Political parties' influence on the transparency and participation of Spanish municipal websites: the case of Catalonia, the Community of Madrid, the Community of Valencia, and the Region of Murcia

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Abstract

In modern democratic states, citizen participation is promoted through representative channels. In recent years, at the different institutional and political levels in Spain, some classic parameters of democracy have been called into question, such as citizen representation, deliberation, and the responsibility of the rulers towards the citizens. This crisis coincides with a decline in bipartisanship in Spain and the appearance of new parties. Some of this parties championed the regeneration of democracy, committing themselves to encouraging transparency and citizen participation in public management. As local entities are the institutions closest to citizens, both transparency and participation become key elements to comply with these parameters, providing the technologies of information and communication (ICT) with new tools such as websites and portals, which can contribute to strengthening them. This research aims to analyze the use of these channels to promote transparency and citizen participation, by the municipalities of 4 autonomous communities (Catalonia, the Community of Madrid, the Valencian Community, and the Region of Murcia), placing special emphasis on how the left-right axes and old-new parties could influence, along with the population size of the municipalities. The method used consists of a categorical content analysis, based on the *Infopartícipa Map* indicators and two linear regression models using ordinary least squares. The results and conclusions of the study show that the size of the population and the

autonomous community are determining factors in the transparency indices. In addition, the political formations aligned to the left of the ideological spectrum, together with some of the new parties, influence the greater transparency and participation of the websites of the municipalities governed by them.

Keywords

Municipal communication; Transparency; Citizen participation; *InfoParticipa Map*; Political parties; Ideology; Autonomous communities; Representative democracy; New political parties; Webs; Websites.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the wave of indignation (**Gutiérrez-Rubí**, 2014) about the Spanish State's inability to deal with the economic crisis that began in 2008, and the successive cases of corruption, led citizens to demand other ways of doing politics and shaping the common will, empowering transparency and a participatory democracy to act as a counterweight (**Garrido-López**, 2021).

In this sense, citizens have been disappointed with representative institutions (**Sartori**, 1999), and a feeling of alienation and distrust towards politics has spread (**Lorente-Fontaneda**; **Sánchez-Vítores**, 2018) because decisions about public affairs are not being made (**Schumpeter**, 1962).

Representative political participation is carried out using political parties as key elements of democracy, but the public's opinion of political parties has deteriorated considerably in recent years (**Torcal-Loriente**, 2008; **Lobera-Serrano**; **Ferrándiz-Magaña**, 2013), reopening the debate on new ways for citizens to participate in collective decisions.

The representation crisis coincided with a moment of decline for the two-party system in Spain and the emergence of new parties that, in some cases, championed the regeneration of democracy by committing themselves to encouraging transparency and citizen participation in governance.

Since the end of the 20th century, and especially in the 21st century, a more participatory environment has been fostered in public administration, partly due to the progress made by ICTs and the promotion of new forms of governance (*European Commission*, 2001).

The proximity of local entities leads to a greater capacity of their governments to generate trust relationships with citizens (**Paricio-Esteban** *et al.*, 2020), where transparency is a key element that contributes, in turn, to achieving a more informed and active citizenship, enhancing participatory processes. ICTs have provided new tools such as the municipal website and transparency portals, which, according to **Campillo-Alhama** and **Martínez-Sala** (2017), can contribute to the management of public policies based on governance, transparency, and citizen participation.

1.1. Transparency as a response to the crisis of political representation

Citizens' distrust of political parties and governments has increased in recent years, as evidenced by successive opinion surveys by the *Center for Sociological Research* (*CIS*), as well as *Eurobarometers*. Thus, according to the *Pre-electoral Barometer of the General Elections* published in October 2019 (*CIS*, 2019), problems related to politicians in general, parties, and politics were the second issue that most concerned Spaniards. In this line, the *Eurobarometer* (*Comisión Europea*, 2021) showed that 90% of Spaniards distrust political parties and 75% distrust the government and also would not give the local administration a passing grade.

The crisis of political representation is a topic widely addressed by the scientific literature, being not only a problem of trust, as Villoria indicates,

> "given that distrust towards political power is necessary and positive for democracy, because it leads us to demand transparency to hinder the abuse of power" ["*dado que la desconfianza frente al poder político es necesaria y positiva para la democracia, porque nos lleva a demandar transparencia para dificultar el abuso de poder*"] (**Villoria**, 2018, p. 17),

but also of lack of interest that, as **Mair** (2008) points out, results in the citizens' feeling of indifference when it comes to the field of politics.

In Spain, there are two phenomena that represent a turning point:

- the 15M movement or the *indignados* movement revealed the breakdown of some of the political instruments that had taken shape during the Spanish Democratic Transition such as: the role of the parties, the role of civil society, and, especially, the idea of participation, "which never came to involve a substantial part of the public" ["*que nunca llegó a implicar a una parte sustancial de la ciudadanía*"] (**Monge-Lasierra**, 2021, p. 13); and
- the holding of the 2015 general elections that sparked "an implosion of the party system" ["*una implosión del sistema de partidos*"] (**Giménez-Glück**, 2019, p. 23).

Its most immediate effect was the entry of new political parties into the institutions (**Lobera-Serrano**; **Rogero-García**, 2017). *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*, with almost 35% of the votes (**Orriols**; **Cordero**, 2016), entered the institutional sphere with a differential approach rooted in the regeneration of democracy. These new parties demanded greater transparency and participation to address disaffection, which forced the traditional parties to adopt strategies to adapt to the new demands (**Rodríguez-Teruel** *et al.*, 2010).

Podemos proposed the creation of Citizens' Councils in different sectoral and cross-sectional areas in all of the autonomous communities, the creation of a Petitions Commission, and the implementation of new digital tools for citizen participation. In turn, *Ciudadanos* proposed reforming the *Law on political parties* to guarantee greater internal democracy and more transparency and the *Law* on the people's legislative initiative so as to facilitate this type of procedure, as well as to encourage citizen participation at the local level.

From there, according to **Villoria** (2018), the third generation of deontological values of public service –which incorporates democratic elements such as participation, collaboration, accountability, and transparency– was established. All of this could be directed at recovering the revolutionary idea of the mid-eighteenth century, according to which representative institutions are based on the idea that "the people should govern themselves" ["*el pueblo debía gobernarse a sí mismo*"] (**Przeworski**, 2010, p. 33), taking an active part in decision-making, in an informed way (**Kosack**; **Fung**, 2014). This fact would be tied to the promotion of institutions that encourage the public to innovate and produce public goods (**Acemoglu**; **Johnson**; **Robinson**, 2005).

