

## **ACTION PLAN FOR A RESPONSIBLE NIGHTLIFE IN THE MEDIEVAL TOWN OF VITORIA-GASTEIZ**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Because of an increase of the leisure activities in the public areas of cities and due to a greater requirement of the citizens' quality life, the noise caused by concurrence of people is one of the issues to be addressed by the City Councils in Spain. Vitoria-Gasteiz has begun addressing this problem from a participatory approach involving all the stakeholders to build a common diagnosis and a shared road map. The identified actions highlight the need for a holistic approach (not only from the spatial point of view but also from the need to consider, apart from the noise, other issues such as safety and cleanliness). These actions also show the need to raise awareness and involve all stakeholders, the key ones being: the leisure users and their own leisure facilities. The technical-participatory execution of the Plan is accompanied by communication actions and performances in public areas to generate enough social impact and also to create awareness of the problem. The focus of the Plan is on the integration of all the stakeholders and on the adaptation of the measures to the reality of Vitoria-Gasteiz.

**Keywords:** Leisure, Noise, Environment, Action Plan.

**I-INCE Classification of Subject Number:**52

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cities in temperate climates are dealing with noise by concurrence of people for the last decades. In the first instance, efforts were focused on the improvement and conditioning of the locals of activities devoted to nightlife as the way to prevent the level of noise that transmitted through the structure of the building. Nowadays, this issue, is considered overcome.

Due to the European Noise Directive (END) noise sources referred to environmental noise have been analysed (using noise maps and measurements) and have been the object of definition of corrective or preventive measures (Action Plans). With this framework, cities have identified the need to address other sources of noise not directly considered in the END but suppose a high degree of discomfort and have a great social impact, although they do not have a remarkable number of people exposed.

Finally, cities aim to create a diverse cultural and tourist offer (to be attractive to citizens, visitors and investment), which, in most cases, implies greater activation and use of public space. In the case of Spain, the Anti-Tobacco Law, that derives in the prohibition of smoking inside locals, has implied a more intensive use of public places. This demand for public space on many occasions creates conflict with the requirement of higher levels of quality of life by residents.

In this context, City Councils are forced to consider noise of public concurrence that is generated in urban places, which constitutes a challenging question that implies to balance different interests, mainly: economic promotion, promoting a cultural offer, creating social context for leisure and providing rest and quality of life of citizens. In the first instance, most municipalities have focused their efforts on the night period because it is the most sensitive and generates more citizen complains regarding noise.

The project presented in this paper provides an example of an approach to address this challenge by an administration, in this case, the City Council of Vitoria-Gasteiz. The Action Plan for a responsible nightlife in the medieval town of Vitoria-Gasteiz merges the technical analysis with the inputs obtained in a participatory process with municipal areas and social agents (involving the perpetrators, the sufferers and the managers) to consider all the points of view in order to make nightlife compatible with citizen's quality of life.

The Plan prioritizes attending to nightlife noise due to its potential impact on the residential population, focusing on the presence of people on the street at a time of maximum sensitivity.

However, other issues, apart from noise, are also considered in the plan, since it is considered as a holistic variable that requires the integration of several related topics:

- Security during nightlife and the gender perspective.
- Uncleanliness of the streets of the old medieval town related to leisure activities during the night.
- Socio-economic activity, putting into value the dynamization factor that is provided by nightlife: activities, services, its suppliers and the beneficiaries of cultural or social activities that are planned by private or public initiative and that generates an economical and social activation of the area (and the city).

## **2.METHODOLOGY TO DEFINE THE ACTION PLAN**

### **2.1 General Framework**

In general terms, the goal of the Action Plan is the reduction of the acoustic impact of nightlife activities. In addition, the following specific objectives are defined:

- Improve the compatibility of night-time leisure activities with the rest and quality of life of the residents.
- Sensitize the citizens of Vitoria on the problem of the nonviolent habits of nightlife in the city.
- Promote citizen co-responsibility for the conservation and defence of the values of coexistence and environmental respect.
- Develop citizen attitude for the correct use of public space, especially at night.
- Reach a political and social consensus on the scope of the actions to be developed to make the rest and quietness of citizens compatible with leisure activities.

As noted, the proposed objectives are challenging and involve the participation of several social agents and decision makers in the city as detailed in section 2.2. of the present communication.

