

State-Wide Wisdom Council on the Agenda of Asylumseekers and Refugees in Vorarlberg

Published On: 03 April 2017

Organisation: Office for Future-Related-Issues of the State Government Vorarlberg

Country: Austria

Level of government: Regional/State government

Sector: General public services

Type: Other

Launched in: 2015

Overall development time: 5 month(s)

Link to the innovation's website

Like this innovation

0 persons like this innovation

Description

In this innovative project, concerning asylum and refugees in Vorarlberg, randomly selected people with different backgrounds facing a socially important problem and working out strategies together. The main problem was that people were insecure about refugees and how they'll change society in Vorarlberg. The process contained of three steps: First of all 600 random chosen citizens got invited to attend at the "Wisdom Council", 23 people attended in the end. On two days they discussed and focussed different problems and worked out strategies how to handle those. For example: What kinds of strategies are necessary to involve refugees in society? What do they need to handle their daily life? In a second step the results got publicly presented. Thirdly, a so called "Resonance group" met; it is a mixed group of social institutions and government agencies who are in touch with asylum and refugees and they started to work out solutions based on the outcome of Wisdom Council & Citizen Café.

Why the innovation was developed

- Like many countries Austria had and still has to deal with a high number of refugees from all over the world. Governments, administrations and NGOs need to develop strategies to handle this challenge. In addition people in Vorarlberg are concerned about transformations and social changes. How will immigrants affect society and living in Vorarlberg?
 - The "State-Wide Wisdom Council on the Agenda of Asylumseekers and Refugees in Vorarlberg" was an innovative project, which offered people with different backgrounds to get in touch and work out ways to find solutions.
-

Objectives

Enhance public trust, Improve social equity, Increase citizen engagement

- Try to find out how people think about refugees: What kind of challenges do they see? What are people really afraid of?
 - How can those suggestions influence a forward looking refugee policy?
 - Finding a positive way to support immigration
 - To provide an opportunity for citizens to participate and form an independent opinion about this important
 - To support personal responsibility, one's own initiative and commitment
 - Refinement and revitalization of the constitutional amendment
-

Main beneficiaries

Ethnic or racial minorities, General population

Existing similar practices

"Wisdom Council" (Bürgerrat)

In other countries' public administrations

Germany – regional and federal level

The approach of the "Wisdom Council" (Bürgerrat) is an Austrian-wide tool for policy-making; and there have been more than 10 wisdom councils also in Germany – regional and federal level

<http://www.bmub.bund.de/buergerraete-umweltprogramm/>

Results

Efficiency

Effectiveness

Service quality

Accessibility:

Responsiveness:

Reliability:

Other:

Development

Design

Since several years public participation is a big issue – the office for future-related issues has huge amount of experience in the field of civic engagement and participation in the context of communities and regional development; since the constitutional amendment of 2013, where participatory democracy was introduced the practice of Bürgerräte got institutionalized; since then the state government calls 1-2 state-wide processes per year to consult with citizens and stakeholders

Testing

- N/A
-

Implementation

Tools used:

- Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter
- Dynamic Facilitation

Resources used:

- Büro für Zukunftsfragen spent about 600 hours of work on the project; partners about 200 hours.
 - The costs are 25,000 Euro.
-

Partnerships

Various Partners

Civil Society, Other, Other Public Sector

Office of the Governor, different units within the public administration: social issues, integration, security & domestic; Association of the Vorarlbergian Municipalities; Caritas, Vindex, Fachstelle okay_zusammenleben

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- A strong – on the need of the people orientated – question is the groundwork for a powerful public participation process
 - Relevant Stakeholders should be “on board” asap
-

Conditions for success

- There should be a real need of government for participation
 - Qualified hosting team (art of Hosting)
-

Copyright OECD. All rights reserved.