As a result, as **Maravall** (2013) points out, an increase in transparency and participation was expected, not only in the political parties' platforms but also in their actions and communication so as to fulfill their campaign promises. Thus, it should be a goal for institutions and parties to implement structural instruments (**Bauhr**; **Grimes**, 2014) in the area of transparency and participation.

Nevertheless, Díez-Garrido, Campos-Domínguez, and Calvo-Miguel conclude that all political parties tout transparency in their election platforms, but there is, with the exception of *Podemos*,

> "a significant dissonance with what they show on their digital platforms" ["*una importante disonancia con lo que demuestran en sus plataformas digitales*"] (**Díez-Garrido**; **Campos-Domínguez**; **Calvo**, 2019, p. 44).

In this line, **Meca-Valles**, **Guzmán-Raja**, and **Guzmán-Raja** (2021) reveal a low level of transparency on most of the political parties' websites.

Overcoming the representation crisis involves a rapprochement with citizens and the restoration of areas of interaction (**Mair**, 2008). This is only possible through greater transparency and participation in the political and institutional sphere, since administrations that tout it are considered to be efficient and better quality (**Hood**; **Heald**, 2006; **Calvo-Gutiérrez**, 2013; **Villoria**, 2018; **Barredo-Ibáñez** *et al.*, 2022). In addition, transparency and participation are key tools for representation and accountability (**Bauhr**; **Grimes**, 2014), which lie at the heart of the public's concerns (**Ignazi**, 2021).

Moreover, transparency and participation are an act of communication (**Frank**; **Oztoprak**, 2015). One of the essential principles of representative democracy is freedom of public opinion, and to achieve this, it is necessary for the media and citizens to have access to public and political information (**Manin**, 1997) to reduce information asymmetries (**Bauhr**; **Grimes**, 2014), which can certainly be enhanced with proper use of ICT (**Bertot**; **Jaeger**; **Grimes**, 2012).

1.2. Municipal communication, transparency, and participation: *Infoparticipa Map*

At the municipal level, there are different precedents focused on transparency and accountability through websites and transparency and citizen participation portals, driven by *Law 19/2013 on Transparency, access to information, and good governance* and the autonomous and local legislations that have followed it.

Catalonia was one of the first to create regulations on transparency (*Law 19/2014 on Transparency, access to public information, and good governance*). This regulation was recently complemented with *Decree 8/2021 on Transparency and the right of access to public information*, aimed at a more homogeneous, effective, and comprehensive implementation of the *Law* by establishing monitoring mechanisms (*Interdepartmental Commission on Transparency and Open Government* and the *Directive Unit of the Administration of the Government regarding transparency*).

In turn, Murcia also soon proposed a regulation on transparency and participation (*Law 12/2014 on Transparency and citizen participation*), creating an interdepartmental commission for the planning, coordination, and approval of the *Law* and an *Office of Transparency and Citizen Participation* for its implementation. In addition, it included a disciplinary and sanctioning system.

The Community of Valencia's first regulation was in 2015 (*Law of Transparency, good governance, and citizen participation*). More recently, *Law 1/2022 on Transparency and good governance* has been passed, partially repealing the previous law, guaranteeing transparency (in regards to both active publicity and right of access), regulating the *Valencian Transparency Council* and the system of guarantees and responsibilities for noncompliance with the law, establishing mechanisms for monitoring and sanctioning.

The Community of Madrid, in turn, has a more recent regulation (*Law 10/2019 on Transparency and citizen participation*) that establishes a mechanism that allows the *Transparency and Participation Council* to function independently. It also includes a system of violations and penalties.

One of the longest-running lines of research is the *Infoparticipa Map*, which has its own system for evaluating public information applied to municipal communication, originating prior to *Law 19/2013*. This methodology defines indicators for evaluating municipal websites (**Molina-Rodríguez-Navas**; **Simelio-Solà**; **Corcoy-Rius**, 2017; **Corcoy-Rius**, 2018; **Carrascosa-Puertas**; **Simelio-Solà**, 2019), broken into two groups (transparency and participation). Those municipalities that comply with more than 90% of the indicators receive the Infoparticipa seal each year (Table 1).

Table 1. The evolution of *Infoparticipa* seals

Years Autonomous communities	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Catalonia	36	67	61	77	92	98	113	121
Community of Madrid	-	-	-	-	-	9	5	6
Community of Valencia	-	-	-	-	-	4	7	9
Region of Murcia	-	-	-	4	6	6	8	9

Previous studies that applied this methodology reveal that, even with an improvement in institutional communication, there is still room for improvement (**Fernández-Falero** *et al.*, 2017; **Bruno-Carlos**; **Alonso-Romero**, 2020; **Beltrán-Orenes**; **Rodríguez-Mateos**, 2021), in terms of both transparency (**Moreno-Sardà**; **Molina-Rodríguez-Navas**; **Simelio-Solà**, 2017) and participation (**Paricio-Esteban** *et al.*, 2020).

Previous studies have focused on individual autonomous communities, not providing comparative results or addressing the parties' possible influence in the local public sphere when it comes to promoting transparency and participation on online channels, thereby giving this study distinctive insight.

2. Objectives, hypotheses, and methodology

This study arises from the following question: Does the type of governing political party influence transparency and participation through municipal websites? To answer this question, this paper aims to analyze different Spanish autonomous communities' municipalities' use of these channels to promote transparency and citizen participation, with a special emphasis on the influence of the old party-new party and left-right axes on these results.

In this sense, the study raises two starting hypotheses, following the review of previous studies that relate greater transparency and participation to parties located on the left of the political spectrum (**Guillamón**; **Bastida**; **Benito**, 2011; **García-Sánchez**; **Frías-Aceituno**; **Rodríguez-Domínguez**, 2013; **Tejedo-Romero**; **Ferraz-Esteves-Araujo**, 2018), and studies that link them to new parties (**Martín-Cavanna**; **Martisi**, 2018). In turn, **García-Santamaría** and **Martín-Matallana** (2017) and **Díez-Garrido**, **Campos-Domínguez**, and **Calvo** (2019) stress the idea that there is no particular political party that in itself is more transparent.

> H1: It is assumed that there are differences in terms of transparency and participation on municipal websites and transparency portals depending on the governing political party according to its ideology (left/right).

> H2: It is assumed that the municipal websites of towns governed by new parties whose founding principles are based on the regeneration of democracy and a commitment to transparency and greater citizen participation will have higher levels of transparency and participation.

The general objectives of the research are:

> 1. To determine the degree of transparency and participation of municipal websites and portals paying particular attention to the communities under study.