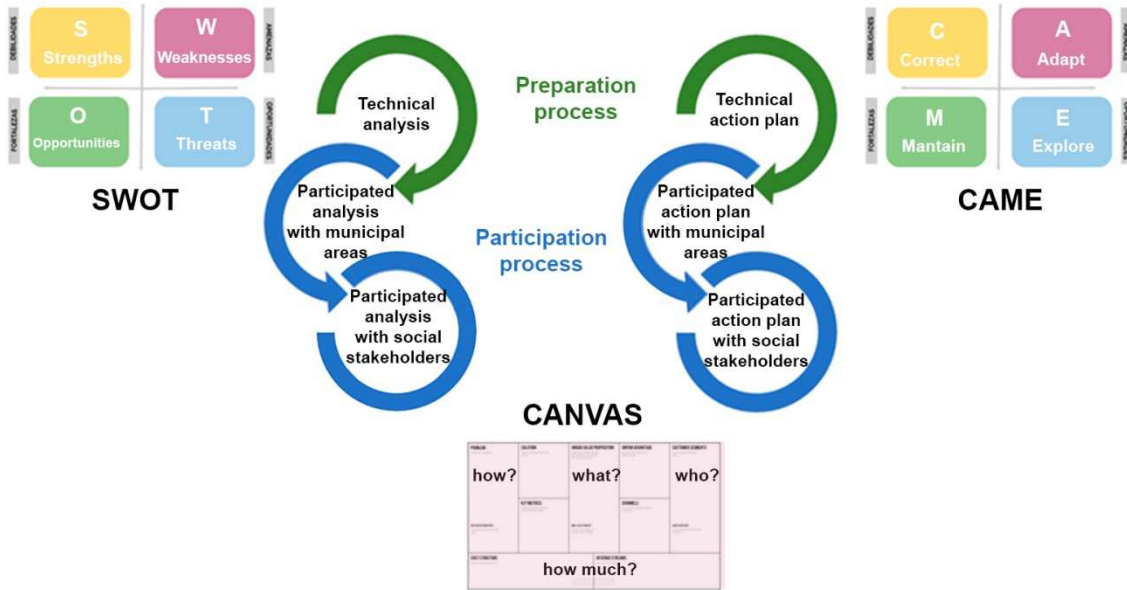
To address the process of definition of the Action Plan, the following three working phases are deployed:

- Phase 1. Participated Technical Diagnosis: aims to obtain a SWOT analysis and the definition of a state of the question, shared by the different stakeholders. To carry out this diagnosis, a preliminary work of expert technical work is developed. This desk-work includes the processing of data related to: location of the activities, complaints, analysis of the type of licenses, the noise levels, as well as the priority points from the point of view of cleanliness and safety. It is important highlighting the use of the results of the Nightlife Noise Map of the city developed considering the results of monitoring of sound levels and a process of acoustic modelling. This analysis determines levels of exposure in the facades of the sensitive buildings of the medieval area. All these data were geo-localised (using GIS technologies) to provide a more graphical analysis of the problem to be addressed in participative sessions and working groups (paragraph 2.2).

- Phase 2. Action Plan (technical and participated): aims to define the long-term strategy addressing also a short-term roadmap. The method implies the translation of the SWOT from Phase 1 to a CAME. Later on, the actions identified are prioritized from a thematic and spatial point of view to be further detailed and specified through the CANVAS methodology.

- Phase 3. Launching campaign: is conceived as a transverse activity that merges the communication and awareness campaigns that create the framework to inform, call for participation and initiate awareness-raising work to change the habits of users of the public space during the night life activities.

From a holistic point of view, the following diagram summarise the methodology deployed to define the Plan:





The above figures illustrate the messages transmitted in the communication and awareness campaigns deployed during Project. The image of the stork is chosen as since it is an identity symbol of the city and it allows giving support to a multitude of messages and prostrates without gender constraints. Other tasks of communication and awareness were carried out through: street interventions, distribution of sweets (to prevent those who enjoy nightlife from talking at night and consequently generating noise) and the development of artistic performance on the street (accompanied by a rap song looking for a responsible nightlife). The sweets simulate a medicine, named “*Relaxpirina*”, that is clearly focused on those who generate noise and with the aim of raising awareness about its consequences.

## 2.2 Participatory processes

The participation strategy is defined considering the different agents involved in the challenge that the city is facing. Sessions are organized by interest groups to maximize the collection of data and the identification of all the concerns, especially in the analysis phase.

