

Strategic partnership funded by Interreg Baltic Sea Region
Programme
Project: “Empowering Participatory Budgeting in the Baltic Sea
Region – EmPaci”

Status Quo Analysis

Full Report of Bielsko-Biala / Poland only

**Author: Agencja Rozwoju Regionalnego SA (Regional Development Agency SA)
Bielsko-Biała**



EUROPEAN
REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
FUND

EmPaci

Agencja Rozwoju Regionalnego SA Bielsko-Biała

Status: Finalized as of March 2020

Responsible for the content solely publisher/presenter; it does not reflect the views of the European Commission or any related financial body. Those institutions do not bear responsibility for the information set out in the material.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

This is the full report of one pilot municipality **Bielsko-Biala / Poland** as of March 2020. Since in Bielsko-Biala / Poland several editions of PB processes have been implemented, the detailed report is published separately.

The entire status quo report of all project pilot municipalities can be found in a separate document.

Contents

Bielsko-Biala/Poland	3
10. General description of the pilot municipality	3
11. Definition of citizenship in the pilot municipality	5
12. Status quo of citizen participation (CP) in the pilot municipality in general	5
13. By which means does the administration usually interact with citizens?	7
14. By which means does/do the local council or local politicians usually interact with citizens?	8
15. Definition of participatory budgeting (PB) in the pilot municipality	9
16. Status quo of participatory budgeting (PB) in the pilot municipality (if applicable)	10
Participatory budget in 2014 – 1 st edition	10
Participatory budget in 2015 – 2 nd edition	12
Participatory budget in 2016 – 3 rd edition	16
Participatory budget in 2017 – 4 th edition	19
Participatory budget in 2018 – 5 th edition	22
Participatory budget in 2019 – 6 th edition	26
Participatory budget in 2020 – 7 th edition	29
17. What could be hindrances of the use of participatory budgeting (PB) in the pilot municipality?	36
18. What is important to be considered when designing participatory budgeting (PB) in the pilot municipality?	37

Bielsko-Biała/Poland

10. General description of the pilot municipality

Bielsko-Biała is a city with district rights located in the southern part of the Silesian Voivodship on the Biała River. Within the administrative borders of the city there are upland areas (Pogórze Śląskie) and mountain areas (Beskid Śląski, Beskid Mały). The city is located on the border of historical regions: Śląski Cieszyn (left-bank part – 57,9% of the area) and Cracov's land (right-bank part – 42,1% of the area). The total area is 124,51 km², which places Bielsko-Biała at 19th place in Poland among cities.

Bielsko-Biała fulfills the main administrative, industrial, commercial and service, academic, cultural and tourist center function of the southern border of the Silesian-Małopolska region, including the following districts: Bielsko-Biała, Bielsko, Cieszyn and Żywiec.

At the end of 2018 the population of Bielsko-Biała amounted to 171 259 people, with a population density of 1,375 people/km². Almost 53% of the total population are women, which gives the number of 90 337 people (data at the end of 2018).¹

At the end of 2018, nearly 1/4 of the population of Bielsko-Biała was included in the post-working age group, and less than 15% people did not reach the age of 15, which is the lower limit of the productive age. In working age (with different retirement threshold for women and men) there were over 100 000 residents, which constituted over 60% of the total.

Table 1. Population of Bielsko-Biała with a division into functional age groups ².

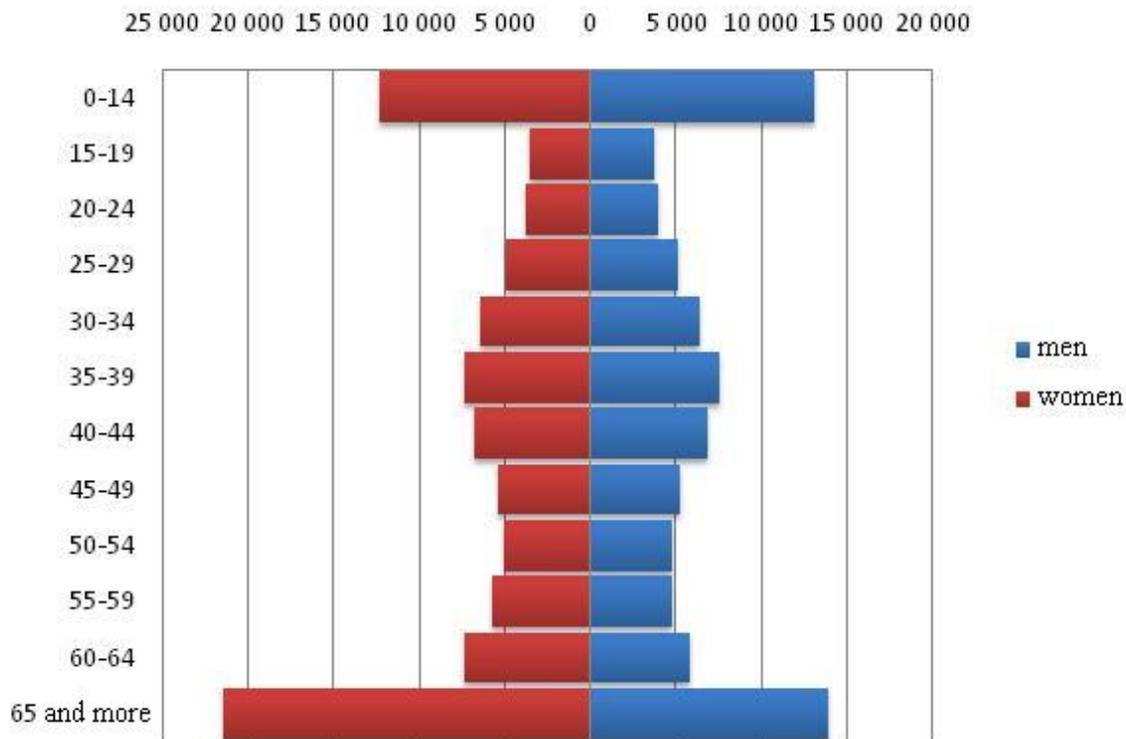
In pre-working age (age of 14 and less)	25 347	14,8%
In working age (age of 15-59 for woman, and 15-64 for men)	103 233	60,3%
In post-working age	42 679	24,9%
Total	171 259	100%

Chart 2. Population of Bielsko-Biała with the division into age groups ³.

¹ Central Statistical Office, Local Data Bank; state at the end of 2018.

² Statistical Central Office, Local Data Bank; state at the end of 2018.

³ Statistical Central Office, Local Data Bank; state at the end of 2018.



At the end of 2018 the unemployment rate in Bielsko-Biała was 2,1% (for men in working age 1,7% and for women 2,4%)⁴. The largest group of the unemployed were people with lower secondary and lower education (23,2% of the total unemployed) and people with higher education (23%). A large group of unemployed people were also people with basic vocational education (22,1%) and post-secondary and secondary vocational education (21,2%). With the lowest account of 10,5%⁵ were inhabitants with general secondary education.

Bielsko-Biała commune carries out tasks through its organs: the City Council as a constitutive and controlling body, and the Mayor as an executive body. To assist in the implementation of statutory tasks, the President appointed 3 Deputies (data for the end of the first half of 2019). On behalf of the President the City Treasurer manages the budget and financial management. The City Council consists of 25 councilors elected in the general election by the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała. In the 2019-2024 term, there are 4 Councilors' Clubs: Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (9 councilors), Platforma Obywatelska (7 councilors), KWW Jacka Krywulca (4 councilors), Niezależni.BB (4 councilors) and 1 non-member councilor (condition for the end of the first half of 2019). The Council's work is directed by the President and 3 Vice-Presidents. The city is divided into 30 settlements constituting ancillary units of the commune, in which there are the 15-person Council of Settlements delegated in the general (public) elections (in the term of 2019-2024, there are 29 Councils).

Total revenues in 2018 amounted to 1 069,4 million PLN, and the commune and district revenues amounted to 622,4 million PLN. More than PLN 1 101,4 million was spent during the year, of which PLN 905,8 million for current expenses and 195,6 million PLN for property expenses. Bielsko-Biała budget

⁴ Statistical Central Office, Local Data Bank.

⁵Report on the state of the city of Bielsko-Biała for 2018, [Bielsko-Biała], [May 2019], p. 16-17.

implementation balance at 31 December 2018 on the side of assets and liabilities showed the sum of 40,5 million PLN, and the total balance including data resulting from the balance sheets of budgetary units and self-government budgetary establishments –2 275 million PLN. The total profit and loss account for the financial year for these entities showed a profit in the amount of 259 million PLN, and the total statement changes in the fund of these entities increased by 90 million PLN. The city's debt at the end of 2018 amounted to 102,2 million PLN, which was 9,6% of completed budget revenues.⁶

11. Definition of citizenship in the pilot municipality

In accordance with Electoral Code from 5 of January 2011⁷, the effective electoral law, i.e. the right to vote, in the elections to the organs constituting local government units (The City Council in case of Bielsko-Biała) has a Polish citizen and a citizen of the European Union not being a Polish citizen, who is 18 years old at the latest on the voting day and who is permanently residing in the area of Bielsko-Biała. All citizens fulfilling the conditions of participating in the elections to the City Council have an active electoral right in the elections of the President of the City. There is no obligation in Polish legislation to participate in elections and referendums at the national and local level. In accordance with Electoral Code, persons do not have the right to vote if they have been deprived of public rights by court decision, deprived of electoral rights by a decision of the State Tribunal, as well as legally incapacitated by a court decision.

12. Status quo of citizen participation (CP) in the pilot municipality in general

For efficient relations with residents, the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała uses the fact, that the citizens use the digital way of communication. This form of interaction allows efficient and two-way information exchange between citizens and local government administration.

Those activities are implemented by:

- public consultations,
- zgloszeniabb.pl platform,
- zapytajprezydentabb.pl platform,
- plebiscite of Bielsko Cultural Center.

The procedure of public consultations conducted on the basis of Art. 5a of the Act from 8 of March 1990 about self-government municipal⁸ in the area of Bielsko-Biała concerns causes provided in the law and other causes important to the city. Local government administration uses public consultations to obtain opinions from residents. Topics discussed in consultation concerns many areas – in Bielsko-Biała they concern, among others: legal and regulatory changes, adopting and changing statutes of organizational and ancillary units of the city, changes and adopting planning documents, urban programs regarding social and investment policy, public life organizational changes, entering fees and subsidies, naming streets, squares, public spaces, and other activities which needs the acceptance from residents.

Bielsko-Biała uses two types of public consultations:

1. Consultations conducted on the basis of the Resolution No. LIX/1371/2010 of the City Council in Bielsko-Biała from 31 August 2010 regarding the method of consulting with local public benefit organizations projects of local law in the areas related to the statutory activities of these

⁶Financial report of the City of Bielsko-Biała for 2018 along with the report of the certified auditor, Bielsko-Biała, May 2019, p. 1; Report ..., op. cit., pp. 20-21.

⁷The Act of 5 of January 2011, Election Code (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 754, item 1000 and 1349 and of 2019 item 273), art. 10.

⁸(Journal of Laws from 2019, item 506)

organizations⁹. The subject of consultations are local legal acts in the areas related to the statutory activities of non-governmental organizations and organizations conducting public benefit activities operating in Bielsko-Biała and projects of annual or long-term cooperation programs of the city with such organizations.

Information about consultations is published in the Public Information Biuletyn (BIP) and on the City Council's notice board. Resolution provides 4 forms of consultations:

- open consultation meetings with mentioned organizations,
 - surveys,
 - online consultations,
 - submitting opinions and comments to special prepared boxes placed in designated places.
2. Consultations conducted on the basis of Resolution No. V/60/2007 from 20 of February 2007 of the City Council in Bielsko-Biała on defining the procedure and rules for conducting consultations with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała (Journal of Laws of the Silesian Voivodeship of 2007 No. 54, item 1176). In this procedure, the residents of Bielsko-Biała are informed about the form of consultations by posting on the website of the Municipal Office, on Local Government Magazine "in Bielsko-Biała," on the notice board in the Municipal Office and by posting on the area covered by the consultation.

Consultations with their territorial scope cover the whole area of the city or local, when the matter concerns only residents of a given area. All residents of Bielsko-Biała may participate in the consultations or if the subject of consultations concerns only a given housing estate, its inhabitants. The resolution also provides for consultation in a selected group of city residents, if the matter is limited to this group only. Persons residing in Bielsko-Biała and having an active electoral right are entitled to participate in the consultations.

Besides the of 4 forms of consultation provided for organizations conducting public benefit activities, the resolution also provides for consultation lists containing a question as well as closed and open variants of responses. In practice, consultations are usually carried out in the form of online consultations (e-consultations) using the form on the website of the Municipal Office (www.um.bielsko.pl) and in the traditional way – in writing. The completed document is sent to the indicated e-mail address or provided to the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała.

A particular form of public consultation is the Participatory Budget procedure, implemented in Bielsko-Biała every year since 2014. A detailed description of its functioning is described later in this study.