> 2. To determine the possible influence of the governing political party on the transparency and participation of municipal websites and portals considering two axes: right-left and new party-old party.

> 3. To observe whether there are differences among the autonomous communities analyzed in terms of the transparency and participation of municipal websites according to the right-left and new political party-old political party axes.

> 4. To determine whether population size affects the transparency and participation of the municipal websites of the communities analyzed.

2.1. Research corpus

The research universe was made up of Spanish municipal websites, selecting a sample of four autonomous communities in Spain that are diverse in terms of the following criteria:

- Population density. The autonomous communities with the highest population density are the Balearic Islands, the Canary Islands, Catalonia, the Community of Valencia, Madrid, Murcia, and the Basque Country (*INE*, 2021). Of these, only the following participated in the *Infoparticipa Map* during the period under analysis: Catalonia, Valencia, Madrid, and Murcia.

- Out of all of the municipalities in these communities, those with more than 10,000 inhabitants were selected on the basis of previous studies (**Moreno-Sardà**; **Molina-Rodríguez-Navas**; **Simelio-Solà**, 2017; **Paricio-Esteban** *et al.*, 2020) that indicate that, below that population, the lack of resources can influence website management.
- Furthermore, in relation to the research objectives, only localities governed by a political party have been selected.

The research corpus is made up of 221 municipalities, and as shown in Table 2, the map of political parties is made up of national and regional parties.

Table 2. Selected political parties

Catalonia (108 municipalities)	Community of Valencia (39 municipalities)	Community of Madrid (45 municipalities)	Region of Murcia (29 municipalities)
Partido Popular	Partido Popular	Partido Popular	Partido Popular
PSOE	PSOE	PSOE	PSOE
Ciudadanos	Ciudadanos	Ciudadanos	Ciudadanos
Unidas Podemos	Unidas Podemos	Unidas Podemos	Unidas Podemos
Izquierda Unida	Izquierda Unida	Izquierda Unida	Izquierda Unida
ERC	Compromís		
Junts x Cat			

Note: *PSOE*: *Partido Socialista Obrero Español.*
ERC: *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya.*
Junts x Cat: *Junts per Catalunya.*

2.2. Methodology

Regarding objectives 1 and 2, we applied the methodology of the *Infoparticipa Map* (2020), divided into two groups: transparency and participation (see Annex). Data collection was carried out by different members of the Infoparticipa team, and to monitor the homogeneity of criteria, we used the guidelines published on the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* website, where spot checks are carried out.

A categorical content analysis (**Bardin**, 1986) was carried out, designing a codebook differentiating five variables:

Table 3. The different political parties' location along the right-left axis according to the population surveyed by the *CIS*

Party	Average	Standard deviation	*N*
PSOE	4.0	1.6	3,903
Partido Popular	7.8	1.3	3,959
Podemos	2.4	1.4	3,825
Izquierda Unida	2.3	1.3	3,750
Ciudadanos	6.7	1.7	3,676
ERC (in Cataluña)	3.0	1.6	579
Junts per Cat (in Cataluña)	5.4	2.0	547
Compromís (in the Community of Valencia)	2.7	1.6	325

Source: *Post-electoral barometer for general elections 2019* (*CIS*, 2019).

- Overall compliance (48 indicators)
- Overall compliance in regard to transparency (indicators 1-34) with particular attention to indicators 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8
- Overall compliance in regard to participation (indicators 35-48)
- Overall compliance in regard to political parties according to left-right axis as shown in Table 3 (48 indicators and specific analysis of indicators 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8)
- Overall compliance in regard to political parties according to old-new axis as indicated in Table 4 (48 indicators and specific analysis of indicators 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8)

When establishing a classification of the new and old parties, a distinction was made between national and regional parties (Table 4).

Table 4. Classification of political parties in Spain according to old-new axis with reference bibliography

Older parties Spain	New parties Spain	Source
PSOE	Podemos	**Calle-Collado** (2016) **Rama-Caamaño** (2016) **Rama-Caamaño**; **Reynaers** (2019)
Partido Popular	Ciudadanos	
Izquierda Unida	Vox	
Old parties within autonomous communities (CCAA)	**New parties within autonomous communities (CCAA)**	**Source**
ERC	En Comú Podem	**Barberà**; **Barrio**; **Rodríguez** (2009) **Martín-Cubas** *et al.* (2017) **Colomer** (2018) **Fernández-Castaño**; **González-Torrecillas**; **García-Moreno** (2018) **López-Díaz** (2021)
	Compromís	
	Junts per Cat	
	Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP)	

With respect to objectives 2, 3, and 4, a statistical treatment of data was carried out. To analyze the influence of political party, autonomous community, and population size on transparency and participation, we used the ordinary least-squares (OLS) linear regression method and considered the "percentage of compliance" as the dependent variable. This variable was calculated according to the total percentage of indicators with which the municipalities complied.

> The proximity of local entities leads to a greater capacity of their governments to generate trust relationships with citizens where transparency is a key element

Two different models were designed. In model A, the independent variables are new, right, and population; in model B, the "autonomous community" effect was taken into account, as well. For this, a dummy variable was used for each community, taking Catalonia as a reference. The description of the independent variables, common to both models, is as follows:

The variable "new" ["*nuevo*"] is a dummy variable that has a value of 1 if the political party is considered newly created and 0 if it is considered old (Table 4).

- The variable "right" ["*derecha*"] is a continuous variable that indicates the perception that citizens have of whether the governing party is ideologically more right-wing or less right-wing (value between 1 and 10, with being closer to 10 being considered the more right-wing); this was obtained from the CIS barometer from December 2019 (Table 3).
- Regarding the variable "population" ["*población*"], the number of inhabitants in the municipality in the year *Infoparticipa Map* collected the data has been taken into account. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables mentioned.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of the variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Percentage	221	8.33	100	59.66	27.43
New	221	0	1	0,19	0.39
Right	221	2,3	7.8	4.71	1.76
Population	221	10,039	3,266,126	69,307.35	252,376,83
DCCAAC (Catalonia)	221	0	1	0.49	0.501
DCCAACV (Community of Valencia)	221	0	1	0.18	0.382
DCCAAMU (Murcia)	221	0	1	0.13	0.338
DCCAAMA (Community of Madrid)	221	0	1	0.20	0.404

The models used, in which Y (dependent variable) is the percentage of compliance, are outlined below:

- Model A: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 NEW + \beta_2 RIGHT + \beta_3 POPULATION + \varepsilon$
- Model B: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 NEW + \beta_2 RIGHT + \beta_3 POPULATION + \beta_4 DCCAACV + \beta_5 DCCAAMU + \beta_6 DCCAAMA + \varepsilon$

Before estimating the regressions, collinearity tests were performed on the variables to determine whether there might be a correlation problem between them, but no correlation was found.