In this sense, these participation sessions (some related to the analysis phase and others to the definition of the road map) are organized separately for the following groups:

- Workshops with the City: different meetings for politicians and technical staff were defined. The departments that were involved were the following: environment, urban planning, communication and participation, economic development, youth and citizen security.
- Workshop with social stakeholders and citizens: different meetings to gather all the approaches were developed: neighbouring citizenship and associations, economic activities and elderly people.

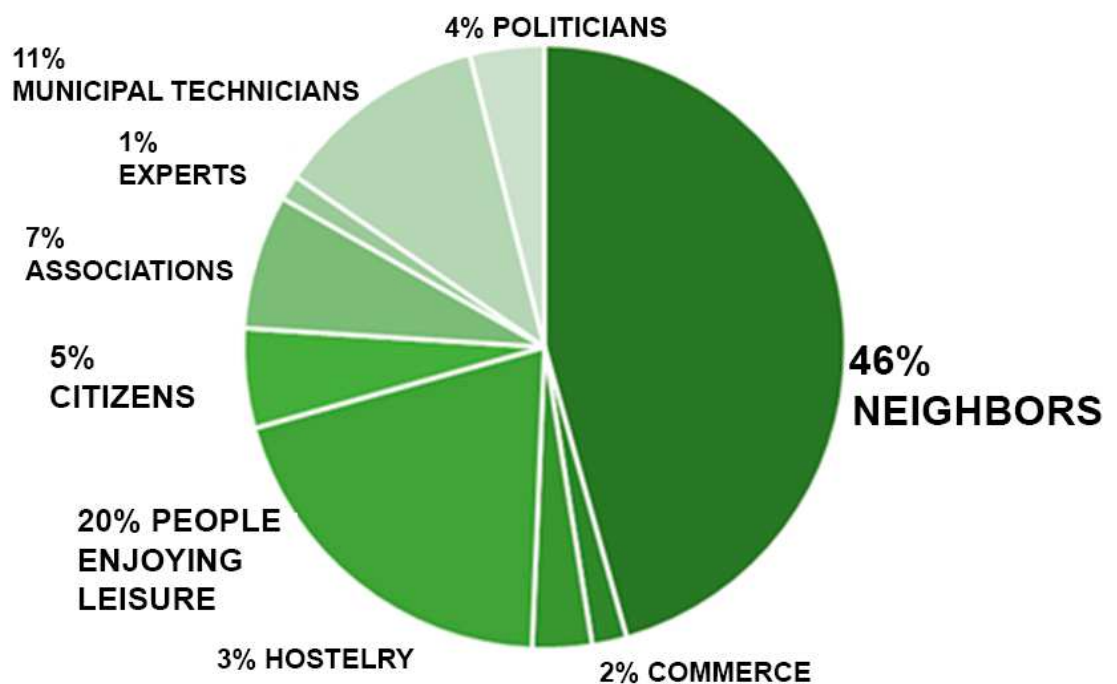
As part of the participation strategy, a virtual tool is commissioned for the participation. This digital tool (citizen) is useful for: increasing the number of participants that contribute the process (all those who cannot or do not want to attend the workshops), providing feedback of the results and managing the inscriptions related with the workshops.

Promotion of participation is a key variable to ensure assistance and increase the impact of the project and quality of achieved results. To this end, specific tasks were carried out through: press releases, actions on the municipal website and on social networks and signpost in the doorways of residential buildings in the medieval town.

