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CONSUL CON

DAY 2 - 13:45 - Participation Stage

Communication and digital participation: experiences from Montes de Oca and Málaga

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Session recap

At a glance

This Spanish-language session brought together two experiences. Massiel Villanueva, of the Municipality of Montes de Oca in Costa Rica, presented the city's long-running participatory budget on CONSUL: its legal basis, hybrid online and assembly-based process, results and challenges, with a lively discussion on how to sustain participation through changes of government. David of Enreda, a non-profit technology cooperative from Andalusia, then described the progressive roll-out of CONSUL in the City of Málaga, from internal training and legal consultations to a participatory budget with online and in-person voting, and a procurement innovation that gives points to certified CONSUL partners.

Key messages

- Earmarking a fixed share of a stable revenue (10 percent of property tax) protects participatory budgeting from political discretion.
- Formal regulations make the process robust and enforceable: residents can hold the administration to its own rules.
- Continuity through political change depends on committed staff who brief each new administration and defend the core commitments (budget share and support contract).
- Hybrid participation is essential where many residents are older: online submission combined with district assemblies and in-person support.
- Pre-submission advice and technical feasibility checks lead to better, implementable proposals.
- Large administrations can adopt CONSUL progressively, training each department to run its own processes and integrating the platform into legal procedures.
- Public tenders that reward CONSUL certification help ensure that experienced, committed providers run municipal platforms, rather than the cheapest bidder.

Facts, figures and references

- Montes de Oca: 10 percent of property tax for participatory budgeting (70 percent decided by communities, 30 percent by district councils); 233 projects and about EUR 3.7 million invested from 2016 to 2026.
- Málaga: about 600,000 inhabitants, 11 districts; participatory budget grew from about EUR 2.5 million to about EUR 4 million; first digital vote combined with ballot boxes.
- Málaga's tender awarded points for CONSUL DEMOCRACY Foundation certification.
- Enreda projects include a CONSUL consultation on Somalia's constitutional reform and a UNDP project in Peru.

Takeaways for the community

- Ring-fencing a share of stable revenue and enshrining it in regulation is a transferable model for sustaining participatory budgeting.
- Staff continuity and onboarding of new political leaders are key to surviving changes of government.
- Rewarding CONSUL certification in tenders is a practical way for cities to secure qualified providers and strengthen the ecosystem.
- Municipalities would value a peer network within the CONSUL community.