In recent years, the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała launched two innovative services, significantly increasing the level of interaction and facilitating the contact between the local government administration and the city residents. On 1 February 2018, an interventionist electronic system for residents was launched – it was called ZgłoszeniaBB. System and allows for reporting comments, problems and failures regarding irregularities in the functioning of infrastructure elements in public space. The platform is available on the website www.zgloszeniabb.pl or through the free mobile application ZgłoszeniaBB. Registered notifications are verified and submitted for implementation by specific Departments of the Municipal Office and municipal organizational units. The list of notifications is published on a public map with a specification of the status of implementation. Residents who have made notifications receive up-to-date information about the implementation of their notifications. An additional functionality of the system is the possibility of transmitting important messages and

⁹ (Official Journal of the Silesian Voivodeship., 312010, No. 220, item 3186)

notifications about the city via this channel – mainly meteorological warnings and information about sports and cultural events.

Since the launch of the ZgłoszeniaBB system until 26 June 2019, a total of 6 545 interventions have been registered. Over 61% of the notifications were registered using the website, and nearly 39% by using dedicated mobile application.¹⁰

More than a half (51 %) of the reported problems have been resolved, 37% were considered as closed or rejected, i.e. those for which there was no possibility to intervene (i.e. non-compliance with the regulations, private area, duplicate notification, etc.). The percentage of newly submitted or ongoing notifications was 12%.¹¹

Exactly one year after the launch of the portal zgloszeniabb.pl, a new functionality was added. The functionality allows to ask questions to the President of the City of Bielsko-Biała. This service has been provided for registered users of the zgloszeniabb.pl platform and is also available on the webpage zapytajprezydentabb.pl. The system provides for the possibility for resident to directly ask question to the Mayor of the City of Bielsko-Biała. In some cases, the answer to the questions is substantively prepared by a specific department of the Municipal Office, and then forwarded to the President of the City for approval. The platform facilitates communication in a significant way on the line of residents - self-government authority. Using the platform, residents have the possibility to pay local governments attention to matters relevant to local communities. The system provides an opportunity to familiarize the local administration with the problems and social attitudes of the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała. The platform allows also to submit ideas and suggestions regarding the city's investment policy, its development and the distribution of public funds. The interaction of the system is largely due to the fact that every resident who directs a query to the Mayor receives a response from a representative of the local government. Since the launch of the system zapytajprezydentabb.pl until 26 June 2019 a total number of 267 questions have been sent.

A specific form of interaction by the municipal organizational unit with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała is the annual plebiscite run by the Bielsko-Biała Cultural Centrum (BCK), in which selection the artists to appear in Bielsko-Biała in the year following are chosen. The plebiscite is taken in three rounds. In the first stage, residents are submitting proposals of performers whose performance they are interested in. The condition is to submit proposals of Polish artists or those artists who are related to Poland. There are no restrictions related to music genre or popularity. Residents can submit their proposals by e-mail or by the BCK's Facebook profile. The second stage consists of voting by residents for maximum three artists from the list created on the basis of previous phase. The last phase of the plebiscite consists in voting and the selection of three artists from the short list, from which those artists who did not get a minimum of 10 votes in the second stage will be crossed out. In the plebiscite conducted in 2018, the residents of Bielsko-Biała submitted over 300 proposals of performers, and in the last stage of the vote deciding about the invitation of specific artists to Bielsko-Biała, a selection was made from 58 artists.

13. By which means does the administration usually interact with citizens?

In addition to commercial and private media, in Bielsko-Biała are also published magazines financed by the Bielsko-Biała Local Government – Magazine called „In Bielsko-Biała” (in the formula of biweekly and quarterly) and Bielsko Magazine News „Full Culture” (in the monthly formula). Both magazines are distributed free of charge in more than one hundred places located in Bielsko-Biała. „In Bielsko-Biała” is a magazine informing mainly about the activities of the Mayor, resolutions of the City Council, planned

¹⁰ Team for Information Society, IT Department, Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała

¹¹ Team for Information Society, IT Department, Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała

investments and ongoing investments in the city. On the pages of the magazine, there are also published announcements of the Municipal Office regarding, among others disposal of urban areas, presentation of spatial development plans, public consultations, etc. The „Full Culture” magazine is an information magazine, grouping information on broadly defined cultural events taking place in the city, organized both by local government and private entities. Due to their copies of copies (10 000-15 000 copies), both journals are one of the main official sources of information for the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała.

City Hall additionally, through an external company, performs a weekly "Television City Hall Magazine", which is broadcast in a commercial local station (Regional TV) and on the official city YouTube channel

On the basis of cooperation with a private broadcaster – Radio Bielsko, weekly interviews with representatives of the city authorities are broadcasted in the series called „Guest of the Day” (the most frequent guest in the program is the Mayor of the City, less frequently members of the City Council). During the recording, the most important information about the activities of the Municipal Office and the City Council as well as cultural events taking place in the city are transferred.

The fastest form of contact on the line local government – inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała are electronic channels, edited directly by the press service of the Municipal Office. The basic channel is the official website of Bielsko-Biała (Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała) – ww.um.bielsko.pl. Every day, at least 1–4 new messages are published there. This information is about cultural events in the city, investments carried out, activities of the Mayor of the City, sessions of the City Council and other events important for the residents of the city. In emergency situations via the website, key information about emergency states, threats and meteorological warnings are also transmitted. Official website is also used by other local media, which on the basis of news and photos placed on the official website of the Municipal Office create their own press materials. A large part of the official texts from the website www.um.bielsko.pl is then reproduced by websites and local newspapers, thus expanding the group of recipients to which official messages and information prepared by the press services of the Municipal Office reach.

The official profile of Bielsko-Biała on Facebook – [@bielskobiala.profiloficjalny](https://www.facebook.com/bielskobiala.profiloficjalny) is the complement and strengthening of online communication with residents. This medium allows messages to be directed communicate to young people who use less „traditional” local media. The content of the information published there concerns a similar theme as the news published on the website, however, it is usually supplemented with additional graphic, photo or film materials.

Since 2017, in Bielsko-Biała there is a System for Notifying Residents (SPM), which allows the local administration to send registered persons SMS and e-mail, about among others the upcoming dates of local fees (eg garbage collection, real estate tax), as well as important messages from the city life (eg cultural and sports information, reminders about events related to participatory democracy – lectures to housing councils, participatory budget).

14. By which means does/do the local council or local politicians usually interact with citizens?

Contacts of councilors and representatives of local government (mainly the city authorities in the persons of the President and his deputies, as well as managers / directors of municipal organizational units and heads of departments of the Municipal Office) with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała is carried out in multi-channel, including using modern information technologies.

A less frequently used form of contact on the line council – inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała are the duties of councilors. This way of maintaining direct contact between councilors and inhabitants does not take place according to predetermined schedules, it is not even a mandatory form enforced by law, city statute or internal rules. Meetings have an ad hoc dimension. Usually, representatives of the City Council meet

individually with residents or specific interest groups in order to conduct a local vision, accept postulates or read opinions. The location of such meetings is not pre-determined. Councilors do not have separate premises dedicated for these purposes. Meetings are usually held in at the residents' meetings, at the premises of the Councils of Settlements or at the City Hall's premises designated for this purpose.

The basic and most common channel of contact with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała is the local press (in broad terms, i.e. in the form of radio, television, newspapers and Internet). Cooperation with local journalists is initiated by the editorial office, by the press services of the Municipal Office or specific councilors.

In Bielsko-Biała there are primarily the following commercial local media:

- radio: Radio Bielsko,
- local television: TV Regionalna,
- newspapers (printed version): Kronika Beskidzka, Kurier.BB, Dziennik Zachodni,
- Internet portals: bielsko.biala.pl, bielsko.info, bbfan.pl, bb365.info.

The specificity of local media makes that they become a significant channel of communication between the local government and the inhabitants. This mediation is used by both parties. By filling the main, informative role, the local press becomes an intermediary in transferring important messages about the functioning of the city to residents of Bielsko-Biała (eg reports from the City Council sessions), investments carried out (eg information on traffic problems), important events (eg cultural events) or incentives for residents to participate in local democratic processes (participatory budget, elections to the Councils of Settlements, public consultations). On the other hand, local media play an intervening role consisting in publishing articles and reports on local problems reported by residents. Usually, contact with the press and a request to intervene with the councilor are the first attempts to solve the problem reported by the residents. Thanks to the local media, the city gains an additional source of knowledge about the needs and problems of the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała.

15. Definition of participatory budgeting (PB) in the pilot municipality

Local government authorities elected in general elections, encourage greater involvement of residents in local government issues by creating appropriate organizational and legal conditions as well as tools for implementing the participatory budget procedure. The participatory budget in Poland was introduced relatively late, in 2011. In 2013, the city of Bielsko-Biała joined the implementation of the participatory budget for the first time. It can happen thanks to the councilors of the Bielsko-Biała City Council, who put forward an initiative to create such a budget as a form of social consultations. To do this end, a special team composed of councilors was established. The team were headed by the vice-president of the City Council, Jarosław Klimaszewski. After several months of discussions and meetings with representatives of city auxiliary units, non-governmental organizations and residents, the principles of the participatory budget was created (this principles was put in Resolution No. XXXV/845/2013 of the City Council in Bielsko-Biała – Resolution No. XXXV/845/2013 regarding principles and procedures for social consultations with Bielsko-Biała inhabitants on the budget of the city of Bielsko-Biała for 2014). It was the first legal act regulating the problem of participatory budget in Bielsko-Biała. So far, the City Council decided on the purpose for which the funds from the city budget should be allocated, by adopting appropriate resolutions at the sessions. In 2014, for the first time, part of the expenditure budget of the city of Bielsko-Biała was directed to the implementation of projects that were directly reported by the city residents. The adopted Resolution provided the residents with 2 million zlotys (ca. 500 000,00 EUR) for which projects of local or supra-local Bielsko-Biała were implemented. Local government authorities have

gained the opportunity to learn the priorities and expectations of residents in the spending of public funds, and in the first, historical vote, over 28 000 valid votes were cast.

This analysis of the status quo is a discussion of all previous editions of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget as an instrument allowing co-deciding residents about the way of spending public funds. The analysis discusses seven editions of the participatory budget, starting with the edition initiated by the Resolution of 2013.

It should be emphasized that the participatory budget procedure includes two basic stages. In the first stage, projects are selected in the voting process and after that they are entered into the budget of the local government unit for the following year. The second stage includes the implementation of selected projects in accordance with the adopted city budget. For this reason, the name of a given edition of the participatory budget will be determined by the year in which the selected tasks are implemented. In addition, the legal considerations for the implementation of the Participatory Budget of individual editions have been taken into account and described in the analysis. The participants of the participatory process, the number of projects submitted in each edition, the directions of spending public funds, the adopted forms of voting on the proposed tasks, as well as problems accompanying the procedure itself were also discussed. Both the rules governing the participatory budget as well as the voting rights have changed over the course of the edition. The nature of the projects submitted and the amount of funds allocated by the city authorities to the entire participatory budget also changed. Also the maximum amounts for project proposals submitted by residents evaluated. It should be emphasized that from the very beginning the Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała was aimed at disseminating the idea of activating residents, including the development of civil society. Thanks to this type of consultations, the city was given the opportunity to familiarize oneself with the residents' expectations on an annual basis, as well as to gain the ability to raise their abilities in organizing social discourse.

16. Status quo of participatory budgeting (PB) in the pilot municipality (if applicable)

Participatory budget in 2014 – 1st edition

The first edition of the participatory budget of Bielsko-Biała was based on experience and organizational and legal solutions developed and implemented by other cities in Poland (Sopot, Poznań, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Zielona Góra, Dąbrowa Górnicza). The first edition created the foundations for preparing and introducing new, better solutions, taking into account the expectations of the participants of the participatory process. The Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała, implemented in 2014, was a kind of pilot project. For this reason, the city authorities carried out a wide informational campaign addressed to residents. The assumption of the campaign was to provide full information on the participatory budget, including in particular how to submit projects and vote on them.

On 9 October 2013, the City Council of Bielsko-Biała adopted Resolution No. XXXV/845/2013 on the principles and procedure for conducting public consultations with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała on the budget of the city of Bielsko-Biała for 2014. The text of the adopted Resolution includes all comments that the supervision authority made to the original draft from August 2013 (Voivode of Silesia). The resolution regarding the Citizens' Budget for 2014 entered into force on the day of its adoption.

In the amended Resolution observations of the supervisory authority were carried out, giving up the possibility of submitting projects to the budget by: non-governmental organizations, public benefit organizations and bodies constituting auxiliary units of the commune. Projects of tasks for the Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała of the first edition could be submitted only by the city residents. This above mentioned principle invariably applied in all editions.

Inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała submit ideas for tasks, and the most interesting of them are chosen for implementation by voting. In the budget of the city of Bielsko-Biała for 2014 for the implementation of tasks submitted to the participatory budget - in accordance with the adopted Resolution – PLN 2 million (ca. EUR 500 000,00) was allocated. According to the adopted rules, every adult (18 years old) resident of Bielsko-Biała, who received written support from at least 20 adult citizens of Bielsko-Biała, could submit a project on the form provided for this purpose. The application form could be a) sent to address of the City Office address, b) submitted personally at the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała or c) sent electronically to the address and in the manner indicated in the announcement of the City Mayor . Both local projects (for a specific residential) and city-wide projects (concerning more than one residential) were submitted. The projects could have an investment character (eg construction of a pavement, playground, outdoor gym, bicycle path, etc.) as well as non-investment (eg training, research, workshops, concerts, etc.). In each case, the applicant was required to determine the estimated cost claimed task suggestions. The maximum estimated amount of an individual task could not exceed PLN 2 million.