As pointed out by **Cea-D'Ancona** (2002), the tolerance statistic, whose values are between 0 and 1, would indicate a multicollinearity problem if the value were close to 0.2. The test results show that the independent variables lack such a problem; the same is true for the variance inflation factor, which would indicate that there is a problem for values greater than 5.

Table 6. Collinearity test

Coefficients			
Model		Collinearity statistics	
		Tolerance	Variance inflation factor
1	(Constant)		
	New	0.887	1.127
	Right	0.730	1.369
	Population	0.978	1.022
	DCCAACV	0.790	1.266
	DCCAAMU	0.755	1.325
	DCCAAMA	0.633	1.580

3. Results

3.1. Overall results of overall compliance with transparency and participation indicators of the websites and portals of the four communities studied

First, the overall compliance results for all the autonomous communities are presented. Regarding compliance with the 48 indicators analyzed, 59.72% showed compliance of more than 50%, while 32.12% were between 75% and 100% (Figure 1).
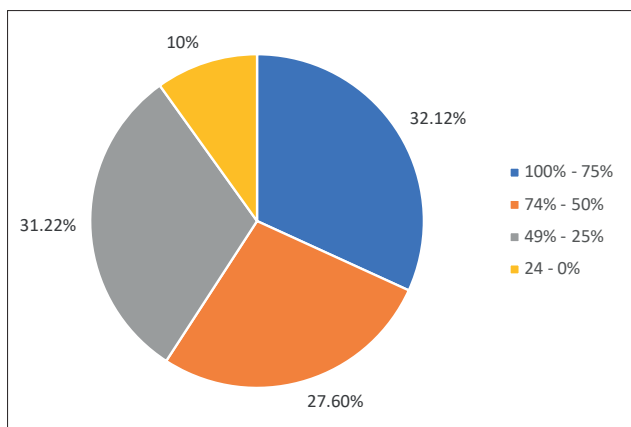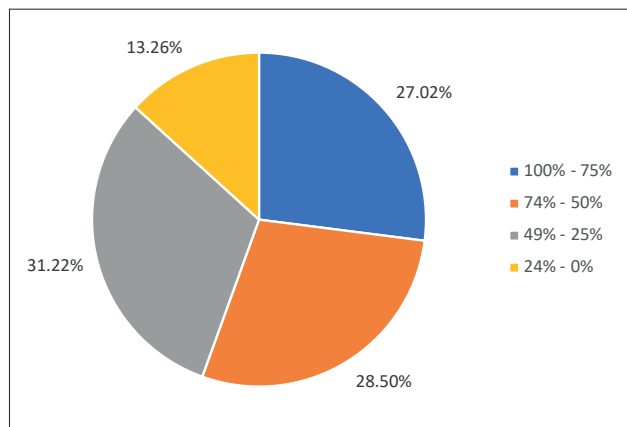
Figure 1. Overall transparency compliance

Figure 2. Overall participation compliance

Regarding the transparency indicators (from 1 to 34), 63.92% of the municipal websites had compliance of over 50%, while 35.41% were between 75% and 100%.

Regarding the indicators related to the transparency of public offices linked to political parties (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8), compliance of 60.38% was observed. When analyzing the indicators related to the government team, 78.39% of the municipal websites published the name, photo, and party (indicator 3), while 52.25% presented biographies (indicator 4).

Regarding the opposition, 73.87% of the websites published the name, photo, and party (indicator 5), while 45.49% presented biographies (indicator 6). Only 35.74% published the elected officials' salaries (indicator 7) on their websites. In addition, the statements of activities and assets of elected officials (indicator 8) appeared on 40% of the websites.

Finally, regarding the participation indicators (from 35 to 48), the municipalities that complied with more than 50% of the indicators represented 55.53%, with 27.02% above 75%.

Regarding the general compliance with the transparency and participation indicators according to autonomous community, in Catalonia, 84.08% of the municipalities had a compliance rate of over 50%, while 52.77% exceeded 75%. In the Community of Valencia, 35% of the municipalities had a compliance rate of over 50%, while only 5% exceeded 75%.

In the Community of Madrid, 46.67% of the municipalities had a compliance rate of over 50%, while 15.55% exceeded 75%. Finally, in the Region of Murcia, 45.81% of the municipalities had a compliance rate of over 50%, while 17.24% exceeded 75%.

The main results for the group of transparency indicators are presented below by autonomous community. In Catalonia, 78.62% of the municipal websites showed compliance above 50%: 52.77% had compliance above 75%, and 26.85%, between 50% and 74%. A total of 19.44% registered compliance between 49% and 25%, and there was only one municipality (Sant Adrià de Besòs) below 24%.

In the Community of Valencia, the Community of Madrid, and the Region of Murcia, the majority of municipal websites had below 50% compliance. Thus, in the Community of Valencia, 5.12% complied with 75% to 100%, and 30.76% complied with between 50% and 74%. Of the towns, 56.41% were in the range between 49% and 25%, and there were only two municipalities below 24% (Alginet and Benissa).

In the Community of Madrid, 35.5% of the populations were between 49% and 25%, and 17.77% were below 24%. Of the websites,
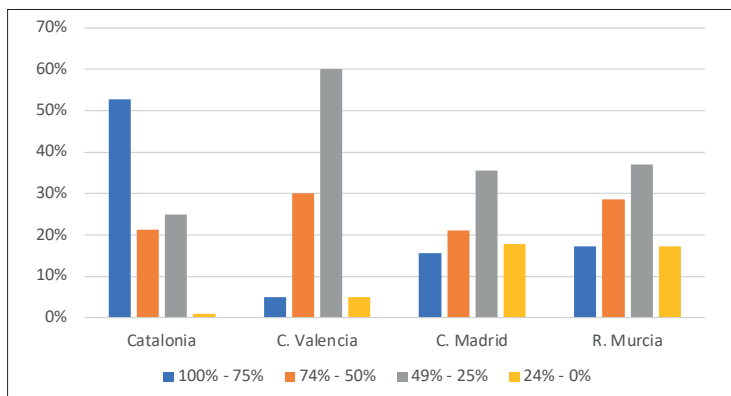

