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CivicTech For A New Participatory Democracy

Jess Bauldry
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Sana Hadzic-Babacic, pictured, is a co-founder of the Europe Technology and Collective Intelligence for Citizens (ETICC) (Photo © Silicon Luxembourg)

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Citizen engagement, also known as participatory democracy, is essential for tackling polarisation in society. Here’s how tech entrepreneurs can play a role in bringing citizens to the decision-making table.

When Sana Hadzic-Babacic carried out an online search for Luxembourg tech startups developing tools that reinforce the democratic link and two-way trust between institutions and citizens, she came away empty-handed. It was not that they did not exist, simply they had yet to adopt a collective term for what they do.

For the co-founder of Luxembourg think- and action tank the **Europe Technology and Collective Intelligence for Citizens (ETICC)**, the label was clear: CivicTech. Three years after the civic participation and innovation organisation was first formed, Sana and the ETICC team are preparing to launch their first project: the creation of a Luxembourg CivicTech hub to foster an ecosystem.

“Through this ecosystem of CivicTech here in Luxembourg, we want entrepreneurs to realise that there are interesting business opportunities in this sector. We’re looking for interested and motivated entrepreneurs to join us and create their own CivicTechs,” the researcher explained.

More ‘Vivre Ensemble’

To kick off the process, the University of Luxembourg will host a forum on technology and sustainable democracy on 21 April. Co-organised with ETICC, the hope is to create a consortium of different social actors to work together and develop platforms where citizens can develop grassroots solutions to plug the gaps in traditional models of governance.

In the past, these growing gaps have led to an increased polarisation of societies. While social media has already played a significant role in this divide, technological solutions may also offer solutions for restoring trust between citizens and institutions.

“Everyone is living in his own reality, then you have a lot of realities in one society. We saw it with the gilets jaunes [protestors against rising fuel prices] in France, and with the anti-vaccine demonstrations in Luxembourg,” Hadzic-Babacic explains. “We want to give the opportunity to citizens to extend their knowledge and vision of life, of society, by creating more ‘vivre ensemble.’”

CivicTech solutions would focus on building collective intelligence tools that bring together actors with different values and explore the “space between representative democracy and participatory democracy.”

“What can we do to reconcile those two worlds and to make society work better?”. The researcher adds that the willingness and need for citizens to become more involved is stronger than ever.

“Considering also the current events in Ukraine, we see that democracy is something we need to work on regularly, we need to feed democracy. What is important for the next decade is the involvement of citizens in the preservation of democracy and how it will be sustainable,” she says.

The conference is open to institutions, local authorities, citizens, NGOs, entrepreneurs and anyone interested in technology and the creation of positive impact on society.

Read more about the conference on [LinkedIn](#).

- ETICC
- Europe Technology and Collective Intelligence for Citizens
- Sana Hadzic-Babacic