In the first edition, 171 projects were submitted. **108 of them were positively verified** – what is mean they obtained the recommendation of the project verification team and were put to the vote. In terms of the number of projects submitted, this was a special edition. This result was not repeated in the next six editions of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget. All projects submitted by the residents were posted on the official website of the Bielska-Biała Participatory Budget at www.obywatelskibb.pl. These projects have been subject to formal verification (checking whether the application form contains all the required elements), and then they were subjected to substantive opinion procedure by relevant departments of the Municipal Office and municipal organizational units. The verification was carried out from the legal point of view, the technical feasibility of the task and the verification of the amount estimated by the applicant, necessary to carry out the task. The final verification of the projects was carried out by a verification team appointed by the President of the City of Bielsko-Biała, composed of representatives of the Municipal Office, city councilors and representatives of housing councils. The verification team took into account or rejected the opinion of the Municipal Department, and then recommended or refused recommendations to individual projects submitted by residents, justifying their position. On this basis, a list of all submitted projects with a justification was prepared. This list was made public so that the residents of Bielsko-Biała could get acquainted with the content of the projects and the opinion of the verification team. City Hall announced the list of projects scheduled for voting and provided the date of voting for positively verified projects. The first vote in the history of Bielsko-Biała on the participatory budget lasted five days. Everyone entitled to vote, an adult resident of Bielsko-Biała received 10 points, which one could distributed in whole for one project or divide it among a larger number of projects. The results of the voting were made public on the official website of the Participatory Budget, the official website of the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała, the Bulletin of Public Information, and posted on the City Hall's information boards.

In accordance with the President's order regarding the implementation of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget in 2014, from 7 to 11 April 2014 voting on the projects approved by the verification team was carried out. 28 481 eligible residents participated in the vote, ie 20,6% of those entitled. The amount of nearly 280 000 points distributed has fed into 108 eligible projects. Almost 2/3 of the valid votes were cast via the Internet (63%), 1/3 of votes were handed over directly – through voting cards (36%), individual votes were sent to the Municipal Office by post. For each project, the points awarded by the voters were counted and a table of results was created on this basis. On the basis of the points awarded, a ranking of projects was created, and on the basis of the ranking, funds were allocated from a total amount of PLN 2 million necessary for the implementation of projects in the order from the project that received the highest number of points. In the case where there was not enough funds for the implementation of

another project on the list, the next one, which was to be realized in the amount remaining at the disposal, was considered recommended for implementation. These principles were generally applicable in subsequent editions of the citizens' budget.

Thus, after counting all the valid votes, the projects recommended for implementation were:

Continuation of construction of a stationary Hospice named after John Paul II in Bielsko-Biała – estimated amount PLN 1 904 900,00.

24-hour veterinary care for animals – estimated amount PLN 42 000,00,

Purchase of equipment for the technical facilities of the Starobielskie Cultural Education Center (SOEK), and creation of a district social information system – estimated amount PLN 43 000,00

The largest number of voters in the first edition of the Participatory Budget were people in age between 30 and 44 – 29,95% of voters (8 531 people). Among those entitled to vote, the majority were women – 56,86% of voters (16 193 people), men – 43,14% of voters (12 288 people). Analysis of the first edition also provided interesting statistical information. The Participatory Budget website was visited by Internet users from all European countries, as well as from Japan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, United Emirates and Nepal. Participatory Budget website was visited (statistically) by every seventh resident of the city of Bielsko-Biała. About 80% of those entitled to vote gave all 10 points of support for one project. The latter information as well as the fact that one large project consumed almost the entire amount of funds foreseen for the participatory budget of the first edition gave the basis for a lively discussion on the necessary changes in the rules and functioning of the participatory budget of the next editions.

Participatory budget in 2015 – 2nd edition

The second edition of the Participatory Budget was held in accordance with Resolution No. XLIII/1024/2014 of the City Council in Bielsko-Biała of 24 June 2014 on the principles and procedure for conducting public consultations with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała on the budget of the city of Bielsko-Biała for 2015 year. The resolution has redefined the rules and mode of social consultations with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała regarding the city's budget for 2015. This act took into account the demands and remarks of the residents submitted during the first edition. Residents reported their proposals for changes both by e-mail, post and during personal conversations with representatives of the city authorities. Representatives of non-governmental organizations also spoke on this subject. Perceived imperfections consisting mainly in the distribution of funds provided for the participatory budget. In connection with the above, some minor changes were introduced in the rules regarding the functioning of the Participatory Budget for 2015.

The second edition of the participatory budget of Bielsko-Biała amounted to PLN 3 750 000,00 with the total financial resources was allocated according to the following rules:

- the amount of PLN 1 500 000,00 has been allocated for city-wide projects. The city-wide project was defined as a project whose estimated cost of implementation does not exceed PLN 500 000,00 and whose concerning the needs of residents of more than one residential or whose place of implementation is not assigned to one residential;
- **the amount of 2 250 000,00** was allocated to projects implemented on individual residential. This amount is distributed in equal parts – PLN 75 000,00 for each of the 30 auxiliary units of the city (residential) existing in Bielsko-Biała.

Thanks to such a division of funds model, it was possible to implement a greater number of projects in individual residential. Residents reported smaller, limited by maximum value projects dedicated to their

surroundings. Thus, the problem from first edition was solved, when one large city-wide project consumed almost the entire financial resources provided for in the participatory budget. Each residential in Bielsko-Biała obtained a chance to implement small investment projects in its area. Moreover, the resolution provided for a solution whereby the proposed local task, whose estimated cost, after substantial analysis exceeds PLN 75 000,00 will be reclassified to the general urban task, provided that the estimated cost of the task does not exceed PLN 500 000,00 and relates to the needs of residents of more than one residential, or whose place of implementation is not assigned to one residential. The age of eligible persons, whose can submit project proposals to the Participatory Budget for 2015 and participate in vote has been reduced. In addition the postulate of the younger part of the city residents who could co-decide on participatory projects was implemented. In accordance with the new Resolution, a project proposal could be submitted by every resident of Bielsko-Biała, who is 16 years of age.

The project proposal had to be submitted on the prepared application form. The project proposal had to be supported by at least 15 inhabitants who were 16 years of age (in the previous edition it was 20 people supporting the given project required). Project proposals forms in an electronic version were available on the website of the civic budget and in a paper version in the Office of the Municipal Office Service Handler in Bielsko-Biała, in the Social Entrepreneurship Incubator in Bielsko-Biała and in the "Consultation Points" appointed by the Mayor of the City. For residents, three ways to submit a project proposal form were provided: a) by post to the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała (with an annotation on the envelope "Participatory Budget" 2) personally at the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała in the Service Office of the Entrepreneur; 3) electronically to the e-mail address provided, whereby the electronically submitted project form had to contain all the required attachments in the form of a scan of the original documents.

The city authorities also introduced restrictions on the implementation of the notified projects, which were included in the Resolution. As part of the second-edition citizens' budget procedure, the following tasks could not be carried out:

- 1.) tasks whose required total budget for implementation would exceed the amount of funds that was provided for in the Resolution constituting the Second Participatory Budget;
- 2.) tasks that after implementation would generate costs disproportionately high in relation to the value of the proposed task;
- 3.) tasks that were in conflict with the plans and programs in force in the city, including, in particular, spatial development plans, industry programs, EU programs, projects included in the Long-term Financial Forecast, etc .;
- 4.) tasks that required institutional cooperation of external entities, if they did not provide explicit, readiness to cooperate in the form of a special statement, the formula of which was defined in the Resolution;
- 5.) tasks that would violate applicable law, rights of third parties, including property rights;
- 6.) tasks that assumed the implementation of only a part of the task, including the preparation only of the project or project plan or only the means for execution, without securing funds for design.

Such constraints seemed to follow the postulates of various social groups related to the participatory budget, including eliminating at least some of the significant doubts accompanying the implementers of selected projects. In particular, the solution consisting in excluding the possibility of performing a task inconsistent with the local spatial development plan or project previously included in the city budget or financed with external funds and funds was right. The provisions of the new Resolution also pointed to the necessity to precisely determine the amount of the estimated task, involving in this respect both the applicant and the departments of the Municipal Office. To assess the submitted project, the competent

department of the Municipal Office or the municipal organizational unit used the project card. During the assessment of the application, the estimated cost of the project was verified and the project considered as feasible or impossible to implement, along with the justification and possible recommendations of the alternative solution for the project. For the first time, if there were doubts arising from specific provisions of the project, and affecting the process of its opinion, the need to contact the applicant was emphasized. This principle has been significantly expanded in the next editions of the Participatory Budget. So far, the reviewer could, but did not have to contact the Applicant. It was assumed that the applicant only presents the idea of the task, and implementation of task is the exclusive property of the city and takes place without the participation of the applicant.

After the completion of the wide educational and promotional campaign of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget for 2015, which lasted from the beginning of June 2014, the time to submit projects has come. Eligible residents could submit their projects from 11 August to 12 September 2014. The time provided for submitting projects was long enough and gave the strong opportunity to properly prepare the task for implementation within the framework of the participatory budget.

In the second edition of the participatory budget, the residents submitted a total of **79 projects** (including 32 city-wide and 47 residential projects). **62 projects were positively verified** (24 city-wide and 38 residential). The evaluation stage of the submitted projects lasted from mid-September to the beginning of November 2014. At the stage of verifying and giving opinions on residential projects submitted, it was turned out that in some settlements no proposals for local projects were submitted. At this stage, it was also turned out that some of the submitted local projects could not be carried out for formal reasons, of which the applicants were informed. In the opinion of the local government, since it was decided to introduce co-decision by the residents with reference to the amount of PLN 3 750 000,00 for expenditure from the city budget, this amount should not be reduced due to the lack of activity of residents in some residential. It was purposeful to allocate the entire amount for the implementation of the submitted projects. In view of the large number of city-wide positively evaluated projects, it was considered justified that unused funds for residential projects would increase the funds allocated for city-wide projects. At the same time, the city authorities found it reasonable not to vote residents in residential where one or more projects were submitted or when the total value of which does not exceed PLN 75 000,00. Such submitted and positively verified projects should be considered for implementation in 2015 without the need vote.

All the above changes have been included in Resolution No. XLVI/1108/2014 of the City Council in Bielsko-Biała of 21 October 2014 regarding the change of Resolution No. XLIII/1024/2014 of the City Council in Bielsko-Biała of 24 June 2014 regarding principles and procedure for public consultations with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała on the budget of the city of Bielsko-Biała for 2015.

City Council, through the adopted amendments, eliminated the need to vote in those residential where one or more projects were submitted or when the total value of which does not exceed PLN 75 000,00. This solution was criticized in later editions of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget. In arguments unfavorable to this solution, it was pointed out that in fact it is not known what in fact public support is obtained by one project submitted in the residential. Lack of social verification in the form of launching the vote could be the basis for stating that the project having the status of sole was unnecessary or not very interesting for the residents of the residential, and the only support he got was the signatures of the people appearing on the list attached to the project..

Voting for positively verified projects of the second edition took place from 7 to 14 November 2014. The President of the City of Bielsko-Biała has issued an appropriate order regarding the voting for projects, indicating the date of voting and the voting card model of the Participation Budget for 2015. The above

regulation defined the method of voting and indicated 30 „Points for direct voting” by setting the hours and days of their functioning. Eligible persons could vote in two ways:

- directly, by inserting the ballot paper into the specially marked ballots located in the “Voting Points”. The direct voting consisted in placing the "X" sign in one city-wide project and / or one residential project that the resident wants to support. Therefore, new, simplified voting rules were introduced, abolishing the vote by allocating points for individual projects. The direct voting card including all positively verified city-wide and residential project were made available from 7 November 2014 at voting points and can to be downloaded from the official website of the Participatory Budget.
- electronically via the interactive voting module on the website of the participatory budget from 7 of November at 0.00 to 14 of November 2014 at 24.00. Any number of residents entitled to vote could use an electronic vote from one computer. However, in the case of an electronic vote using one e-mail address could no more than 5 eligible residents.

By voting electronically, one should provide own PESEL number, name and surname, address of residence in Bielsko-Biała and have an active e-mail address which was used to confirm the vote. An activation link was sent to the provided e-mail address which confirmed the vote and ended whole process of voting. During the voting, it turned out that there were few problems with receiving a message with a link confirming the vote. It usually happened due to some differences in the functioning of individual e-mail clients, different or outdated system software on computers used by voters or errors in the name of the e-mail address. In extreme cases, the activation link did not go to the electronic mailbox of the voter or was placed by the mail program in the spam directory. The City Hall informed the public about any possible technical problems on a regular basis, proposing specific solutions. The easiest alternative was always direct voting in one of the 30 "Voting Points" located on the premises of individual residences and in the City Hall.

