

Open Space

Case Study Having One's Say About the Future of Transport

Country Austria

Background Information

The Austrian state of Vorarlberg's official transport strategy (originally drawn up in 1992) was due to be brought up to date by October 2004. The young people of Vorarlberg were to have an opportunity of developing ideas and wishes as regards the future of transport and of introducing these into the official transport strategy.

Phase of decision making process

Development of a revised transport strategy

Formal framework of decision making process

N/A

Objectives of process

Spreading awareness of transport-related issues among young people and drawing their attention to problems connected with transport in Vorarlberg

Discussing an individual's own behaviour (e.g. driving a car, if one has a driving licence), the potential of cycling and the environmental problems caused by motor traffic

Status

Completed

Objectives and outcomes of stakeholder engagement

Involvement of young people in strategy development.

Young people between 15 and 20 years old described how they see the state of traffic in Vorarlberg, its weaknesses and strengths, and put forward visions for the future. The politicians and experts taking part committed themselves to dealing with all the concerns expressed; in June 2004 they reported on this.

May 2003: the steering committee in charge of the official transport strategy for Vorarlberg decides to involve young people by way of an open space event

November 2003: open space event

January 2004: three young people report on the results at a meeting of the steering committee, which then discusses these with them

May/June 2004: the project is presented at the event "Curtain call for youth"

June 2004: the steering committee makes a statement on the young people's suggestions and invites their speakers to take part in a further committee meeting

Summer 2004: statement by the young people involved on the 2004 draft transport strategy for Vorarlberg

Involved Stakeholders

Young people between 15 and 20 years old and a number of politicians and experts

Implementer of the participation process

Provincial administration

Financing

Funded by the Vorarlberg provincial administration

Points to consider

An open space conference should last two to three days; to begin with, the central issue is introduced. Any participant who wishes to can initiate a study group on a topic that he or she finds particularly interesting. The course that open space conference takes is determined by one rule and four guiding principles:

The “two-feet rule“ lays down that any participant should stay in a given study group only as long as he or she can make a contribution and/or learn something. It is not just permissible but actually desirable for people to switch between study groups.

The four principles:

1. Whoever comes along is just the right person.
2. Whatever happens – it’s the only thing that can happen.
3. Whenever it starts is the right time.
4. If it’s over, it’s over.

Accordingly, locations and times are defined for each topic, but work on these topics is done in small groups that organize themselves and continually change in composition.

In the final phase of the conference the questions regarded as the most important are filtered out, the next steps required are discussed and “topic guardians” are appointed. This ensures that the ideas generated during the conference stay “on the agenda“ afterwards. At the end of the conference all the participants receive full documentation of the findings from the various groups.

At an open space conference the organizers are responsible only for the logistics and for the “open space“ in which creative potential can emerge; they do not interfere in the content of the conference.

Further tools used in this case study

Citizen’s Panel.

See http://www.partizipation.at/openspace-disc_en.html for more information