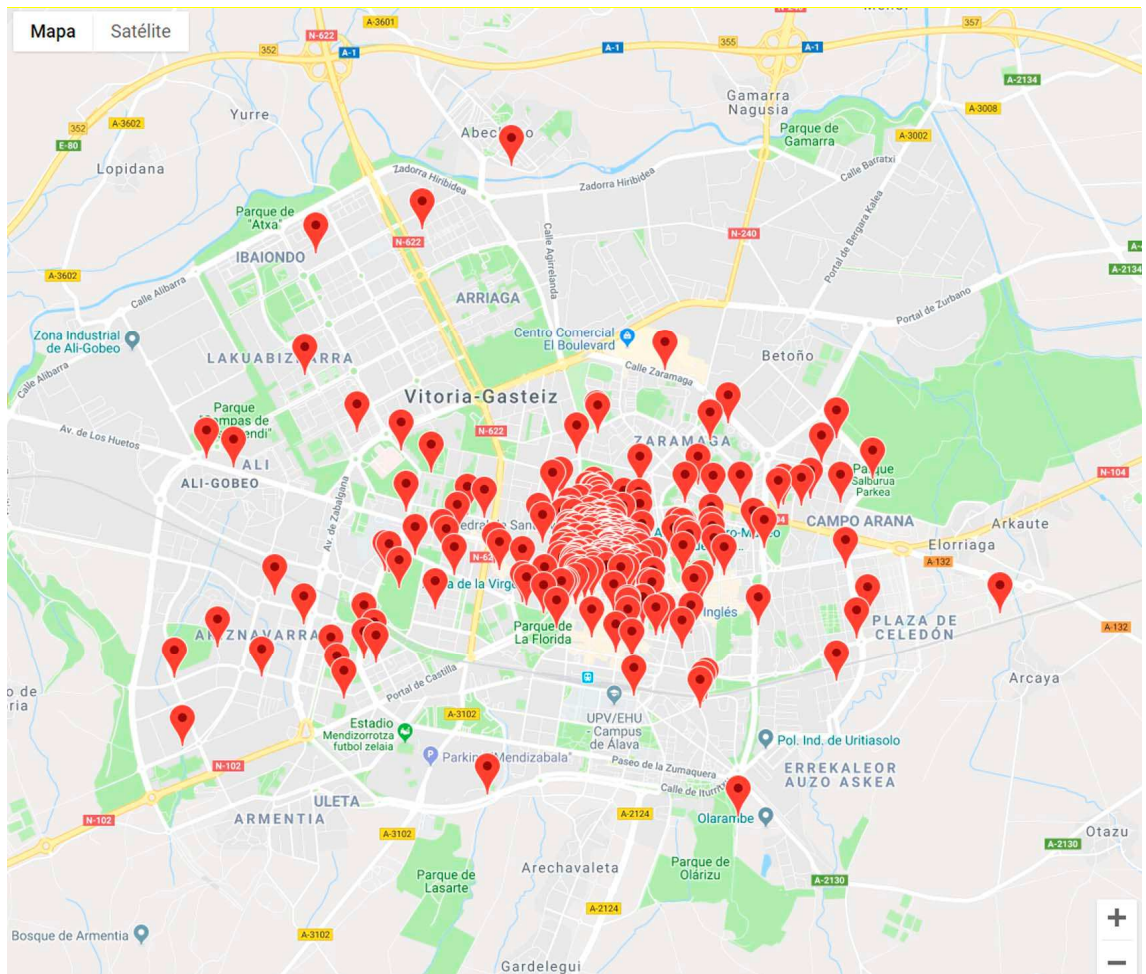
A total of 381 stakeholders participated in the process. 66% in the analysis phase and the rest in the second phase, proposing actions.

The following characteristics describe the participation pool:

- By channel, 42% attended to the workshops, while 58% used the digital platform for their participation.
- By sex, 51% are women, 48% are men and 1% are defined as other identities. In the workshops, the representation of women is lower (47% women vs 53% men), while digitally, it is higher (55% vs 44%). The percentage of women drops in the proposal phase.
- By age ranges, the most represented are those between 45 and 65, and those between 30 and 45 years old (with a 40% and 34% respectively). People under 18 years have practically not participated and people over 65 years old have participated mainly in presence, rather than digital.
- By type of stakeholder, although all the agents identified have participated (neighbours, economic activities, users, citizenship, associations, experts, and politicians), it must be highlighted the high participation of neighbours VS the low participation of economic activities.



- And finally, by location, 57% of participants reside in the medieval town, 38% in Vitoria-Gasteiz and 5% in other municipalities.



The process has allowed to contrast and enrich both: the diagnosis and the proposal of actions with technical, social, economic and political stakeholders. This approach extends the scope of the Plan from noise to dirt and other negative aspects, as well as to other positive variables of the leisure activities.

The evaluation of the process by participants in the workshops has been positive, in the different considered aspects, with between 96% and 100% of agreement:

- This workshop has been useful to better understand the action plan. Agree: 96% of the participants
- The facilitators have communicated clearly and easily. Agree: 100% of the participants
- The participants have communicated respectfully. Agree: 100% of the participants
- I would recommend this type of participation process. Agree: 98% of the participants

