

## Partnership for Change

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**Organisation:** Ministry of Public Administration

**Country:** Slovenia

**Level of government:** Central government

**Sector:** General public services

**Type:** Communication, Human Resources, Methods, Organisational Design, Partnerships

**Launched in:** 2015

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# Description

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The project "Partnership for Change" represents an innovative practice where a strong partnership between business sphere and public administration is built. The objective is to overcome the gap between these "two worlds", to address long lasting stereotypes about lazy civil servants, to enhance understanding about different goals and views, to establish knowledge transfer between organisations and to build a strong partnership for addressing common challenges. The project was first launched as a pilot in 2015 and continued in the year 2016 including 5 ministries and 30 national and international business companies. The project consists of short term exchange of employees from both sectors, creation of mixed teams to address pre-selected challenges and workshops for new competencies. It is coordinated by the American Chamber of Commerce in Slovenia and the Ministry of Public Administration under the sponsorship of Minister of Public Administration and Deputy Prime Minister. The potential of the innovation to be replicated throughout all government and PA is enormous. The model is growing in organic way, with "fun" and "cooperation" as key pillars. We use agile approach and continuously learn from different responses (companies, ministries, employees, observers, media) and put main focus on communication, soft skills, emotional intelligence and not on the rules, procedures, and contracts.

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## Why the innovation was developed

- The project was developed spontaneously from an idea in the meeting between the group of young people from companies (within AmCham Slovenia) and Minister of Public Administration. The discussion was about the concrete measures that would contribute to Slovenia's better future. As one of the most important barriers we identified the lack of understanding and cooperation between companies and PA organisations and existence of stereotypes which are slowing the progress. In general, we also targeted the areas with the biggest potential to improve: lack of creativity, openness, trust, too slow implementation of modern approaches and no fun in the process. Therefore we launched an initiative and piloted a project to exchange employees for a week in 2015. In 2016, we upgraded the concept with workshops for specific competencies and mixed teams to create solutions for pre-selected challenges. The project was set up as a social experiment and it still continues with this character.
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## Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Enhance public trust, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve user satisfaction

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## Main beneficiaries

Businesses, Government bodies, Government staff

# Results

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## Other improvements

- Improved motivation and engagement of employees, improved competencies, strong partnership.
- The participants worked on 5 challenges: raising motivation of employees in PA, enhancing effectiveness of cooperation, making complex electronic services user-friendly, adjusting education curriculum to the needs of 21st century, strengthening the brand I feel Slovenia. The project significantly increased understanding and mutual trust, built strong partnerships and set a model for cooperation (to be used in drafting legislation, development activities, creation of new concepts, solving specific problems or challenges on system level). It increased motivation and engagement of employees on both sides and raised big interest from the top level managers and leaders (government, business). It was covered by the media on a big scale and was presented as good practice. The indirect impact is a step towards a cultural change within the PA and in wider public (optimism instead of pessimism; challenges instead of problems; together instead of alone; public good instead of only profit).

# Development

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## Design

The idea came up spontaneously in a meeting between a group of young people and the Minister of Public Administration. The idea was a result of brainstorming about the future of our country and understanding co-dependence between businesses and PA.

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## Testing

- There were no specific testing methods. The project runs itself as an experiment and as a learning process towards creation of a model for efficient and inclusive collaboration between different stakeholders.
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## Implementation

### Tools used:

- There were no special tools used. The project was implemented via the classical tools which are used at work (basic ICT equipment).

### Resources used:

- There was approx 5.000 € budget needed and there were 10 persons involved in the coordination of the project activities. Since the project is supposed to be based on voluntary engagement and personal interest, we believe significant financial resources should not be necessary.
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## Challenges and solutions

- No specific challenges were encountered. However, there will probably be challenges on how to proceed with the development of the project on a broader scope and yet strictly in an informal manner. There will have to be some dedicated persons to work on the project, due to enormous interest in joining the project from other organisations, to manage activities and monitor that basic approach is not altered.
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## Partnerships

**The general partnership was established with the American Chamber of Commerce in Slovenia. Four additional government bodies and 30 national and international companies.**

Other Public Sector, Private sector

The partnership was established mainly with the purpose of exchanging employees between companies and government organisations and for setting up mixed teams in designing solutions for 5 chosen challenges. The partnership represents the core of the project which enabled us to succeed in creating a mixture of different employees with different positions, competencies and values. The innovation established a transfer of knowledge and contributed to the strengthening of mutual trust. We also emphasized horizontal connections between ministries (in order to break silo organisation) and cooperation between competitive companies.

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# Lessons Learned

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## Lessons Learned

- We feel there is tremendous potential in building partnerships which should be based on trust, mutual understanding and open communication. There is also no need to strictly follow the traditional project management approach. On the contrary, different responses proved that there are numerous possibilities for more free and open methods (an agile approach) with emphasis on gamification and experimentation. We learned that all employees truly want to be engaged, to make a change. However, they have to be visible, they need to have different opportunities to express themselves, and the leaders should have more trust in them – to set a goal and give them more freedom in search of solutions (=innovation). In the next phase we will learn more about implementation of proposed solutions.
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## Conditions for success

- The first main condition for the success of innovation is to truly wish for an honest and open partnership – there cannot be any partial interests or they have to be properly addressed. Social responsibility and other strong values are far the most important. Communication also has to be aligned by all partners.