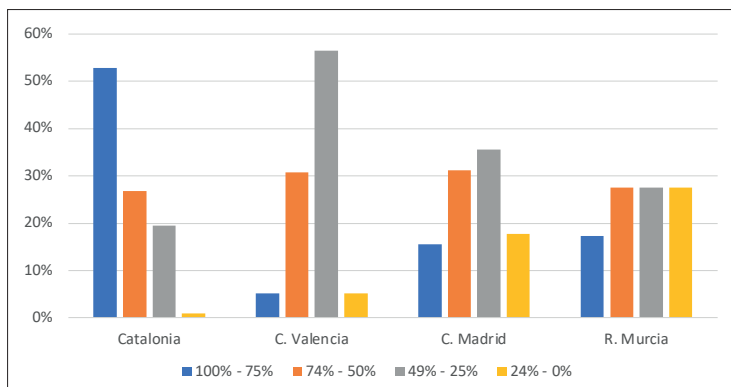Figure 3. Compliance on municipal websites according to autonomous community

Figure 4. Compliance with transparency indicators according to autonomous community

15.55% complied with 75% to 100%, and 31.1%, between 50% and 74%. Finally, in the Region of Murcia, 17.24% complied with 75% to 100% of the indicators, 27.58% of which were between 50% and 74%. Of the populations, 27.58% were in the range between 49% and 25%, and 27.58% were below 24%.

With regard to participation, in Catalonia, 79.56% of the sites had greater than 50% compliance: 55.56% of municipal sites were between 75% and 100%, 24% between 50% and 74%, and 19.44% between 49% and 25%, while there was only one municipality (Sant Adrià de Besòs) below 24%.

In the rest of the communities, the majority recorded compliance of less than 50%. In the Community of Valencia, 5.12% of the municipal websites complied with 75-100% and 30.76% complied with between 50% and 74%. Of the towns, 61.53% were in the range between 49% and 25%, and 2.58% were below 24%. In the Community of Madrid and the Region of Murcia, the percentages of compliance with transparency were the same.

3.2. Compliance with transparency and participation indicators by governing party according to the right-left axis in the communities as a whole

First, the results of the parties associated with the right of the axis are presented.

In the case of municipalities governed by *Partido Popular*, the percentage of websites that passed (49%) and failed (51%) in terms of transparency and participation is similar. Only three municipalities had a degree of compliance between 75% and 100% (Majadahonda and Pozuelo de Alarcón in the Community of Madrid and Caravaca de la Cruz in the Region of Murcia), and 6 below 24% (Arroyomolinos, Colmenar, San Agustín del Guadalaix, and Valdemorillo in the Community of Madrid, Benissa in the Community of Valencia, and Ceutí in the Region of Murcia).

The majority of the towns in which *Ciudadanos* was the governing party failed when it came to transparency and participation (80%). Only one municipality (Valdemoro in the Community of Madrid) was between 50% and 74%.

In contrast to these data, 87.5% of the municipalities governed by *Junts per Catalunya* passed when it came to transparency and participation, with more than half of them scoring between 75% and 100%. Only three municipalities registered compliance between 25% and 49% (Santa Coloma de Farners, Tordera, and Valls in Catalonia).

The results of the municipalities governed by parties linked to the left of the axis are presented below. Of the towns governed by PSOE, 62% passed when it came to transparency and participation (31 municipalities between 75% and 100% and 30 between 50% and 74%). A total of 38% failed (25 between 25% and 49% and 12 below 24%).

Similar data were found in the municipalities governed by the *ERC*, where 65.7% complied with more than 50% of the indicators (15 between 75% and 100% and 8 between 50% and 74%). Only 12 municipalities were between 25% and 49%.

In the case of *Compromís*, 40% of the websites complied with more than 75% of the indicators, whereas 60% were below 49%.

The towns governed by *En Comú* mostly passed when it came to transparency and participation (77.7%), with 4 municipalities between 75% and 100% and 3 between 50% and 74%. Only 2 municipalities were between 25% and 49% (Pallejà and Santa Perpètua de Mogoda).

Finally, the municipalities governed by *Izquierda Unida* recorded compliance of less than 49%.

Below are the results of the analysis focused on indicators 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 related to the transparency of the government team and the opposition, according to the ideology of the governing party (right-left axis).

Starting with the parties on the right of the political spectrum, 77.27% of the total number of municipalities governed by *Partido Popular*
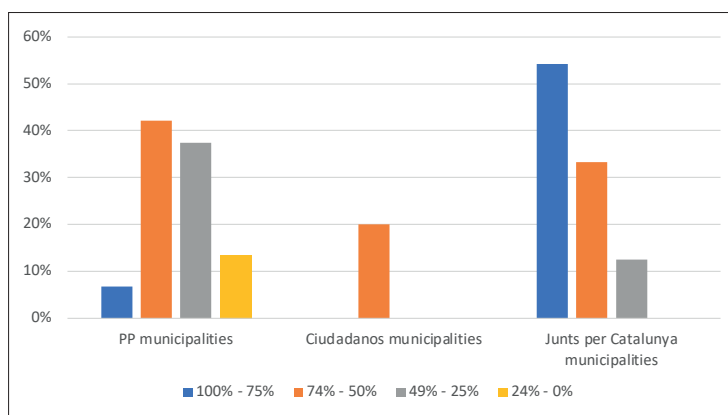

Figure 5. Compliance in websites of municipalities governed by parties located on the right of the axis
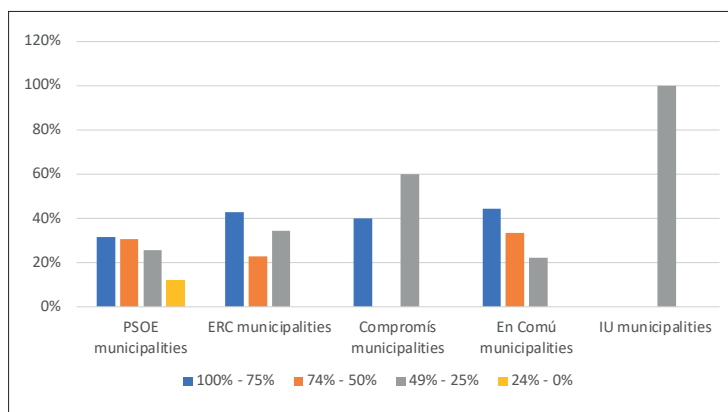

Figure 6. Compliance in websites of municipalities governed by parties located on the right of the axis

(44 municipalities) complied with indicator 3. Regarding indicator 4, the level of compliance dropped to 40.9%. In total, 65.9% complied with indicator 5, and compliance with indicator 6 reduced to 43.18%. Only 13.63% of the websites complied with indicator 7, and 27.27% with indicator 8.

> "Most of the municipalities approve in transparency and participation"

A total of 40% of the municipalities governed by *Ciudadanos* (5) complied with indicator 3. Regarding indicator 4, the level of compliance dropped to 20%. With respect to indicator 5, 60% were compliant, and for indicators 6 and 7, compliance reduced to 20%. Finally, with regard to indicator 8, 40% have published these statements.