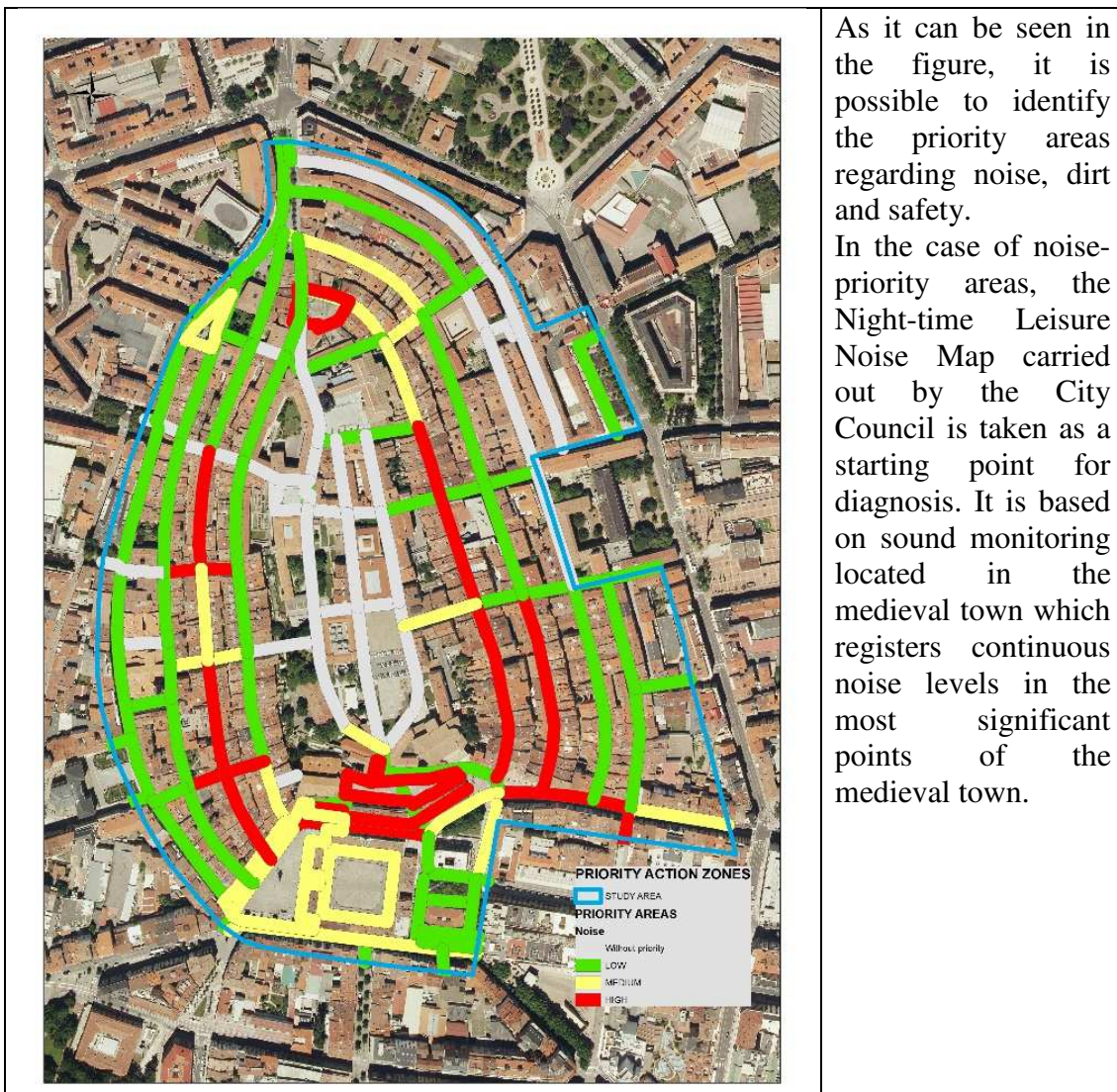
The process has allowed to identify proposals for priority action. The participants have developed some of the action proposals in a preliminary way in order to enrich the CANVAS of the Plan

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Diagnosis

The main objective of the diagnosis is to create a common stage of the issue: nightlife in medieval town of Vitoria-Gasteiz. For this purpose, conclusions are obtained on two variables: the priority areas for the intervention and the priority topics to be considered.

In relation to the areas to be prioritized: although, there are streets or zones with different types of problems and with different degrees of importance, it is considered that the Action Plan must be integral throughout all the medieval town. This approach is devoted to avoiding that the intervention proposed would move the problem from one area to another (not addressing the cause of the problem but only its consequence).