On 14 November 2014, the voting for projects submitted under the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget for the year 2015 was completed. For 8 days (3 days longer than in the first edition) residents could express their support for city-wide and residential projects. As a result of the voting, **33 projects were selected for implementation** (11 city-wide and 22 residential project). Among the residential projects, it is worth indicating tasks related to: construction or equipment for safe playground equipment, creation or development of recreational areas for residents, modernization of pedestrian infrastructure, construction of parking spaces for passenger cars, construction of outdoor gyms, construction of small sports facilities in the area of educational institutions (athletic track, field). Among the city-wide projects, the winning project concerning the construction of mountain and recreational cycling paths (starting from the Kozia Góra complex) deserves special attention. This project was continued in subsequent editions of the participatory budget, becoming a showcase for tourism and sports in Bielsko-Biała. Due to the large interest in this project, Bielsko-Biała is still developing it with funds located outside the participatory budget. Other selected city-wide projects concerned, among others, the construction of a walking and recreational alley along with additional infrastructure, providing veterinary care for wild animals, creating a park street workout and parkour in Bielsko-Biała, conducting an educational and interactive performance for children, which concerned the necessity of cleaning of pets in public places, construction of a square with exercise equipment. The number of valid votes cast was 10 626 – 7,15% of persons entitled to vote. The majority of votes were cast in an electronic vote (in total 6 362 valid votes). It was one of the worst results in terms of the number of all valid votes cast. When analyzing this situation, we should take to consideration to several aspects. The first one had its source in the first pilot edition of Participatory Budget in 2014 and the method of distribution of funds. Inhabitants discouraged participation in the voting process due to the fact that almost all funds was taken over by one large project.

Another aspect concerned the need to organize the second edition in a very short period of time from the first participatory budget. This gave potential applicants little time to prepare new, interesting project proposals. New legal solutions had some significance, in particular in the fact that no voting was conducted in the settlements in which one or more projects were submitted and positively verified with total value which does not exceed PLN 75 000,00. Residents of such settlements did not show willingness to vote for wide-urban projects, which could result in a smaller number of total votes cast.

The most votes in the second edition were cast on the first and last day of voting in the internet voting. The most active were residents between 25 and 34 years old, and more men than women took part in the vote. Nearly 4% of visitors to the site were at the time of voting abroad. The participatory budget website was displayed, among others in Sri Lanka, Qatar, Peru, Thailand and Belarus. Nearly 20% of site visitors used smartphones and tablets, while Facebook was the most effective social medium where residents promoted their projects. Without a doubt, the second edition initiated some interesting solutions. First and foremost, an effective way to use the money after the submitted projects was introduced in order to make full use of funds allocated for the participatory budget. The inhabitants who were 16 years of age could decide on the projects. In addition, the abuse at the voting stage was limited by introducing the possibility of casting a vote from one e-mail address only by five residents. Previously, there was no such solution. Finally, residential projects could only be submitted and voted on by the residents of a given residential. This solution was to emphasize that only residents of a given estate accurately recognize local investment, cultural, social and other needs.

Participatory budget in 2016 – 3rd edition

The City Council adopted the Resolution No. VII/87/2015 of 28 April 2015, which defined the rules and procedures for conducting public consultations with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała on the participatory budget for 2016. The third edition of the participatory budget was based on the tried and tested solutions used in the first and second editions and provided the same amounts for city-wide and residential tasks. The participatory budget, in accordance with the provisions of the abovementioned resolution was on level PLN 3 750 000,00 however the total financial resources were distributed according to the following rules, also in force in the second edition:

- the amount of PLN 1 500 000,00 has been allocated for city-wide projects,
- the amount of PLN 2 250 000,00 has been allocated for local projects (residential projects). This amount is distributed in equal parts, PLN 75 000,00 for each housing estate.

A project of a residential nature was a project that concerned the needs of residents of one housing estate. The unit value of the notified local project could not exceed PLN 75 000,00. Proposed local task, whose estimated cost, after substantial analysis, will exceed PLN 75 000,00, will be reclassified to the general city-wide task, if the estimated cost of the task does not exceed PLN 500 000,00 and concerns the needs of residents of more than one housing estate, or whose place of implementation is not assigned to one housing estate, as described in resolution.

The proposal of a city-wide project could be submitted by every resident of Bielsko-Biała, who is more than 16 years of age, and the proposal of a local project could be made by every resident of a given housing estate who is more than 16 years of age. In this respect, solutions adopted in the previous edition of the Participatory Budget were left.

The project proposal should have been submitted on a specially prepared form, the model of which was specified in the aforementioned Resolution. The project proposal had to be supported in writing by at least 15 residents who were up to 16 years of age, respectively, the city of Bielsko-Biała or a given housing estate (for local projects). In the application form, alternative fields were provided for consenting to the

publication of an e-mail address and telephone number on the official website of the Participatory Budget 2016. In principle, the data in the form of at least e-mail address helped to facilitate contact with applicants for other residents and allowed discussion on project.

Forms with project proposals could be submitted from 22 June to 31 July 2015. This deadline resulted from the schedule of the participatory budget adopted in the Mayor's ordinance of 9 June 2015 and the announcement by the Mayor of the City of 9 June 2015 about the place, date and manner of submitting projects for public consultation with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała on the budget of the city of Bielsko-Biała for 2016. There were three ways to submit a project proposal form: a) by mail to the address of the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała with the annotation on the envelope "Participatory budget"; b) in person at the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała; c) electronically to the indicated e-mail address, where the scanned project proposal form submitted electronically, must contain all the required attachments (including a special statement regarding institutional cooperation if required and a list of signatures of supporters), in the form of scans of original documents.

Residents of the city could also use the online project submission form, filling in the appropriate fields that corresponded to the paper fields in the form, however, the required attachments (including a list of support) should also be attached as a scan of the original documents.

As part of the Participatory Budget procedure, the following tasks could not be carried out:

- 1.) whose required total budget for implementation would exceed the amount of funds provided for in the Resolution for residential or city-wide tasks;
- 2.) which would generate costs disproportionately high in relation to the value of the proposed task after implementation;
- 3.) which were in contradiction with the plans and programs in force in the city, including, in particular, spatial development plans, industry programs, EU programs, undertakings included in the Multiannual Financial Forecast, etc.;
- 4.) which required institutional cooperation of external entities, if they did not provide explicit, readiness to cooperate in the form of an appropriate statement,
- 5.) that would violate applicable law, rights of third parties, including property rights;
- 6.) which assumed only the implementation of a part of the task, including only preparation of a project or a project plan, or only means for execution, without securing funds for design.

The analysis of the above provisions leads to the conclusion that the basic legal regulations did not differ from those adopted as part of the second edition of the participatory budget. The scope of social consultations with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała, similarly to the previous one, was limited to the proposal of tasks possible to be implemented within one financial year, falling within the competence of the commune or county. In the case of tasks that required location in a given area, it had to be an area where the municipality could legally spend public funds.

Eligible residents of Bielsko-Biała (aged up to 16) were able to submit their project proposals from 22 June 2015 to 31 August 2015.

In the third edition of the Participatory Budget, the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała reported definitely more projects than in the second edition, which undoubtedly indicated a better public perception of existing solutions. Among the reported tasks, investment projects predominated regarding the construction of outdoor training facilities within the housing estates, the construction of playgrounds, the construction

or renovation of foot-and-walkways, the modernization of urban infrastructure, the retrofitting of urban facilities, the construction or refurbishment of car parks.

The holiday period in which the projects were submitted favored the citizens' initiative, which was reflected in the number of submitted projects. 128 project proposals were registered at the City Hall. This number included 79 residential projects and 49 city-wide projects. In the third edition, an important emphasis was placed on the manner of presenting projects submitted by the residents through the appropriate preparation of the official website of the Participatory Budget, which is the main information source for interested parties.

The resolution constituting the third edition of the participatory budget of Bielsko-Biała provided a new solution addressed to applicants whose projects were assessed negatively. For the first time, applicants could take advantage of the opportunity to appeal against the negative opinion of the verification team. The resolution stipulated that "within 7 days from the day of publicizing the list of positively verified projects, the person submitting the project not included in the list, (...) is entitled to lodge a written appeal to the Mayor who ultimately decides on placing such a project on the list of projects for voting." The authors of negatively verified projects benefited from the abovementioned possibilities.

As a result of the work of the project verification team and after conducting formal and substantive analysis by the competent departments of the City Hall and municipal organizational units, and after consideration of all appeals received from the applicants, a list of positively verified projects has passed to the voting stage.

It should be emphasized that for 49 city-wide projects submitted by the residents of the city of Bielsko-Biała as part of the third edition, 34 projects were qualified for the voting stage. On the other hand, from among all 79 residential projects, 48 projects have been planned for the voting stage. Applicants who have exercised their right and filed relevant appeals to the Mayor were notified in writing about the manner of considering the case.

Voting for all positively verified and approved projects took place from 5 to 13 November 2015. Inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała could vote in two ways:

- directly, by inserting a ballot paper into specially marked ballots located at voting points whose addresses and opening hours have been specified in detail in the Mayor's ordinance. The direct vote consisted in placing the "X" sign next to one city-wide project and one residential project (local), which the resident wanted to support. Direct voting cards containing all positively verified city-wide and residential projects were available from 5 of November 2015 in "Voting points" and could be downloaded from the website of the participatory budget.
- electronically – via an interactive, encrypted voting form, which was posted on the website of the participatory budget. Any number of people eligible to vote in Bielsko-Biała were able to use electronic voting from one computer. As it was the case in the second edition, no more than 5 eligible residents could vote from one e-mail address. An activation link has been sent to the e-mail address provided by the voter, which confirmed and ended a voting process.

Similarly to the previous edition in the housing estates where one positively verified project remained – voting was not carried out. Such individual projects in the housing estate were immediately planned for implementation in 2016, without the need to vote.

In the online and direct voting, the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała handed over 20 859 valid votes, which was twice as high as in the second edition of the participatory budget and could suggest a growing interest in the citizens' procedure of Bielsko-Biała citizens and undoubtedly built confidence in the city authorities who redefined the procedure. It should be noted that the number of valid votes cast electronically was

almost equal to the number of valid votes cast directly (using voting cards) and amounted to 10 899 valid votes cast electronically and 9 960 valid direct votes (on voting cards). The highest activity during the voting was shown by people aged 30-44 (5 836 people). Women who made up 55,44% of all voters showed greater interest in voting, while men constituted 44,56% of all voters. The Mayor of the City ordered 6 winning city-wide projects and 29 winning residential projects (total of 35 projects) to be implemented in 2016, with a total value of PLN 3 744 550,00 resulting from estimated sums. It should be noted that the participatory budget has gradually evolved towards changes articulated by residents and councils of housing estates. At the same time, the city authorities noticed the need to regulate the voting rules in detail and introduced the expected and postulated appeal procedure while ensuring transparency of all stages of the budget.

Participatory budget in 2017 – 4th edition

On 15 February 2016, a consultative meeting on the participatory budget convoked by the chair of the city council Jaroslaw Klimaszewski was held at the City Hall. The meeting was attended by residents of the city of Bielsko-Biała, representatives of community councils and representatives of non-governmental organizations, as well as applicants who had previously submitted their proposals to the participatory budget. The host of the meeting discussed the course of previous editions, the most important changes included in the last resolutions and presented a report on the implementation of the winning tasks in 2015. The main topic of the discussion were the rules and procedures adopted so far. Meeting participants made comments, proposals for changes and improvements that they believe should be included in the new version of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget for 2017. The proposals articulated at the meeting became the subject of work of the substantive committee of the City Council, whose task was to prepare and submit a new draft resolution.

The legal basis of the discussed edition became Resolution No. XVI/283/2016 of the City Council 22 March 2016 on conducting public consultations to ensure the residents of Bielsko-Biała the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process for a part of expenditure from the Bielsko-Biała city budget for 2017 year. This resolution in its essential shape was identical to the regulations in force with respect to the participatory budget of the third edition, in particular in the part concerning the general financial resources allocated for city-wide projects (PLN 1 500 000,00) and residential projects (PLN 2 250 000,00) and the maximum value of a city-wide project – PLN 500 000,00 and the maximum value of a residential project PLN 75 000,00.

The following regulations were introduced in the Resolution:

- The possibility of allocating unused funds resulting from the implementation of participatory budget projects in 2017 to the maintenance costs of projects already implemented in previous years was introduced. It should be noted that the problem of maintaining investment tasks has swelled over time, as the completed facilities, including sports and public utilities, are subject to natural wear, require inspections or repairs. In addition, the number of investment-related tasks is still increasing.
- provisions were introduced to improve communication with applicants at particular stages of the process of reporting, verification and implementation of projects. This meant that applicants would have a greater impact on the shape of their project during implementation. Designers could agree to change their location or to combine their project with other projects.
- a provision was introduced that investment projects of the participatory budget will be marked with information boards with project names, authors' names and the date of completion.

