a **citizen-centred hub** can function as a multiplier for climate action and resilience when it blends third-place qualities, learning and experimentation, circular services and a clear “information-to-action” pathway. The 2035 Futures Wheel points to systemic co-benefits — stronger social cohesion, diversified local economy, improved wellbeing and higher democratic participation — alongside environmental gains. With co-governance, visible early wins and participatory communications, the **House of the Future can become a credible lighthouse in Graz** and a replicable model for European cities seeking to turn climate ambition into everyday practice.

The Enduring Value of Citizens Foresight

Finally, the focus returns to the overarching mission of the Citizens Foresight project. The true value of the Graz workshop lies not just in the blueprint for the "House of the Future," **but in the process itself.** It built social capital, fostered a sense of collective agency, and demonstrated a powerful, replicable methodology by which communities can move from being passive recipients of the future to its active designers. **Such citizen-driven foresight is essential for strengthening democratic participation and creating resilient, desirable futures across Europe.**

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