

CitizensFirst – 13 & 14/09/2007

Participationplatforms Social welfare



Plan social welfare & participation

- Every city must prepare a **plan for the improvement of the social welfare** of its citizens in 2007.
- A plan with targets for the next 6 years: **2008-2013**.
- **Priorities:** public and social service, care, housing and environment, social employment and socio-cultural participation.
- **Target groups:** youth, elderly, disabled persons and groups who experience a high risk of social exclusion

Plan social welfare & participation

- **Important:** Ypres must have sufficient attention for the **participation of the social organisations** working on its territory **and its citizens**.
- **Different forms of participation:**
 - ✓ a representative inquiry of the elderly,
 - ✓ an inquiry of 180 individual social organisations,
 - ✓ forming of 4 commissions with participants of social organisations and public service,
 - ✓ inquiry of 12 groups who experience a high risk of social exclusion,
 - ✓ **2 platforms of participation** on the internet and the website of Ypres.

Participationplatforms

1. Platform for social organisations:

- **Target:** give social organisations the chance to follow up the work and advices of the commissions and to react on reports posted by the commissions or the administrator.
- **Period:** January - July 2007
- **Tools:** platform linked to the website of Ypres with a register- and login system. Possibility to put reports, advices, studies on the platform and to give comment.
- **Maintenance:** 1 administrator and 1 ICT-technician.
- **Promotion:**
 - ✓ written invitation to every known social organisation,
 - ✓ several publications in the most used channels of information of the city,
 - ✓ occasional individual contacts.

Participationplatforms

- **Evaluation:**
 - ✓ 24 representatives of social organisations and public services and members of the city council signed in.
 - ✓ The platform was mostly used for purposes of information, not giving comment on reports or advices.
- **Conclusion:**
 - ✓ The target: support the work of the commissions. It succeeded in its target to give information, but not to have an interactive discussion. Reasons: due to the technicality of the work of the commissions or lack of concrete issues of discussion? Too much concentrated on giving information?
 - ✓ The low number of participants: due to a lack of repeating the invitation to join the platform?
 - ✓ Overall: Ypres takes its first steps in participation through the internet and an official platform!

Participationplatforms

- **Important:** the maintenance of the platform and the communication must be seen as a vital aspect of achieving success and needs all the support it can get!
- 2. **Citizens platform**
 - **Target:** an open inquiry through the internet about the improvement of public service by forming a 'social window' (questionnaire) and the priorities for the social welfare plan meant for citizens living in Ypres.
 - **Period:** June-July 2007
 - **Tools:** participationplatform linked to the website of Ypres, no registering and login required.
 - ✓ 'Social window': questionnaire and possibility to give comment.
 - ✓ **Priorities:** voting system en possibility to give comment.

Participationplatforms

- **Maintenance:** 1 administrator and 1 ICT-technician.
- **Promotion:**
 - ✓ several publications through the most used channels of information of the city,
 - ✓ written invitations send to all the known social organisations and socio-cultural movements through e-mail or other means,
 - ✓ every two weeks a report of the results was posted on the platform to stimulate participation.
- **Evaluation:**
 - ✓ 34 citizens filled in a questionnaire and 39 voted on the priority-list. We didn't follow up the identity of the participants (age, gender...),
 - ✓ The participants filled in a questionnaire and/or voted for their chosen priorities, very few gave comment or started a discussion.

Participationplatforms

- **Conclusion:**
 - ✓ The target of the platform was to support the work of the commissions. It succeeded in its target to question citizens about social welfare themes, but there were very few interactive discussions. Possible explanation: ?
 - ✓ Ypres takes its first steps in this kind of participation, for a lot of citizens it's a new kind of participation!
 - ✓ The citizens of Ypres (on this moment?) are more likely to fill in questionnaires or to vote, than react on or start an open discussion on an official platform.
 - ✓ The inquiry didn't have a representative character and was only meant to give us an idea of the opinion of the citizens of Ypres. It was meant to give direction in choices, not as a representative and binding advice on itself!

Participationplatforms

- ✓ The communication here was cared for, the citizens platform has been actively promoted with all possible means available.
- **Important:**
 - ✓ The maintenance of the platform and the communication must be seen as a vital aspect of achieving success and needs all the support it can get!
 - ✓ The citizens must know the weight (of the conclusions) of the platform in the whole process of participation and in the choices that will be made,
 - ✓ Vice-versa, this is the first question the organising party must ask itself! The citizen has a right to know what his participation will result in! It can also mean that another type of communication or other tools are required.

Conclusions

- ✓ 1: Set the target.
- ✓ 2: Choose the tools and type of communication.
- ✓ 3: The maintenance and communication need all the support it can get!
- ✓ 4: Don't expect immediate overall success.
- ✓ 5: Repeat communication during the period of running.
- ✓ 6: Giving information or questionnaires are very thankful means to stimulate participation.
- ✓ 7: Active discussion requires concrete issues and continuous stimulation.
- ✓ 8: Participation through an official platform needs getting used to it!

ICT-courses for elderly

- **Elderly in Ypres never or seldom use the internet**, 14% weekly, 1%. Elderly use the internet mostly for surfing and information and e-mailing, only 1% for contacts with the government. That was the situation in 2004!
- Several organisations give **ICT-courses for elderly**: service centres for elderly, social movements, centres for education...
- The number of courses **expanded over the last 5 years** and the elderly have the possibility to follow all kind of courses about ICT-applications.
- ✓ Choice between more **scholarly courses till practical training** in the use of a computer and the internet.
- ✓ The experience learns that not everyone is interested in achieving full knowledge of certain applications, but just want a practical training.

ICT-courses for elderly

- **Available courses:**
 - ✓ Elementary basics of PC
 - ✓ WORD for beginners and advanced
 - ✓ Internet for beginners and advanced
 - ✓ Maintenance and security of the computer
 - ✓ Multimedia for beginners and advanced
 - ✓ Photoshop for beginners and advanced
 - ✓ Powerpoint
 - ✓ Illustrator
 - ✓ Excell
 - ✓ Training sessions computer, 1 hour in the week.

[ICT-courses for elderly]

- The possibility to attend all these courses and the **accessibility to computers** in service centres and public places (for free), should increase the use of ICT-applications by elderly.
- Combined with the option to **increase the access to documents and public information** through the internet, should also increase the use of internet for government contacts.
- And of course, the new generations of elderly or more used to work with computers than the elderly of former generations!

[ICT-courses for elderly]

- **Important:**
 - ✓ Upper courses still suggest that elderly have to come to certain defined places at a defined time, for certain groups it is also necessary to work the other way around to motivate them!
 - ✓ In Ypres there is a project running in 4 small communities in Ypres in which we try to detect socially excluded groups and elderly and give individual service at home.
 - ✓ The project also provides computers at home to train or to learn the basics and organises basic courses with local socio-cultural movements.