In the ordinance of the Mayor of the City issued on 8 April 2016, deadlines for individual stages of the participatory process were defined, starting with the educational and promotional campaign, and on introducing the winning projects into the city budget for 2017. In the next ordinance of the Mayor of the City on 11 April 2016, the locations well known to the residents of the "Consultation Points" and the days and hours of their operation were indicated. In "Consultation Points" residents were provided with information about the new edition of the participatory budget and help to properly fill in the application forms.

In accordance with the adopted schedule, on 9 May 2016, the call for city-wide and residential projects to the participatory budget for 2017, which lasted until 1 July 2016, began. Forms in paper version along with the required attachments were made available from the first day of the call in the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała: a) in the Customer Service Office, b) in the City Council Office and the Consultation Point operating within the Office, c) in the Consultation Point in the Social Economy Support Center in Bielsko-Biała.

Forms in the electronic version with attachments are also available for download and self-printing on the official website of the participatory budget. The form had to be accompanied by a list of support for the project, which had to be signed by at least 15 inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała, who were up to 16 years old. In the case of a residential project, it was necessary, as in previous editions, to collect the signatures of at least 15 residents of a given housing estate supporting the project. The completed and signed project proposal form could be submitted by 1 July 2016: a) by mail, to the address of the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała with an annotation on a sealed envelope "Participatory budget", b) in person at the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała in the Customer Service Office or in the Office of the City Council, c) electronically using the indicated e-mail address or via the online applications, but the required documents sent via the form had to be a scanned version of the original documents.

At. 24.00 on 1 July 2016, the acceptance of proposals for tasks submitted in an electronic version was completed. Taking into account the previous editions, it was the longest, so far, period for submitting project proposals. Finally, 116 citizens' projects were registered and published on the official website of the participatory budget. In this number, 77 residential projects and 39 city-wide projects were included. Recent projects were sent by citizens of Bielsko-Biała in electronic form just before midnight. By far the biggest number of projects have been delivered in the last two days of the recruitment deadline.

After the formal verification stage, the stage of substantive verification of submitted projects was carried out by the relevant departments of the City Hall and municipal organizational units. Substantive verification was completed in the first half of August 2016. The legal and technical conditions for project implementation were checked and the cost estimate of the proposed project was analysed. Similarly to the previous edition, the verification took into account the fact that the estimated cost of the city-wide project could not exceed PLN 500 000,00, whereas the residential project – PLN 75 000,00. The competent departments and municipal organizational units were to contact the applicants in each case when there were doubts resulting from specific provisions of the project, which had an impact on the process of its opinion.

The Mayor of the City, by ordinance of 21 July 2016, appointed the Verification Team for projects submitted as part of the Participatory Budget for 2017. The verification team as a subject permanently present and participating in the verification procedure, makes decisions based on written opinions of the relevant substantive departments of the City Hall or municipal organizational units and makes a final verification of the proposals submitted under the Participatory Budget in Bielsko-Biała.

The team analysed all complex civic projects, taking into account the opinions of the relevant substantive departments and municipal organizational units, and the results of its work were made available to the public on the official website of the Participatory Budget and in local media. The verification team

presented its recommendations by issuing positive or negative assessments with justification. These evaluations created a list of projects verified by the team. Thus, projects that received the team's recommendation (i.e. received a positive grade) went to the next stage, which is the vote of residents for positively verified projects. Authors of projects assessed negatively could benefit from the opportunity to appeal against the team's opinion in a timely manner. The resolution of the City Council of 22 March 2016 stated that "within 7 days from the date of publicizing the list of projects, the person submitting the rejected project is entitled to lodge a written appeal to the Mayor who ultimately decides on the matter placing such a project on the list of voting projects. Within 7 days of lodging the appeal, the Mayor of the City informs the author of the project proposal in writing about the manner of considering the appeal".

As a result of the work of the Team for the verification of projects, and also after the Mayor of the City has finally considered all appeals received from the applicants, a list of positively verified projects has emerged, which have passed to the voting stage of the residents. Out of all 39 city-wide projects submitted by the residents of the city of Bielsko-Biała, 24 projects were qualified for the voting stage. However, of all 77 residential projects, 62 projects have been positively verified. In total, 86 city-wide and residential projects were positively verified. It should be recalled that no voting was held in those housing estates where only one positive verified project remained (this was the case for 9 housing estates). Similarly, if two or more local projects were submitted on a given estate whose total value after verification did not exceed PLN 75 000,00, the voting was also not carried out, and the project was legally placed on the list of selected projects to be implemented (the situation concerned 1 housing estate). Analysis of the above cases lead to the conclusion that the authors of the projects conducted mediation between themselves and meticulously used the legal possibilities provided by the Resolution in order to avoid voting. As a result of the agreements made between the applicants and the compromises that were made many times, in many housing estates there was only one non-voting project. It is difficult to unequivocally assess such behaviour of applicants, however, it indicated a strong need to implement a specific project as necessary for the estate and fully use the allocated financial resources in a given housing estate, and signalled to the city authorities priority investment needs in the housing estate.

Voting for positively verified projects took place from 21 to 28 October 2016. The Mayor of the City, in accordance with the applicable procedure, issued an ordinance on voting for projects, voting dates and the voting card model as part of the Participatory Budget for 2017. Citizens could vote directly or electronically. The direct voting was carried out by inserting the ballot paper into the marked ballots located in the designated "Voting Points" whose addresses and working hours were specified in the ordinance. **The direct vote consisted in putting the "X" sign next to one city-wide project and residential project, which the eligible resident of Bielsko-Biała wanted to support.** The direct voting cards in force at the time of voting included titles, locations and estimates of all positively verified city-wide and residential projects, and were made available from the first day of voting in the "Voting Points". The card also contains information on how to correctly cast your vote. If in a given housing estate no voting for residential projects were provided, the card contained only city-wide projects. The cards have also been made available for self-download and printing on the website of the participatory budget. The latter solution was later the subject of criticism of the supporters of direct voting, i.e. taking place without the participation and assistance of third parties. In the fourth edition, only a resident of a given housing estate whose project it concerns and who is up to 16 years of age could vote for the residential project. **Electronic voting was conducted via an interactive, appropriately secured voting module, which was posted on the Participatory Budget website. At the same time, there was a new solution consisting in the fact that the e-mail address was omitted to provide the mobile phone number of the voter to which the verification code was sent in a text message, to confirm the vote.**

Previous experience with electronic voting clearly indicated that some e-mails sent from the voting system asking for confirmation of the vote (click on the activation link) did not reach the voters from various, often technical reasons, e.g. they were not passed through the firewall, they were treated as unwanted mail (spam). This generated a certain number of unconfirmed and therefore invalid votes. That is why, in the fourth edition, a new solution was introduced, which was more favourable for voters, based on the fact that with the use of one cell phone number, no more than five authorized residents of the city could vote. Electronically voting, you had to prepare your PESEL number, give your name and surname, address of your residence, and have an active cell phone number in any network that was used to confirm your vote. The city authorities encouraged all eligible residents to use the benefits of electronic voting, which was a quick and safe way to vote for civic projects for 2017.

Internet voting lasted until 28 October 2016, and the last vote was given a few seconds before 24.00. For 8 days, residents could express their support for city-wide and residential projects. In total, 10 270 people voted on the Internet and 13 015 votes were cast, while over 21,5 thousand cards were withdrawn from the ballots with votes cast by residents for both city-wide and residential projects. A total of 39 458 valid votes were cast in the online and direct voting. **A total of 12 857 valid votes were cast for residential projects (including 4 722 Internet and 8 135 direct votes). On the other hand, 26 600 valid votes were cast for city-wide projects (including 8 190 internet votes and 18 410 direct votes). Taking into account the results of voting, 35 projects (4 city-wide and 31 residential) were entered into the city budget for 2017 and sent for implementation.** Among the city-wide projects, the decisive winner was "Amphitheatre in Lipnik as a forest place of rest and fun". Subsequent places, due to the number of votes cast, fell to the following projects: "Multimedia Educational Centres" located in Bielsko-Biała educational institutions, "Glider across the sky" concerning the purchase of a glider and aeronautical training for young people and a "Catwalk for dogs at the Włókniarzy Park". Among the winning residential projects were: neighbourhood playgrounds, including for disabled children, recreational parks and outdoor gyms as elements of housing infrastructure, multimedia educational centres for schools, investments creating parking spaces for passenger cars, green squares, investments in road infrastructure, including construction of pavements and access roads, small multi-purpose sports fields, car parks at educational facilities facilitating the bringing and collection of children from schools and kindergartens, investments in equipment and facilities of Volunteer Fire Department and purchases of books for the Beskidzka Library.

Participatory budget in 2018 – 5th edition

Preparatory work concerning the fifth edition of the Participatory Budget was preceded by a consultation meeting with the inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała organized by the chairman of the City Council. The aim of the meeting was to summarize the previous editions of the Participatory Budget in Bielsko-Biała, gathering from the residents, existing applicants, community councils and representatives of non-governmental organizations comments, opinions and proposals for changes based on which conclusions and recommendations for subsequent editions of the participatory budget will be formulated. During the discussions with the participants of the meeting, the main theme were issues related to the implementation of winning civic projects, timeliness and executive quality of implemented projects. It was postulated to accelerate the implementation of the winning tasks entered into the budget. The role of district councils and non-governmental organizations in the entire process of the participatory budget was emphasized. When considering the problem of project implementation, it should be noted that large tasks are more noticeable in urban space, usually serving a larger group of residents and contributing to the promotion of participatory budget among the local community. They are a tangible effect of the effectiveness of the PB procedure. However, the implementation of large projects requires institutional cooperation of many entities and often imposes an obligation to apply public procurement rules. The entire procedure, including industry agreements, is complicated and lasts much longer than the budget

year provided for in the Resolution. Applicants should consider this fact by criticizing the implementation stage.

The participants of the meeting drew attention to the necessity to significantly increase the role of applicants as the authors of the winning civic tasks, who should have a greater impact on the shape of the implemented projects. There were also discussions about projects located in the city's educational institutions and the shape and availability of such projects. For the first time, the issue of the availability of winning tasks as being implemented from public funds and thus available to all participants of the participatory process arose. It is noteworthy that the modified way of voting online, i.e. via a mobile phone, fulfilled its role by improving electronic voting, thanks to which the number of invalid votes fell significantly. Participants of the meeting submitted their comments and proposals for improvements that they believe should be included in the new version of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget for 2018. The proposals submitted during the meeting became the subject of the work of the appropriate substantive committee of the City Council, whose task was to prepare and submit to the City Council a new draft resolution on the participatory procedure.

Resolution of the City Council No. XXVII/504/2017 adopted at the session of 21 March 2017 took into account a number of demands made both during the current edition of the participatory budget and during meetings of the city authorities with residents, representatives of community councils and non-governmental organizations. Thanks to the consultations, the city of Bielsko-Biała gained the opportunity to become acquainted with the expectations of the participants of the participatory process.

In relation to the regulations in force in the previous edition of the participatory budget, the Resolution of 21 March 2017 provided for the following changes:

- the amount of funds foreseen for particular housing estate increased from PLN 75 000,00 to PLN 100 000,00, which in consequence led to an increase in the total amount of funds for local projects up to PLN 3 000 000,00, and the entire amount allocated for implementation of projects within the civil budget to PLN 4 500 000,00
- funds to cover the costs of maintaining and renovating projects already completed under previous editions were increased. If no project has been submitted in a given estate, the submitted projects do not cover the amount of PLN 100 000,00 or if, as a result of the project verification, the unused funds remain in the housing estate – so far these funds increased the pool of funds for city-wide projects. The principle that in the case of not allocating all the financial resources foreseen for the implementation of victorious residential and city-wide tasks, the funds remain at the disposal of the Mayor, who may allocate them for other tasks, in particular for the costs of maintaining and renovating tasks already completed;
- the regulations concerning tasks that cannot be implemented under the Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała, including those having copyright character, were specified, unless they provide a free transfer of copyright to the city and selection of the contractor in a competitive mode;
- the principle has been introduced that any eligible resident of the city of Bielsko-Biała may vote for one residential project selected by him from the amount of all residential projects submitted in the whole city, and not only in the housing estate in which he resides. In this way, the voices were "released" and thus regionalization was abandoned.
- more emphasis was put on the cooperation of the City Hall departments and municipal organizational units carrying out the winning projects with the project authors and the appropriate housing estate council, in particular regarding the consideration of submitted comments and proposals at the stage of preparation and implementation of the task. In addition,

the following provisions were introduced: appointment for each task of the project supervisor on behalf of the Municipal Office, increasing cooperation with non-governmental organizations, notifying the author of the project about the deadline for receiving the task and requesting the author for the opinion on the project implementation.

Detailed schedule of the fifth edition, including deadlines for submitting applications, formal and substantive evaluation and the date of voting on positively verified projects were determined by the Mayor's ordinance of 31 March 2017 on the implementation of tasks in the scope of Participatory Budget resulting from resolutions of No. XXVII/504/2017 of the City Council in Bielsko-Biała on 21 March 2017.

From 8 May to 5 June 2017, a call of city-wide and residential projects for the Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała for 2018 continued. Project forms in paper version with required attachments were available at the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała and at "Consulting Points" operating on designated days and hours.