Meanwhile, of the total number of municipalities governed by *Junts per Catalunya* (24 municipalities), 95.83% complied with indicator 3. Regarding indicator 4, the level of compliance dropped to 79.16%. Of the municipalities, 95.83% complied with indicator 5, 75% with indicator 6, and 50% with indicator 7. Finally, with respect to indicator 8, 62.5% were in compliance.

Continuing with the parties on the left, in relation to PSOE (98), 26% of the websites complied with indicator 3, and indicator 4 reached 52%. A total of 69.38% complied with indicator 5, and 39.79% with 6. Finally, indicators 7 and 8 were published by 41.8%.

Of the total number of municipalities governed by the *ERC* (35), 85.71% complied with indicator 3, 54.28% with indicator 4, 88.57% with indicator 5, and 48.57% with indicator 6. Only 34.28% complied with indicator 7. Finally, with regard to indicator 8, 65% had published these statements.

In the towns governed by *Compromís* (4), 50% complied with indicator 3, and 25% with indicator 4. In total, 50% of the countries complied with indicator 5, indicator 6 was half that (25%), 60% complied with indicator 7, and 50% complied with indicator 8.

In turn, all the municipalities governed by *En Comú* (9) complied with indicator 3, 66.66% with indicator 4, and 88.88% with indicator 5; indicators 6 and 7 were reduced to 66.66%. Finally, 55.55% had published indicator 8.

All towns governed by *Izquierda Unida* (2) complied with indicator 3. In relation to indicators 4 and 5, the level was 50%. None of them complied with indicators 6, 7, and 8.

3.3. Compliance with transparency and participation indicators by governing party according to the old party-new party axis in the communities studied as a whole

In localities governed by old parties (*Partido Popular*, *PSOE*, *Izquierda Unida*, and *ERC*), the average compliance with transparency and participation indicators was 44.17%. However, differences can be observed: Whereas, in the municipalities governed by PSOE and the *ERC*, most of the websites registered compliance above 50% (62% and 65.7%, respectively), only 49% registered compliance in those governed by *Partido Popular*, and none of those governed by *Izquierda Unida* did.

Table 7. Compliance of websites of municipalities governed by old parties with transparency and participation indicators

Levels of compliance	Percentage of *Partido Popular* municipalities	Percentage of *PSOE* municipalities	Percentage of *Izquierda Unida* municipalities	Percentage of *ERC* municipalities
100% to 50%	49	62	0	65.7
49% to 0%	51	38	100	34.3

In the towns governed by the new parties (*Ciudadanos*, *Junts per Catalunya*, *Compromís*, and *En Comú*), the average compliance rate was 71.8%. However, differences were also found: More than half of the towns governed by *Junts per Catalunya* and *En Comú* registered compliance levels above 50% (87.5% and 77.77%, respectively) on their websites, compared with *Ciudadanos* and *Compromís*, where the majority were below that.

Table 8. Compliance of websites of municipalities governed by new parties with transparency and participation indicators

Levels of compliance	Percentage of *Ciudadanos* municipalities	Percentage of *Junts per Catalunya* municipalities	Percentage of *Compromís* municipalities	Percentage of *En Comú* municipalities
100% to 50%	20	87,50	40	77.77
49% to 0%	80	12,50	60	22.23

Finally, we present the results centered exclusively around indicators 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 according to the old party-new party axis.

Beginning with the results related to the indicators on the governing team (3 and 4), with respect to the old parties (*Partido Popular*, *PSOE*, *Izquierda Unida*, and *ERC*), the average compliance with indicator 3 on the municipal websites was 72.24% (it was below 30% only in municipalities governed by *PSOE*). With respect to indicator 4, the average compliance rate was 49.29% (with only *Partido Popular* below 50%).

Regarding the indicators related to the information about the opposition (indicators 5 and 6), the average compliance with indicator 5 was 68.46%, that of indicator 6 was 32.88% (0% on the websites of the municipalities governed by *Izquierda Unida*), and that of indicator 7 was 32.4%.

Finally, in relation to indicator 8 (declaration of assets of government and the opposition), the average stood at 33.7% (only *ERC* passed, and the case of *Izquierda Unida* sticks out with 0% compliance).

Table 9. Compliance on municipal websites with indicators 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 when it comes to the old parties (in percentage)

Political parties	*Partido Popular*	*PSOE*	*Izquierda Unida*	*ERC*
Indicator 3	77.27	26.00	100	85.71
Indicator 4	40.90	52.00	50	54.28
Indicator 5	65.90	69.38	50	88.75
Indicator 6	43.18	48.57	0	48.57
Indicator 7	13.63	34.28	0	34.28
Indicator 8	27.27	65.71	0	65.71

In turn, in the towns governed by the new parties (*Ciudadanos*, *Junts per Catalunya*, *Compromís*, and *En Comú*), the average compliance with indicator 3 was 71.45% (only the websites of the municipalities governed by *Ciudadanos* had a compliance of less than 50%). With respect to indicator 4, the average compliance rate was 47.7% (municipalities governed by *Ciudadanos* and *Compromís* were below 25%, whereas *Junts per Catalunya* and *En Comú* exceeded 50%).

Regarding the indicators related to information about the opposition (indicators 5 and 6), the average compliance with indicator 5 was 73.67% (all parties above 50%), and that of indicator 6 was 46.65% (municipalities governed by *Ciudadanos* and *Compromís* had compliance below 25%, whereas *Junts per Catalunya* and *En Comú* had compliance above 50%).

With regard to indicator 7 on information on elected officials' salaries, 51.6% of the websites of municipalities governed by these political parties did comply with this indicator, the most noteworthy being the municipalities governed by *Ciudadanos*, where only 20% of the websites published this information.

Finally, in relation to indicator 8 (declaration of assets of the government and the opposition), the average stood at 52% (only municipal websites in towns governed by *Ciudadanos* failed).

Table 10. Compliance on municipal websites with indicators 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 when it comes to the new parties (in percentage)

Political parties	*Ciudadanos*	*JuntsXCat*	*Compromís*	*En Comú*
Indicator 3	40	95.83	50	100
Indicator 4	20	79.16	25	66.66
Indicator 5	60	95.83	50	88.88
Indicator 6	20	75.00	25	66.66
Indicator 7	20	50.00	60	66.66
Indicator 8	40	62.50	50	55.55

3.4. Results of the influence of the profile of the mayors, the population of the municipality, and the autonomous community on transparency and municipal participation

The results of the two regressions performed (model A and B) are detailed below. As can be seen, two of the independent variables are related to political party (new and right). Although one might assume that the mayors of different municipalities behave differently, even though they belong to the same political party, an Anova test of differences in variances was performed to see how similar behavior was within each party.