In relation to the topics, noise is the priority due to its sound level and recurrence. The dirt is another topic to be addressed because of the presence of urine, waste on streets and glass. And finally, the security is also a relevant topic in relation with vandalism, aggressions between specific groups, occasional thefts and intimidations.



Likewise, economic activities (related to leisure) is a priority aspect to be considered as an intervention variable:

- Locals with doors open generate noise outside and induce users to concentrate on the street, activating the public places.
- Local owners do not commit with normative or do not have enough legal or administrative support. Some of these normative are in relation with: timetables, use of terraces, the management of alcoholic drinks on the public places, presence of glass on the street, celebration of specific events, management of dirt, ...

On the other hand, the type of building and the type of economic activity, conditioned the intervention: it is necessary to improve the quality of the building to get a better acoustic insulation and to promote the residential use of the area. Likewise, it is necessary to promote diversity to enrich the economic activities in the medieval town.

Finally, users' awareness is key as they are the main agent in relation with the nuisance due to noise and dirt. It's important to put into value the medieval town as an identity symbol of the city and to provide quality of life to its residents.

### **3.2 Definition of Actions: Road Map**

Once a common view of the problem has been obtained, it is possible to identify actions to be addressed using the CAME approach:

To correct:

- Promoting the municipal action ex officio. Nowadays complaints is the key driver to start actions, nevertheless a more proactive approach is required. Citizens security department is a relevant agent related to this action.
- Encouraging communication channels with the municipality defining appropriate response protocols for citizens, users and economic activities.
- Promoting funding schemes for the rehabilitation of buildings (to improve the acoustic insulation of dwellings and especially in relation to the insulation of their facades).

To face:

- Local normative: review and, if necessary, modify it to include variables such as: the presence of people on public places, regulation of events, and schedule of activities. Also, the modification the types of sanctions must be addressed. The main objective is to strengthen the work of control and sanction of Citizen Security agents.
- Citizenship (noise-dirt-safety-drugs-vandalism ...): sensitizing users by extensive awareness campaigns in Vitoria-Gasteiz, and developing educational material and initiatives.

To maintain:

- Promoting activities that consider the objectives of the Plan: recognizing or rewarding those economic activities at the medieval town that develop activities aligned with the Plan.
- Maintaining the Medieval Town as a cultural and touristic reference area of the city: analyzing the events happening at the medieval town, promoting the use during day-time, selecting the best areas to be used for relevant events,

and applying protocols and criteria to attend the different challenges identified.

To enhance:

- Diversification of the economic activity through determining the type of schedules and promoting alternative options for leisure and services that also provide value for resident in the area.

Finally, as part of the definition of the Plan, the CANVAS of these actions will be developed. These CANVAS will help to identify resources and to schedule actions based on the identification of synergies with other city policies and plans.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

This communication details the work process and the obtained results of the ACTION PLAN FOR A RESPONSIBLE NIGHTLIFE IN THE MEDIEVAL TOWN OF VITORIA-GASTEIZ. The objective is to lay the basis of a way of doing, maintained over time, that mainly allows: a gradual improvement, the consideration of all needs of the medieval town and considering their replicating capacity to other areas of the city with common challenges related to public noise concurrence. Therefore, the participation is considered as a transverse variable that allows the co-creation of a framework of collaborative approach providing empowerment to the relevant stakeholders. On that sense, the proposals obtained during the participatory processes are integrated as part of the results of the project and will be included in the Plan.

To this end, the process is divided into three phases: two of them are technical developments (diagnosis and definition of the roadmap) and the other is a transverse phase (awareness and communication campaign). In each phase, face-to-face and digital participation dynamics are established for all the social, economic and decision-making stakeholders (all of them related to the challenges to be addressed). Stakeholders that were part of the participatory processes valued them as effective and valuable.

The result of the diagnosis shows that the acoustical variable (the main driver of the project) must be addressed in a holistic approach with other variables (safety and dirt). Therefore, the action must be integral both spatially and in terms of the subject to be considered.

Finally, it should be remarked that City Council must provide the leadership with a clear message regarding nightlife and must be an example of inter and intra coordination, involving the private sector, associations and citizens and defining protocols of ex officio action being proactively instead of reactive. The priority aspects to address are: enforcing the local normative, monitoring the situation to enrich and update the diagnosis and maintaining the ongoing actions (including participation and empowerment of stakeholders and the awareness of users and locals).

#### **5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We acknowledge gratefully Vitoria-Gasteiz municipality and all the stakeholders that has been involved in all the participatory processes

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