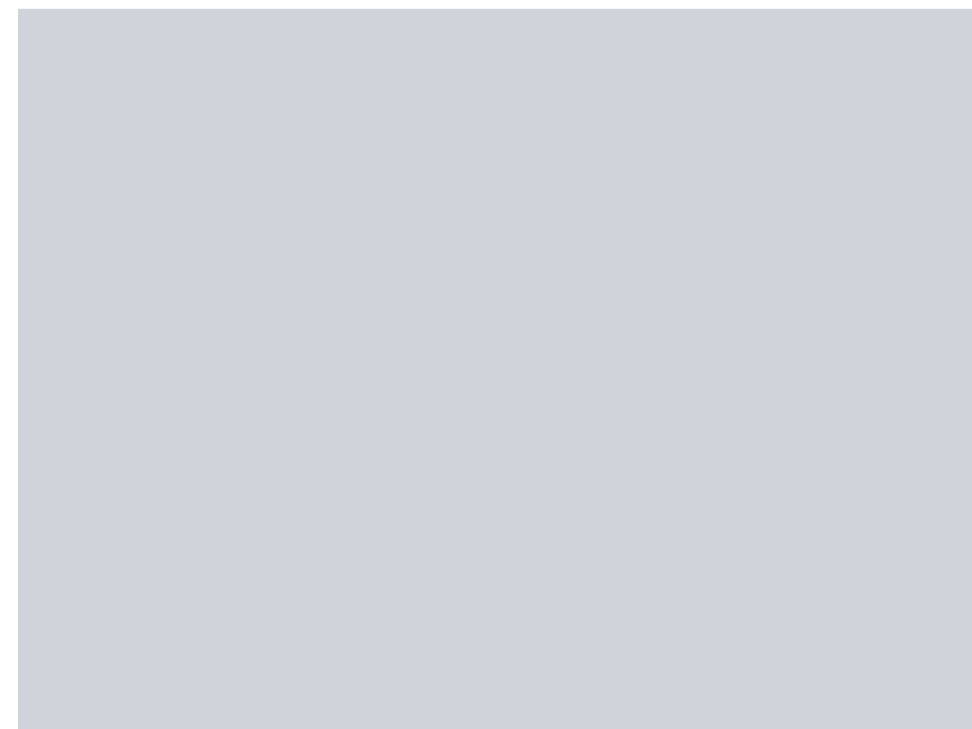
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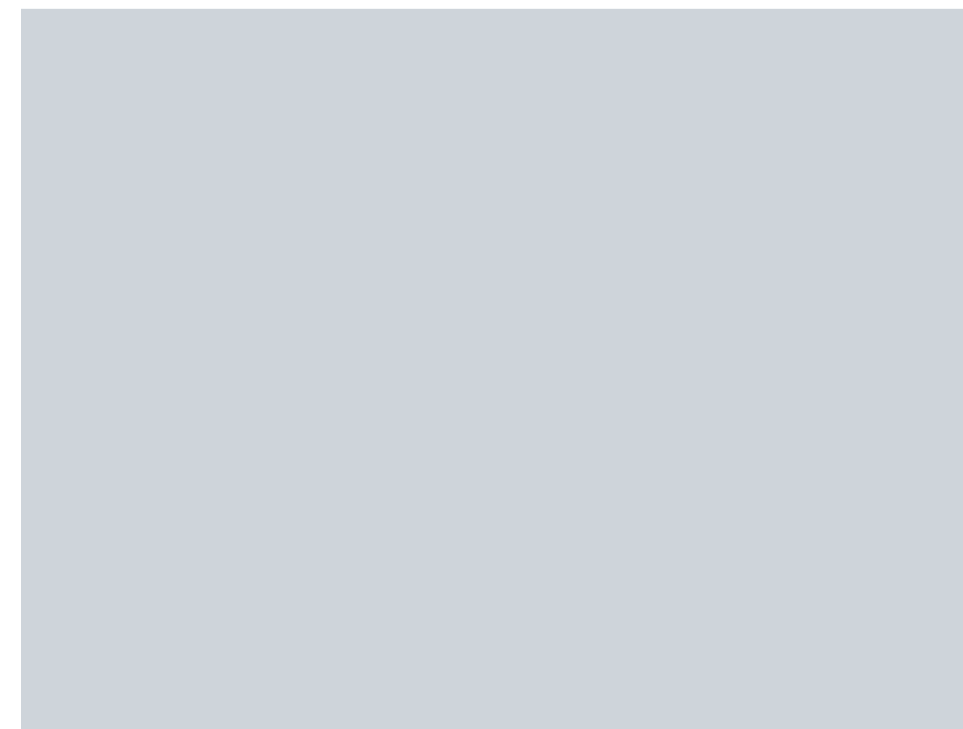
Jess trained and worked for several newspapers in the UK before moving to Luxembourg in 2010 where she worked as a full-time reporter for the Luxemburger Wort and Delano. In her free time, she writes fiction, cycles and performs stand-up comedy.

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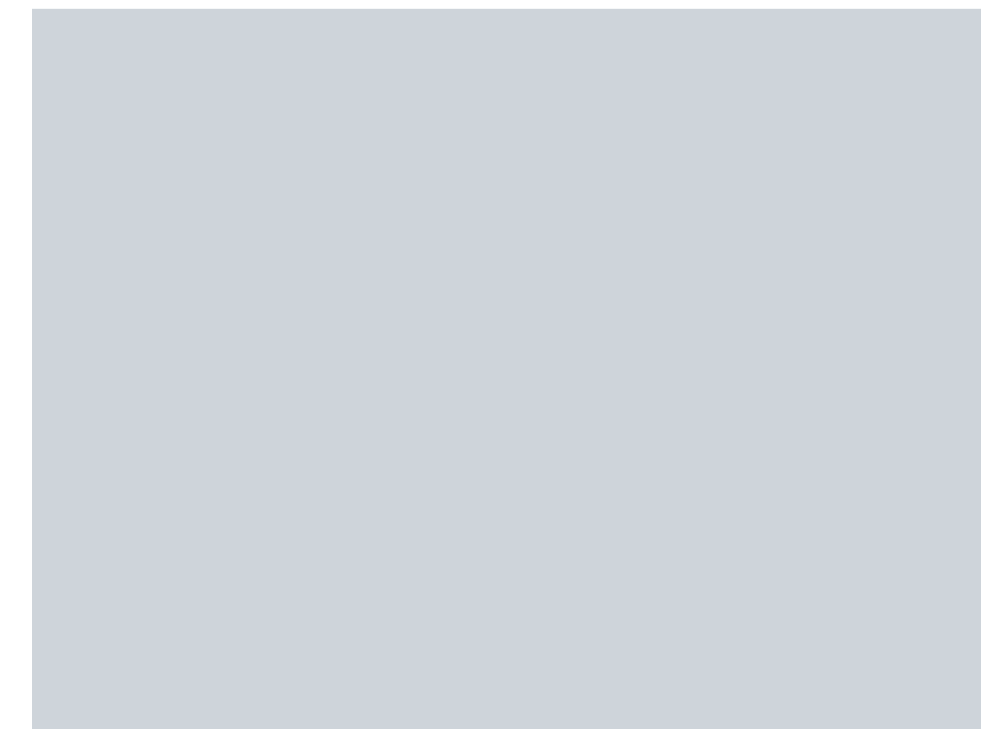
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