Every inhabitant of Bielsko-Biała, who was up to 16 years old, could submit a proposal for a city-wide project, and a proposal for a local (residential) project could be submitted by every resident of a given housing estate who was up to 16 years of age. **As in previous editions, the number of projects submitted by one person was not limited. At the same time, the City conducted a broad information and promotion campaign in social media, on the official website of the participatory budget, through posters and leaflets and in local media starting from April 2017.**

The inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała did not disappoint and demonstrated a civic initiative, which translated into the number of submitted projects. Finally, at the City Council Office, which was responsible for the organization of the project call, 106 project proposals were registered and published on the official website. In this number, there were 80 residential projects and 26 city-wide projects. Substantive verification of submitted projects, carried out by the relevant departments of the City Hall and municipal organizational units, lasted, according to the adopted schedule, by the beginning of August 2017. The projects have been verified in terms of their feasibility, and legal, location and technical conditions have been verified. During the substantive assessment, the cost estimate of each project was checked.

After reviewing the substantive opinions of the relevant departments of the City Hall and municipal organizational units, the verification team reviewed the submitted project proposals and issued appropriate recommendations. The team, while analyzing the projects, used the opportunity to apply to project authors, requesting additional explanations, corrections or additions wherever there were doubts related to the assessment of the possibilities and scope of the proposed task.

Based on the opinion of the verification team, a list of verified projects was created and it was published on the official website of the Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała. All projects that have received a positive evaluation (i.e. have been positively verified) have obtained the status of projects recommended by the team for the next stage of voting in Bielsko-Biała. In the fifth edition, the principle was continued that in estates in which one project was submitted and positively verified or several projects whose verified estimated amount did not exceed PLN 100 000,00 received a positive evaluation of the team - no voting was carried out. Such projects were immediately put on the list of projects to be implemented. At the same time, the authors of projects with a negative opinion could, like in the previous edition, take advantage of the opportunity to appeal to the Mayor of the City, who ultimately settled on placing the project on the list of voting projects. After completing the verification team's work, the Mayor of the City (after hearing the opinions of the Team for individual projects and after consideration of appeals) approved the list of projects that will be subjected to the vote and list of projects that were automatically qualified for implementation without voting in the Participatory Budget for 2018. For all 26 city-wide projects submitted by the residents of the city of Bielsko-Biała to the Participatory Budget for 2018, 18 projects have been validly verified. However, out of all 80 residential projects - 63 projects were positively

verified (including 51 projects for voting). Applicants who have exercised their right and filed an appeal to the Mayor of the City were notified about the manner of considering the case. The number of city-wide and residential projects positively verified in the fifth edition also took into account the fact that four projects were withdrawn by the applicants and that two projects in one housing estate were jointly joined by the applicants in one project. The Mayor of the City issued an ordinance of 5 October 2017 regarding voting on projects, voting dates and the voting card model as part of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget for 2018. Voting for positively verified projects took place from 12 to 19 October 2017. Residents who were 16 years of age at the latest on the voting day could vote directly by inserting the ballot paper into the marked ballots located in the voting points and electronically via the form provided on the website. Voting cards were made available to residents on the first day of voting. The principle was introduced that the voter could take no more than 10 cards at the voting point at one time, then hand them over to the nearest family and thus encourage them to participate in the participation procedure. This solution was also supposed to prevent the generation of votes by applicants seeking votes for their projects, who independently reproduced and delivered to the ballot boxes large amounts of filled voting cards. Local government authorities also saw the danger of unauthorized use of residents' personal data by persons collecting votes to support the project. After the analysis, it turned out that the residents were not always aware of how their personal data is processed by persons collecting statements of support for a given project. This problem became the basis for further changes in the civic procedure, which until now had the character of a plebiscite and was not subject to the rigors of voting that characterized the state general elections. The problem of possible unauthorized use of personal data was also noticed.

Electronic voting was promoted by the city authorities as the safest and fastest way to vote for civic projects, because it gave the smallest scope for abuse and irregularities that could accompany voting through the cards, especially since the voting lasted for several days. Electronic voting was carried out via an interactive, encrypted voting form, which was posted on the website of the participatory budget. As in previous editions, a resident entitled to vote chose one city-wide project and one residential project. In the case of electronic voting, a verified and appreciated solution was in force, namely that the voter gave the mobile number to which the verification code for confirming the voice was sent by SMS. **With the use of one active cell phone number, no more than five residents of Bielsko-Biała could vote. This solution allowed for voting by members of the immediate family of voters who did not have a mobile phone and made the participation process more open. In the seventh edition of the participatory budget, this solution, designed to facilitate voting for multi-person families, has been questioned by the supervisory body as conflicting with the principle of equality and directness of voting.**

In the fifth edition of the participatory budget, the inhabitants handed over 12600 valid votes, including 5 625 votes for city-wide projects, and 6 975 votes for residential projects (in total, 13 9015 valid votes were cast online) via the Internet. Moreover 21 778 valid votes were sent directly to the residential projects (via voting cards), and 27 535 valid votes for city-wide projects. A total of 49 313 valid votes were cast in a direct way. Again, the highest interest in voting was shown by women who constituted 56,02% of all voters. In addition, voting for positively verified projects was the most popular among residents aged 30 to 44 (altogether 12309 people, which accounted for 31,72% of all voters). It is worth noting that people aged 60 to 74 constituted 22,76% of all voters (in total 8 835 people).

Undoubtedly, the fifth edition of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget was record-breaking in terms of the number of votes cast for particular civic projects. A total of 61 913 valid votes were cast in the online and direct voting. As a result of the voting, 37 projects were selected for implementation (4 city-wide and 33 residential). The favorites, due to the number of votes received, turned out to be projects concerning the purchase of fire trucks and retrofitting of rescue and firefighting equipment of individual units of the Volunteer Fire Department. Other winning city-wide projects concerned: modernization of the pitch at

Mikołaj Rej Primary School No. 27 in Bielsko-Biała, the purchase of a non-invasive device for the diagnosis of postural defects in children and adolescents and the implementation of "Aviation Playground". Among the residential projects the majority were: co-financing Volunteer Fire Departments (purchase of equipment for carrying out rescue and firefighting operations), projects concerning the construction or renovation of small sports facilities or equipment (treadmill, small pitch), as well as the construction and modernization of playgrounds or the creation of recreational areas and greenhouses in the settlements. Among the most appreciated projects are tasks falling into various categories, however, the majority of them are infrastructural projects concerning the construction and modernization of public facilities and the development of urban space.

It should be added that in accordance with the provisions of the abovementioned Resolutions of 21 March 2017, the amount of funds not used for projects remained at the disposal of the Mayor and could have been intended in particular for the costs of maintenance and repairs of tasks already completed.

Participatory budget in 2019 – 6th edition

The sixth edition was preceded by a consultation meeting on the preparation of the next edition of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget for 2019, organized by the chairman of the Bielsko-Biała City Council. The consultation meeting was held on 29 January 2018. The format of the debate remained unchanged, and the meeting itself was aimed at summarizing the previous editions of the Participatory Budget in Bielsko-Biała, gathering comments from residents, opinions and proposals for changes based on which conclusions and solutions for the future edition of the Participatory Budget will be formulated. Meetings of this format, involving entities most interested in the Participatory budget, have become a tradition and are well perceived by all participants of the participatory process. The arrangements and proposals articulated during the meeting became the subject of the works of the substantive committee of the City Council preparing a new draft of the Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała. During the session of the City Council of Bielsko-Biała on March 20, 2018, Resolution No. XXXIX/773/2018 was adopted, which officially began the sixth edition. The Participatory budget for 2019 took into account the experience of previous years, contained solutions tested and appreciated by the participants of the participatory process, and at the same time introduced completely new, revolutionary solutions.

The most important regulations included in the Resolution of 20 March 2018:

- the total amount of funds provided for the Participatory Budget at the level of PLN 4 500 000,00 was maintained. The city-wide task was a project whose estimated cost of implementation did not exceed PLN 750 000,00 (in previous editions it was PLN 500 000,00), concerning the needs of residents of more than one housing estate, or whose place of implementation is not assigned to one housing estate. This solution included the possibility of reporting larger projects and the fact of significant changes in the prices of building materials and the costs of services generated by contractors of large investment projects;
- in the case when at least one project has been submitted and positively verified in the estate, the value of which after verification does not exceed the estimated amount provided in the Resolution, i.e. PLN 100 000,00, a vote of the residents is carried out. If the project was included in the list of selected projects for implementation, he had to obtain the support of at least 2% of the residents of a given housing estate (as at 31 December of the year preceding the vote). This solution was the result of reservations made mainly by non-governmental organizations assessing the adopted solutions within participatory budgets in individual municipalities, including *Stowarzyszenie Aktywności Obywatelskiej Bona Fides*. It was pointed out that at least one positively verified project or projects, whose total estimated amount did not exceed the amount provided for the housing estate, were provided by virtue of the right to implement, and in fact

received little public support. In practice, a project, which received the approval of a small group of residents limited to the number of 15 people supporting the housing estate project was implemented. Such a state of affairs required a change, which was done in the Resolution. The solution was therefore abandoned, that for implementation - without voting - one qualified and positively verified project would enter in a given housing estate;

- the principle has been restored that a city-wide project can be submitted by a resident of Bielsko-Biała, who is up to 16 years of age, and a residential project (local) resident of a given housing estate, who is up to 16 years of age;
- it was indicated that the project proposal must be supported in writing by at least 25 residents of the city (for city-wide projects) or housing estate (in case of residential projects), respectively. So far, at least 15 people were required to support;
- community councils have been included in the participatory process. Forms with local project proposals were sent to the community council competent for the location of the project, in order to issue an opinion on the project;
- significant change in the material scope of the project proposal, including in particular the change of its location or connection with other projects, was possible only with the consent of the project's author and the relevant substantive department of the City Hall or the municipal organizational unit issuing opinions on the project;
- voting took place only electronically using an interactive, encrypted electronic form posted on the website of the Participatory Budget in Bielsko-Biała for no less than 6 calendar days. Thus, direct voting via cards thrown into the ballot box was abolished. This solution was supposed to be the implementation of statutory provisions and the protection of persons voting against unauthorized use of their personal data, and at the same time eliminated a number of irregularities related to the traditional form of voting (inserting a large number of cards by individuals). The city authorities provided the opportunity to vote in the voting points that were designated in the city to those residents who did not have access to the Internet or were unable to use it;
- The Mayor of the City could devote more resources to the implementation of the winning tasks than those resulting from the provisions of the Resolution, but the amount of increase in funds for residential tasks could not be higher than 5% of the current value of such task. The regulation was to adapt the executive process to the changing costs of tasks in a given budget year;
- in accordance with the general rules, the implementation of the winning tasks should have been carried out within one financial year, where in justified cases it was possible to extend the task (in particular, investment or repair project) to a maximum of two years, in accordance with the rules of law. This solution was created due to the changing business conditions on the executive market and rapidly growing prices of construction services and materials. It is worth noting that high prices of services and materials have caused problems not only in the sixth but also in previous editions, which prolonged the process of realizing the winning tasks included in the city budget and became the reason for the dissatisfaction of the applicants.

The Mayor of the City issued two essential ordinances for the participatory process: 1) on the implementation of tasks related to the Participatory Budget resulting from the provisions of Resolution No. XXXIX/773/2018 of the City Council in Bielsko-Biała of 20 March 2018; 2) regarding the appointment of Consultation Points and determining the days and hours of their operation and appointing coordinators of service "Consultation Points" for the implementation of the Participatory Budget for 2019. In "Consultation Points" employees of the City Hall provided general information on the current edition of

the Participatory Budget and issued and explained application forms for the project proposal. The ordinances also defined the schedule of activities as part of the sixth edition of the participatory procedure.

A call for proposals for city-wide and residential projects for the Participatory Budget for 2019 was open from 7 May to 1 June 2018. Forms with the required attachments in paper version were available at the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała: a) in the City Council Office and the "Consultation Point" operating in it, b) in the "Consultation Point" in the Social Economy Support Center reporting to the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała, c) in the Customer Service Office in Bielsko-Biała.

The electronic forms together with the required attachments were available for download and printing on the website of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget.

The residents could submit the completed form by 1 June 2018: a) in person at the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała in the Customer Service Office or in the Office of the City Council; b) by mail to the address of the City Hall in Bielsko-Biała with an annotation on the envelope "Participatory Budget"; c) electronically using the indicated e-mail address.

The electronically submitted project form had to contain all the required attachments in the form of a scan of the original documents.

Finally, 60 projects were registered and then published on the official website of the Participatory Budget. In this number there were 46 residential projects and 14 city-wide projects. As a result of the formal and substantive assessment carried out by all entities envisaged for this purpose and after the appeal procedure, 52 projects (9 city-wide and 43 residential) were finally positively verified, which were recommended as the voting stage.