Table 11. Anova test results

Anova				
Percentage				
	Sum of squares	Df	Root mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	20,745.065	7	2,963.581	4.357	0.000
Within groups	144,884.453	213	680.209		
Total	165,629.518	220			

According to the test result, the differences between the various political parties were significantly greater than the differences within each party, indicating that mayors belonging to the same party will have similar behavior.

In contrast, the results of regression models A and B (Table 12) were quite different if the effect of the autonomous community is taken into account.

As can be seen in Table 12, in model A, where no distinction is made between autonomous communities, all the variables were significant, although the "new" variable was significant only at a 95% confidence level. This significance would imply that, if the municipality is governed by a new party, a party considered more left-wing (the coefficient *ß* of the "ri-

ght" variable is negative), the larger the municipality, the higher the percentage of compliance.

In model B, the variables for the autonomous communities of Valencia, Murcia, and Madrid were introduced, and Catalonia was taken as a reference, demonstrating that the variables related to political parties are no longer significant. However, the size of the municipality continues to be a variable that explains the highest percentage of compliance. With respect to the three autonomous communities, the results were significant and had negative coefficients, that is, the Catalan municipalities had a higher percentage of compliance. If, moreover, the increase in R^2 in model B is considered, the municipality's being located in Catalonia was more determinant for the percentage of compliance.

The goodness-of-fit measures for models A and B are presented below.

Table 12. Linear regression analysis (OLS) of overall compliance level

	Model A $\beta\ p$	Model B $\beta\ p$
Constant	**	**
New	0.157 *	0.002 ns
Right	−0.223 **	0.042 ns
Population	0.202 **	0.231 **
DCCAACV		−0.436 **
DCCAAMU		−0.323 **
DCCAAMA		−0.484 **
Adjusted R squared	10.1%	31.4%

** = $p < 0.01$; * = $p < 0.05$; ns = nonsignificant

Table 13. Goodness of fit for model A

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard error estimate	Statistics of change	
				Change in R^2	Change in F
0.336	0.113	0.101	26.019367560483620	0.113	9.216

Anova					
Model	Sum of squares	df	Root mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	18,718.893	3	6,239.631	9.216	0.000
Residue	146,910.625	217	677.007		
Total	165,629.518	220			

Table 14. Goodness of fit for model B

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard error estimate	Statistics of change				
				Change in R^2	Change in F	df1	df2	Sig. Change in F
0.577	0.333	0.314	22.724316	0.333	17.790	6	214	0.000

Anova					
Model	Sum of squares	df	Root mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	55,121.078	6	9,186.846	17.790	0.000
Residue	110,508.440	214	516.395		
Total	165,629.518	220			

Regarding goodness of fit, the significance associated with the F ratio was less than 0.05 in both models, which implies that the prediction of the dependent variable was not due to chance but rather that the estimated regression was statistically significant, as indicated by **Cea-D'Ancona** (2002).

4. Discussion and conclusions

The main conclusions of the research conducted are presented below. Regarding objective 1, to determine the degree of transparency and participation of municipal websites, we conclude that the majority of them passed when it came to transparency and participation, in line with previous studies –such as **Cabezuelo-Lorenzo**, **Rey-García**, and **Tapia-Frade** (2016), focused on municipalities of Castilla y León that had more than 10,000 inhabitants; **Martínez-Rolán**, **Piñeiro-Otero**, and **Baamonde-Silva** (2016) in Galician municipalities of more than 30,000; and **Herrero-Gutiérrez** and **Ruano-López** (2017) on the Community of Madrid in towns of more than 20,000– in which positive results with room for improvement are observed.

On the other hand, this contradicts studies such as those of **Ruano-López** *et al.* (2016), **Manfredi-Sánchez** *et al.* (2016), and **Fernández-Falero** *et al.* (2017) that analyze the municipalities of the Balearic Islands, Castilla La Mancha, and Extremadura and the Community of Valencia, respectively; in these, it is concluded that the majority present significant deficits in terms of transparency and participation.

It is worth noting the lack of information from municipal elected officials regarding the publication of their state-

There is greater transparency and participation in the websites of the municipalities governed by the new parties, but not in all the municipalities

ments of activities and assets. In addition, differences were found in relation to the degree of transparency of the government and the opposition, with the opposition being lower (biographies in particular).

It was observed that there was higher compliance with transparency indicators compared with participation indicators –contrasting with the study by **Paricio-Esteban** *et al.* (2020)– not taking advantage of websites' role in encouraging local participation (**Rodríguez-Breijo**; **Vadillo-Bengoa**; **Álvarez-Nobell**, 2015; **Jiménez**, 2017).

In terms of autonomous communities, the descriptive analysis showed unequal compliance, with most of the municipal websites, with the exception of Catalonia, failing and with the lowest compliance being in the Community of Valencia. For Catalonia, its longer track record, having its own autonomous legislation since 2014, could have played a role. This was not so in the Region of Murcia and, particularly, in the Community of Valencia (legislation was passed in 2014 and 2015, respectively).

In relation to objective 2, to determine the possible influence of the governing party on the transparency and participation of municipal websites, it was inferred that compliance with the indicators was greater on the left of the axis (the websites of most of the municipalities governed by *PSOE*, *ERC*, and *En Comú* passed) compared with the municipalities governed by parties ideologically to the right (only those led by *Junts per Catalunya* passed).

With regard to the statistical analysis, the results of model A also allowed us to conclude that transparency is determined by a party being located on the left of the ideological axis. This conclusion is in line with previous studies such as that of **Guillamón**, **Bastida**, and **Benito**, (2011) in which it was evidenced that populations with progressive governments are more transparent, contradicting other studies such as that of **García-Santamaría** and **Martín-Matallana** (2017), which emphasized that there are no differences between the most traditional parties and the new ones.

Considering the old party-new party axis, we can see that, although the average overall compliance on the websites of the municipalities governed by the new parties was higher, there were differences in those of the old ones (most of the municipalities governed by *PSOE* and *ERC* passed, compared with *Partido Popular*, where 51% failed, and *Izquierda Unida*, which all failed).

