

Secondly, controversial opinions of experts have been presented to the citizens. Therefore, I am going to review how the participants have developed their own opinions on the most important topics, how they have formulated distinct key points.

Moreover, the paper reveals opinions of citizens who had sufficient time to digest information and to make a well grounded and informed decision. The paper also outlines how recommendations of citizens relate to the Hungarian vocational education policy.

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Explaining the decision to participate – Is rational choice theory useful in explaining attendance at the deliberative weekend?

(A részvételi döntés magyarázata - Racionális döntéselméleti megközelítéssel megfelelően magyarázható-e a megjelenés a deliberatív közvélemény-kutatás rendezvényén?)

In the spring and summer of 2008, as part of the IntUne European Research Project two participative research methods were applied in the Kaposvár region: deliberative polling® and citizens' jury. As a first step, 1514 people belonging to a representative sample in the region were asked after filling out a questionnaire to take part at a deliberative weekend, where they would discuss with others the issues of unemployment and job creation and where they would have the opportunity to ask questions from experts. They were offered financial compensation, lunch and dinner. From the original sample, in the end 111 people participated at the second step of the research: the deliberative weekend (108 took part in the deliberative polling, 3 people together with others in the citizens' jury).

In our lecture we examine if rational choice theory provides an adequate framework to explain the choice of participation at the weekend. We formulated hypotheses about differences in attributes between those who did not come and those who took part at the event based on a sociological perspective of rational choice theory. Although the decision to participate could contain strategic elements (resembling the free rider problem), we treated it as a parametric choice situation. Our basic supposition is, that those people were more likely to attend the weekend for whom it contained less costs and more benefits. We included under benefits not only financial gains, but for example the fact that for some discussing on this topic might be a positive experience. Amongst costs we included beyond the possible costs of travel, the factor that participants had to sacrifice their time to be there. After checking whether the data support our hypotheses we discuss the implications of our findings. We argue that our results have a wider significance, because they can be relevant for other methods not just deliberative polling. For example, focus group research is also based on inviting people to take part at an event where they can discuss a topic with others (although for a more limited amount of time).

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