Voting of residents for positively verified projects took place from 21 to 30 September 2018. The Mayor of the City, implementing the provisions of the abovementioned Resolutions, issued an ordinance of 6 September 2018 regarding the ordering of voting on projects, the date of voting and electronic voting under the Participatory Budget for 2019. At the same time, by a separate ordinance of 12 September 2018, the Mayor of the City set 22 electronic voting points for residents for projects submitted as part of the Participatory Budget for 2019 and defined the days and hours of their operation. Electronic voting lasted from 21 to 30 September 2018. The online voting used a proven solution that no more than five eligible residents could vote for one cell phone number. Electronically voting, you had to prepare your PESEL number, give your name and surname, address of your residence, and have an active cell phone number in any network that was used to confirm your vote. A total of 13 959 valid votes were given online on positively verified projects. As a result of electronic voting, which was held via an interactive, encrypted form made available on the website, 27 projects were selected for implementation (2 city-wide and 25 residential). The winning projects were transferred to the relevant departments of the City Hall and municipal organizational units for implementation in 2019. Among the city-wide projects, two projects using the entire amount of PLN 1,5 million won: 1) "Green City Beach", whose aim is to create an urban space with mutually interpenetrating functions related to rest, recreation, sport and walks among valuable natural areas. The project includes the development of infrastructure related to the proper orientation of tourist traffic in valuable natural areas (consideration was given to complementarity with the planned urban project consisting in the protection of biodiversity) and 2) "Replace smoky chimney to clean and eco one", provides financial resources for the replacement of old heat sources (central heating furnaces) destined for decommissioning. Buildings belonging to the Bielsko-Biała Commune will be able to be connected to the district heating network or to install gas, etatal or low-emission central heating.

Among the voters, the largest group were residents aged between 30 and 44 – 41,08% of all eligible voters (4 118 people). Residents aged 16 to 29 accounted for 15,19% of all eligible voters (1 523 people).

Taking into account the number of submitted projects and the number of votes cast, one can risk the statement that the sixth edition showed a weakening interest in the citizens procedure. Opponents of exclusively electronic voting, among which were also project promoters, indicated that older people would be excluded from the participatory process, lacking IT equipment and knowledge allowing effective voting. However, it should be noted that the authorities of the city of Bielsko-Biała have designated "Electronic voting points" operated by persons delegated from the City Hall in order to facilitate digitally voting for the excluded. On the other hand, sealing the voting system and eliminating irregularities accompanying the voting through the cards showed the real value of the electronic votes cast as devoted after some thought. In the participatory process, it is extremely important for the residents to make decisions with the expected, full awareness of the responsibility for the choice made. The delays in the implementation of the winning tasks from previous editions, signalled earlier, influenced the attendance of both the submitting person and voters for civic projects. Analysis of the results of the sixth edition could also indicate the exhaustion of the idea of the participatory budget or the depletion of ideas of applicants locating projects in urban space, which would be a disturbing phenomenon, requiring a deep analysis by the local government and an appropriate response. The next edition of the budget verified these doubts.

Participatory budget in 2020 – 7th edition

The participatory budget of the seventh edition was prepared taking into account the article 5a of the amended Act on commune self-government, under which "in the municipalities that are cities with poviats rights, the implementation of a participatory budget is obligatory (...)". The basis for the implementation of the procedure became Resolution No. VI/61/2019 of the City Council in Bielsko-Biała of 19 March 2019 regarding the Participatory Budget in Bielsko-Biała. Participatory procedure of the seventh edition is based on experience from previous years, contains solutions already tested and appreciated by the participants of the participatory process. Traditionally, the adoption of a resolution introducing the Participatory Budget for 2020 was preceded by a consultation meeting with residents, initiated by the chairman of the City Council of Bielsko-Biała - Janusz Okrzesik. The purpose of the meeting was not only to summarize the previous editions, but also to give a wide information addressed to residents regarding changes in the participatory budget in the Act on commune self-government. It should be emphasized that in communes that are cities with poviats rights, the creation of a participatory budget has become obligatory, as mentioned in Article 5a, paragraph 5 of the Act on commune self-government of 8 March 1990. The remarks and opinions collected from the residents in the new legal reality could not be fully taken into account by the local self-government. The amended Act set the legal framework, and additionally gave the adopted resolutions the character of local law acts, which resulted in the fact that they were directed to legal supervision bodies. The creation of a participatory budget has become mandatory in cities with poviats rights. So far, the rules and procedures for consulting residents were defined by the resolution of the municipal council, and consultations as such were also optional. In the judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Gliwice of 18 August 2016, the court pointed out that "it requires emphasizing that consultations are only consultative, do not create law. The results of the consultations are not binding for the commune authorities as opposed to the municipal referendum or elections, therefore the legitimacy to participate in the local referendum and in the elections was completely different. Consultations are only aimed at familiarizing with opinions (wishes, expectations) on a given topic". The amendment of the Act means that tasks selected within the framework of the participatory budget by voting may not be removed from the resolution of the commune council nor changed to a significant degree. In addition, the legislator granting the municipal council the right to determine the rules and procedure for consultation with residents of the commune by way of a resolution did not narrow down

the circle of entities entitled to participate in consultations. The only statutory requirement is the fact of being a member of a given community, and thus being a resident of a commune. The amendment to the act on local government met with criticism of territorial self-governments, which were forced to modify or abandon the well-developed and well-functioning procedures of the participatory budget (f. ex. in these cities where the vote was abandoned and replaced by discourse that led to the selection of projects in districts.)

The new Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała for 2020, which for the self-governing authorities of the term 2018-2023 became an act of local law, introduced the following changes:

- the possible amount was increased to PLN 6 000 000,00 of which PLN 4 500 000,00 (in an equal division into 30 housing estates) were designated for residential projects, and PLN 1 500 000,00 for city-wide projects. In the executive act to the Resolution, it was clarified that the estimated value of a single residential project could not exceed PLN 150 000,00 and a city-wide project PLN 750 000,00. When establishing the pool of funds in the resolution, it was taken into account that the amount of the participatory budget is legally at least 0,5% of the commune's expenditure included in the last budget implementation report;
- a civic project under the revised Act on commune self-government can be submitted by every resident of Bielsko-Biała. There are no age breaks, so you can imagine a situation that the project proposal is submitted by a 6-year old resident of Bielsko-Biała, after prior consent of the legal guardian.;
- for a city-wide project a list of support with signatures of at least 30 residents of Bielsko-Biała is required, while for a residential project a list with signatures of residents supporting the project is not required;
- submitted projects are sent to the appropriate community council due to the location of the project in order to issue an opinion on the project, and the opinion is not binding.;
- voting for positively verified projects takes place only electronically, i.e. by means of an interactive electronic form made available on the official website of the Participatory Budget, in accordance with the schedule. The Mayor of the City will indicate "Electronic Voting Points" for residents and specify the days and hours of their operation.
- voting for positively verified projects lasts at least 14 days;
- a person entitled to vote may cast a maximum of two votes, of which one for a city-wide project and one for a residential project, whereby only a resident of a given housing estate whose project is concerned can vote for a residential project;
- the investment task on non-urban real estate is allowed, provided that an appropriate statement is made, in which the owner or the dependent user consents to the performance of the public task;
- in justified cases, the Mayor of the City may allocate more funds for the implementation of the winning residential projects, however the amount of increase may not be higher than 10% of the current value of the winning residential project;
- it was indicated that the implementation of selected tasks should take place within one financial year, where in justified cases it is possible to extend the project implementation (in particular, an investment or renovation project) for a maximum of two years;
- the adopted resolution defined the required percentage support of residents for residential and city-wide projects that will be directed to implementation.

Call for projects under the new Resolution and in accordance with the schedule specified in the Mayor's ordinance of 12 April 2019 took place from 23 April to 23 May 2019. In the provided period, the residents submitted 83 projects, of which 62 residential projects and 21 city-wide projects, which suggested a greater interest of citizens in the citizenship procedure. At the same time, it should be noted that the supervisory body (Silesian Governor) issued a supervisory decision of 17 May 2019, in which it annulled the abovementioned Resolutions of the City Council as inconsistent with Article 5a, paragraphs 2 and 7 of the Act on commune self-government. The city of Bielsko-Biała was not the only self-government in the Śląskie Voivodeship, which felt the effects of the supervisory settlement. The situation was similar in: Gliwice, Żywiec, Tychy, Pszczyna, Świętochłowice, Ruda Śląska, Bytom, Jaworze etc. The supervisory body indicated that the challenged resolution of 19 March 2019 does not properly regulate the issues regarding the voting rules for the projects submitted under Participatory Budget. The commune council, according to the supervisory body, is obliged to regulate these principles in such a way as to ensure equality and directness of voting. The amended Act on commune self-government lacks a legal definition of the concept of equality and direct voting, however, the supervisory authority has attempted to clarify the meaning of these statutory terms indicating that it is undoubted that equal voting should be understood as giving equal numbers of votes and strength to each voter. The supervisory resolution emphasized that equal voting also boils down to equal access to voting, which meant that every entitled person has the right to use it on an equal basis and while maintaining equal opportunities. The criticism contained in the supervisory decision mainly concerned the regulation by the governing body in the Resolution of 19 March 2019 solely on the electronic vote. The supervision authority did not seem to notice the fact that the city authorities ensured equality and directness of the voting by organizing "Electronic voting points" within the city for people excluded digitally. Moreover, in the era of widespread computerization of public life, this allegation seems to be misguided. One can get the impression that the supervisory decision suggests entering a vote in a traditional form (in the form of ballots), and its lack in the Resolution determines the violation of the principle of equality. The supervisory authority also questioned the entry that, using a single mobile phone number, no more than five residents can vote for residential and city-wide projects. According to the supervisory authority, the regulation creates conditions for one person - having a given number of a mobile phone - to vote five times for the Participatory Budget project, which leads to violation of the principles of directness and even violation of the principle of equality. Criticism did not take into account the fact that this regulation served more numerous families, and the online voting form contained embedded IT validation mechanisms, verifying the votes cast both during and after voting, while determining the results of the vote. Such a solution successfully operated in previous editions of the participatory budget, and the residents did not comment on it.

As a result, the City Council, after a broad discussion, decided to take into account all the remarks contained in the above-mentioned supervisory decision and, at the session on 10 June 2019, adopted a new resolution regarding the Participatory Budget in Bielsko-Biała. This resolution, if it is not re-challenged by the supervisory authority, will allow for the continuation of the Participatory Budget procedure.

Participatory budget statistics

Table 2. The participatory budget and the budget of the Bielsko-Biała city ¹².

year	city budget expenses	the amount of funds foreseen for	% of city budget expenditures	the amount of funds foreseen	% of city budget expenditures	sum of funds (city-	% of city budget expenditures
------	----------------------	----------------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------	---------------------	-------------------------------

¹² Source: own study based on data from the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała.

		city-wide projects		for residential projects		wide + residential)	
2019	1 340 504 618,00	1 500 000,00	0,11%	4 500 000,00	0,34%	6 000 000,00	0,45%
2018	1 101 367 415,21	1 500 000,00	0,14%	3 000 000,00	0,27%	4 500 000,00	0,41%
2017	970 404 986,97	1 500 000,00	0,15%	3 000 000,00	0,31%	4 500 000,00	0,46%
2016	894 917 608,64	1 500 000,00	0,17%	2 250 000,00	0,25%	3 750 000,00	0,42%
2015	783 961 574,65	1 500 000,00	0,19%	2 250 000,00	0,29%	3 750 000,00	0,48%
2014	745 780 270,67	1 500 000,00	0,20%	2 250 000,00	0,30%	3 750 000,00	0,50%
2013	722 519 147,80	2 000 000,00	0,28%	-	-	2 000 000,00	0,28%

Expenditure of the city budget in the years 2013-2018 given on the basis of the actual implementation of the budget; city budget expenditures in 2019 were given on the basis of the budget resolution.

To the above statement, the year of submitting projects in specific editions was referred to as the base date.

Table 3. The funds foreseen for the implementation of the winning tasks resulting from the estimated amounts ¹³.

Edition number (year)	City-wide projects	Residential projects	Total
I (2014)	1.989.900,00 zł	-	1.989.900,00 zł
II (2015)	2.258.348,00 zł	1.487.561,00 zł	3.745.909,00 zł
III (2016)	1.793.900,00 zł	1.950.600,00 zł	3.744.500,00 zł
IV (2017)	1.592.800,00 zł	2.149.550,00 zł	3.742.350,00 zł
V (2018)	1.439.490,00 zł	2.945.000,00 zł	4.384.490,00 zł

¹³ Source: own study based on data from the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biala.

VI (2019)	1.500.000,00 zł	2.416.500,00 zł	3.916.000,00 zł
Total	10.574.438,00 zł	10.949.211,00 zł	21.523.649,00 zł

Table 4. Projects registered and positively verified ¹⁴.

Edition (year)	Registered			Positively verified			
	City-wide	residential	Total	City-wide	residential	total	percentage
I (2014)	171	-	171	108	-	108	63%
II (2015)	32	47	79	14	38	62	78%
III (2016)	49	79	128	34	48	82	64%
IV (2017)	39	77	116	24	62	86	74%
V (2018)	26	80	106	18	63	81	76%
VI (2019)	14	46	60	9	43	52	87%
VII (2020)	21	62	83	-	-	-	-

Chart for the table 4. Projects registered and positively verified.

¹⁴ Source: own study based on data from the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biala.