Regarding the statistical analysis, the results of model A also allowed us to conclude that the greater transparency and participation of municipal websites was influenced by the new parties

However, an important finding from the content analysis is that not all municipalities led by new political parties show the greater transparency and participation that they demanded to address public disaffection. This aspect would align with recent studies (**Díez-Garrido**; **Campos-Domínguez**; **Calvo**, 2019; **Meca-Valles**; **Guzmán-Raja**; **Guzmán-Raja**, 2021) regarding transparency on the websites of political parties that conclude that there is a significant dissonance between what they show on their digital platforms and their election platforms' promotion of transparency.

In particular, this fact illustrates a contradiction in parties such as *Ciudadanos*, which, according to **Orriols** and **Cordero** (2016), entered the institutional sphere with a differential approach rooted in the promotion of transparency and participation in decision-making, an approach which was replicated by *Compromís* (**Abellán-López**; **Pardo-Beneyto**, 2018).

With respect to transparency regarding public representatives in the government and the opposition, there were no major differences when it came to ideological axis and the old party-new party axis, with most of the parties coinciding in offering more information about the governing elected officials as opposed to the opposition (all of the old parties failed as did two new ones: *Ciudadanos* and *Compromís*).

A noteworthy finding is the coincidence in the lack of transparency in disclosing statements about assets among all of the national parties regardless of their ideology, with the websites of the regional parties being more transparent.

With regard to objective 3, to observe whether there are differences between the various profiles of autonomous communities, the descriptive analysis showed unequal compliance by autonomous community, with most of the websites analyzed failing. With respect to the statistical analysis, model B concluded that, by introducing the differentiation by autonomous community, the influence of the right-left and old party-new party axes disappeared. In this model, it was evident that the determinant for the transparency and participation of municipal websites was the town being in Catalonia (the longer history with respect to the *Infoparticipa Map* could play a part), in line with previous studies (**Rebolledo**; **Zamora-Medina**; **Rodríguez-Virgili**, 2017; **Curto-Rodríguez**, 2020).

In relation to objective 4, in which it was asked whether the size of the municipality has an influence, from the statistical analysis performed, in both model A and B, we conclude that the population is a determinant for the level of transparency on municipal websites, in line with previous studies (**Moreno-Sardà**; **Molina-Rodríguez-Navas**; **Simelio-Solà**, 2017; **Paricio-Esteban**; **Bruno-Carlos**; **Aznar**, 2021). This aspect seems logical since larger municipalities may have more resources at their disposal.

Based on the research findings, we continue on to validate hypothesis 1, which assumed that there would be differences in transparency and participation in municipal websites depending on the governing party according to its ideology. This would also validate the second hypothesis, in which it was assumed that there would be higher levels of transparency and participation on the websites of the towns governed by the new parties, with the exception of *Ciudadanos* and *Compromís*, where a contradiction with their founding principles was seen.

One limitation of the study is that municipalities governed in coalition were not included in the research corpus owing to the difficulty of establishing comparisons between parties in these towns. Another would be the inability to make a comparison of all the political parties in the autonomous communities.

The methodology used can be extrapolated to research in other autonomous communities, which could provide a more complete map of Spain as a whole.

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Annex. Indicators of transparency and participation

Indicators	Description
Indicator 1	Information about the mayor/mayoress: name and surname, photo and political party
Indicator 2	Basic information about the mayor: biography/cv
Indicator 3	Basic information on government representatives: name and surname, photo and political party
Indicator 4	Basic information on government representatives: biography/cv
Indicator 5	Basic information about the opposition: name and surname, photo and political party
Indicator 6	Basic information about the opposition: biography/cv
Indicator 7	Publication of remuneration of elected officials (government and opposition)
Indicator 8	Publication of declarations of activities and assets of elected officials (government and opposition)
Indicator 9	Publication of the mayor's institutional agenda
Indicator 10	Publication of contact details of members of the government (email, social networks, telephone)
Indicator 11	Publication of contact details of the opposition (email, social networks, telephone)
Indicator 12	Information on the composition of the governing bodies: plenary session, governing board and/or information commissions
Indicator 13	Information on the powers and work schedule of these bodies
Indicator 14	Publication of the complete political organization chart of the current mandate
Indicator 15	Publication of calls for municipal plenary sessions with the agendas
Indicator 16	Publication of the minutes of the Municipal Plenary
Indicator 17	Publication of the agreements of the Governing Board and/or the full minutes when the Governing Board acts on behalf of the plenary
Indicator 18	Publication of the Government Plan (acquired commitments)
Indicator 19	Publication of municipal regulations
indicator 20	Publication of urban regulations (land planning and land use)
Indicator 21	Publication of the Budget of the City Council for the current year and of the autonomous bodies and dependent entities
Indicator 22	Publication of information on the quarterly execution of the budget for the current year
Indicator 23	Publication of budget modifications made
indicator 24	Publication of information on compliance with budgetary stability and financial sustainability objectives and/or level of indebtedness?
indicator 25	Publication of the liquidation of the budgets of previous years and/or the general account
Indicator 26	Publication of the list of jobs and the remuneration of the workforce according to the categories
Indicator 27	Publication of the list and remuneration of management personnel, positions of trust and/or advisors to political groups, where appropriate, their duties and their CV
Indicator 28	Publication of the job offers of the city council, the development of public tenders and the results
Indicator 29	Publication of the general inventory of the town hall's assets
indicator 30	Publication of all formalized contracts (major and minor)
Indicator 31	Publication of the average period of payment to suppliers
Indicator 32	Publication of the grants awarded, calls and resolutions
Indicator 33	Publication of the agreements signed, specifying the parties, their purpose and the economic obligations that derive
Indicator 34	Publication of the cost and characteristics of institutional advertising campaigns in the media, advertisements, as well as agreements and/or signed agreements
Indicator 35	Publication of press releases on the day-to-day actions of members of the government related to management
Indicator 36	Publication of press releases on the actions of the opposition and/or political groups related to the control of government management
Indicator 37	Publication of journalistic information on the development of the plenary session
Indicator 38	Information about the history of the municipality
Indicator 39	Information on the situation of the municipality: municipal area, registered population, social diversity, economic and cultural activities
indicator 40	Agenda of municipal and citizen activities
Indicator 41	Publication of the contact with the person responsible for Press, Information and/or Communication of the Institution
indicator 42	Information on the Citizen Participation Regulation
Indicator 43	Directory of entities and associations of the municipality and/or the registry of interest groups
Indicator 44	Instruments for consultation and/or participation on current issues of local interest
indicator 45	Results of consultations and/or participation on current issues of local interest
Indicator 46	Charter of Services and commitments to the public
Indicator 47	Instruments to assess the services and to submit complaints or suggestions about their operation
Indicator 48	Results of the management of the evaluation of the services, of the complaints or suggestions presented

Fuente: *Mapa Infoparticipa* (2020)