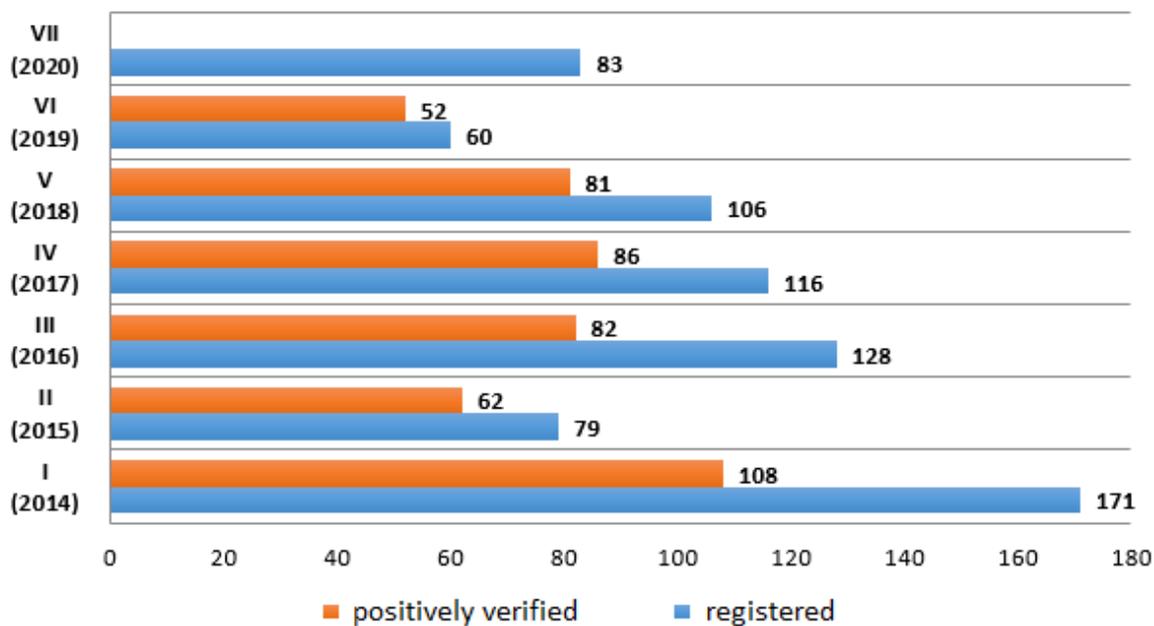


Chart 4. The number of winning tasks in individual editions of the Participatory Budget ¹⁵.

¹⁵ Source: own study based on data from the Municipal Office in Bielsko-Biała.

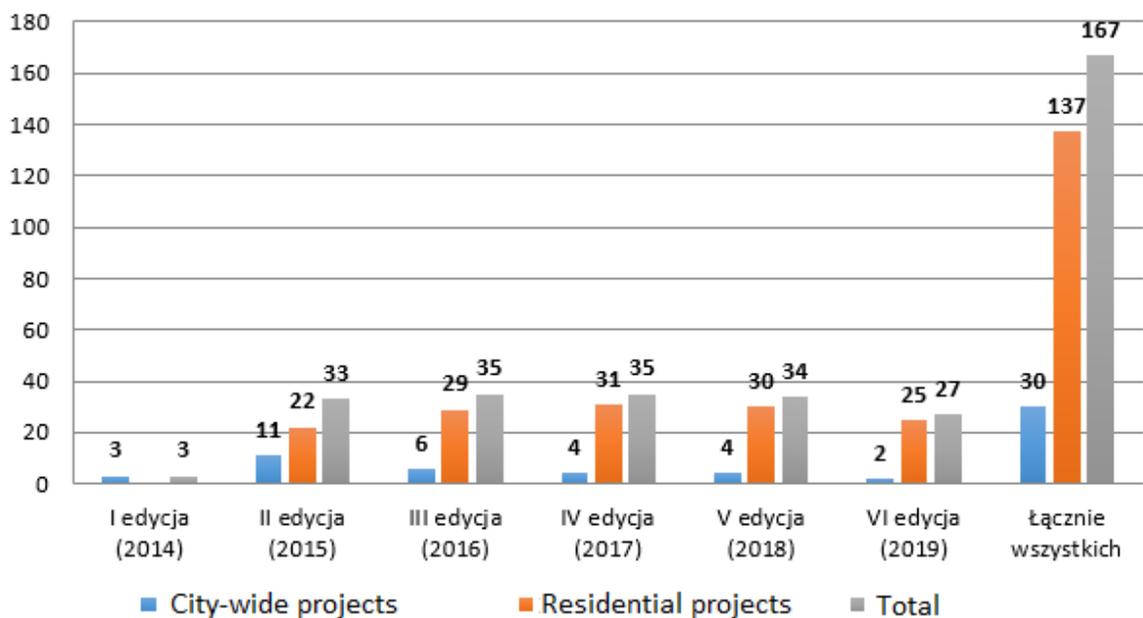
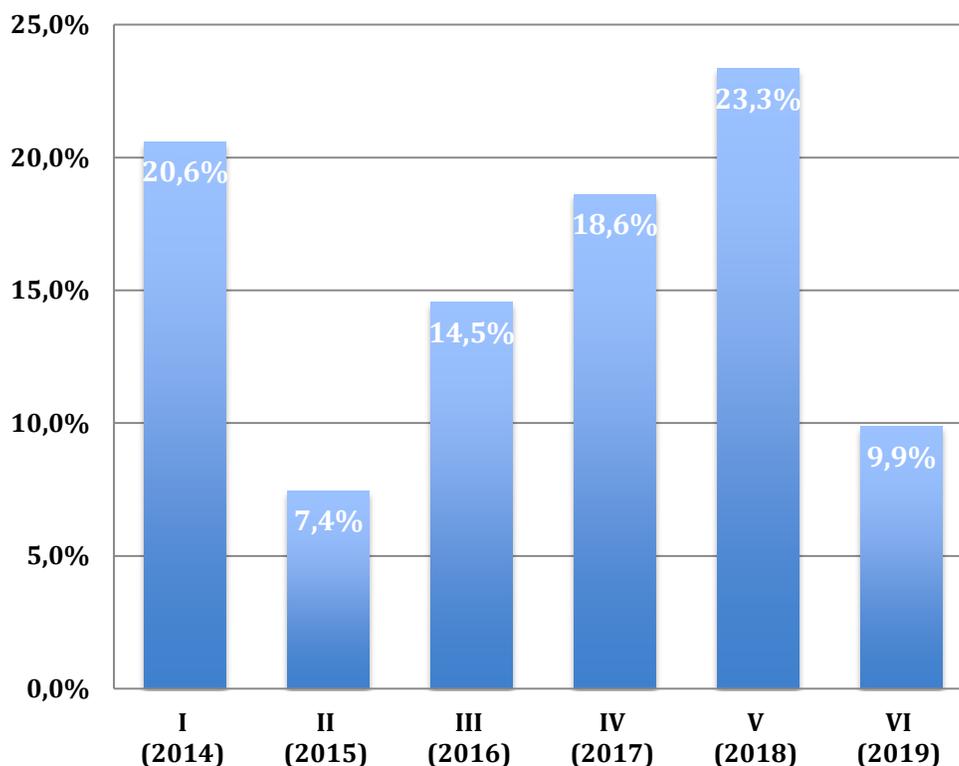


Table 5. Turnout in voting at individual editions of the Participatory Budget.

Edition (year)	number of persons entitled to vote	number of voters	Turnout
I (2014)	138400	28481	20,6%
II (2015)	142655	10626	7,4%
III (2016)	143413	20859	14,5%
IV (2017)	142835	26600	18,6%
V (2018)	142066	33160	23,3%
VI (2019)	141576	13959	9,9%

Chart for the table 5. Turnout in voting at individual editions of the Participatory Budget.



17. What could be hindrances of the use of participatory budgeting (PB) in the pilot municipality?

The participatory budget as an instrument involving the inhabitants in the life of the local self-government community has its supporters and opponents. Proponents of the PB idea pay attention to the democratic nature of the process itself, the lively social discourse accompanying the procedure and the positive impact on the activation of citizens. The allocation of financial resources to areas indicated and desirable by residents who previously neglected local government authorities should be underlined. A participatory budget can play a great role in assessing the work and involvement of local authorities. Proponents say that only the imagination of applicants limits the quality and quantity of submitted projects. Opponents stress that the participatory budget has been depreciated, and its role has declined in recent years, becoming a kind of fashion for local government authorities and a façade activity. Antagonists claim that after the first wave of optimism, disappointments related to the increasingly visible appropriation of the participatory budget by municipal organizational units trying to save their budgets through project proposals submitted by dependent applicants have come. Some have observed attempts to appropriate participatory budgets by community councils. It points out the unfavorable phenomenon of allowing a large number of investment projects aimed at saving neglected road infrastructure or modernization of public facilities, which should be financed from sources other than the participatory budget. Opponents say that problems with timely implementation of winning tasks have also deter residents from submitting projects. Some critics point out explicitly that media coverage around the participatory budget serves only local government authorities awaiting re-election.

The value of the participatory budget can only be assessed by its active participants. Up to the seventh edition of the Participatory Budgets of Bielsko-Biała people who were 16 years of age or older could be active persons in the participatory process. In the first edition, those eligible for submitting projects and voting on positively verified projects were adults (18 years of age or over). Currently, due to the amendment to the Act on commune self-government, no age restrictions have been provided, which means that any natural person residing in the municipality can submit a civic project. In Bielsko-Biała it is foreseen that minors (aged 13) who want to participate in the participatory process must obtain the consent of their legal guardian.

Local government authorities continue to support the idea of a participatory budget and reach a broad group of its recipients to the widest extent, in particular through broadly understood educational and information campaigns and to create a space for social discourse. Currently, the results of the selection of projects under the participatory budget are binding for the commune authorities. The Act clearly states that the municipal council in the course of work on the draft budgetary resolution may not remove or change, to an essential degree, tasks selected within the framework of the participatory budget. In the light of the current provisions of Polish law, the draft budget is prepared by the executive body, and the budgetary resolution is finally adopted by the legislative body. However, the provisions of the budget resolution must take into account projects selected for implementation by the residents in the process of the participatory budget, in the shape consistent with that which was the subject of voting by the residents. For the participatory procedure itself, a well-defined amount of the participatory budget is equally important, which is – in accordance with the new regulations – at least 0,5% of the municipality's expenditure included in the last report on budget implementation. It also does not seem possible that the existence of a participatory procedure would be jeopardized due to the fact that in communes that are cities with poviát rights (and that is Bielsko-Biała), the creation of a participatory budget is obligatory. This means that, year by year, city authorities with poviát rights are obliged to carry out the participatory budget procedure in accordance with the rules they have adopted.

18. What is important to be considered when designing participatory budgeting (PB) in the pilot municipality?

When designing a participatory budget, besides the statutory requirements, the city authorities should take into account several important elements. In the first place, the outcome of the participatory procedure is binding for the city authorities, which means that the winning projects are included in the budget resolution. Secondly, the PB process should follow clear rules, a set of rules, known to all process participants before starting the entire procedure, and which should not be subject to changes during the process. Another element is the openness of the participatory process, which should be based on uncomplicated and understandable procedures, and the organizers should ensure their transparency and provide assistance and support at individual stages for all those willing to join the entire process. Therefore, it is important to care about informing a broad groups of residents about the possibility of participating in a participatory process. In addition, the city authorities should provide space for conducting debate with residents, which in Bielsko-Biała has become the rule and meetings with residents were organized year-on-year. However, as the Act on commune self-government changed, the rules governing the participatory procedure will not change significantly. During the procedure, the commune authorities should also support the activity of the residents. In other words, it is about proper care for the public participation of residents in the participatory budget. The participatory procedure should primarily be based on the activity of residents and applicants and give them as many opportunities and spaces to cooperate as possible by discussing the priorities in spending public funds, cooperating in project preparation and building support for project proposals preceding mandatory voting. It seems that the current construction of the Bielsko-Biała Participatory Budget, shaped and improved during the previous

editions, is a well-thought-out solution. The solutions adopted in the city of Bielsko-Biała aim to create an instrument for long-term codecision by the residents about the city's functioning.

It seems that in the near future, the hope for the participatory budget is thought-out and attractive non-investment projects (so-called soft projects) in the form of trainings, workshops, fairs, lectures, lectures that guarantee residents acquiring new skills or improving their knowledge but lacking a permanent element of investment. The city authorities and applicants also see that the area of land on which the city can legally invest is less and less, hence the future of soft projects is justified. The observed phenomenon of submitting a smaller number of projects to the participatory budget may also suggest that basic needs – mainly in housing estates - have been met, although in the case of the Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała it was not a rule. It should be emphasized that the participatory budget is the basis for cooperation between residents and self-government authorities and as such is a tool through which relationships with authorities are strengthened, and also through good social discourse good local networks are formed. A well-thought-out and well-organized participatory budget activates a specific pool of financial resources from the city budget, and thus affects its development in almost all areas. To date, over PLN 21,5 million have been expended from the Participatory Budget of Bielsko-Biała, which allowed for the implementation of a number of projects, mainly investment ones. It is to be hoped that applicants will continue to surprise by the diversity of projects submitted.