

## 1ST PART: BASIC DATA

Title of the experience:Life without violence.		
Name of the city/region:Gothenburg		
Country:Sweden		
Institution presenting the candidacy: the district of Västra Hisingen in Gothenburg		
Start date of the experience:2016-02-12		
End date of the experience:2017-12-17		
Type of candidacy	New experience	x
	Innovation on an existing experience	
Type of experience	Participatory budgeting	
	Urban planning	
	Council	
	Workshop/meeting for diagnose, monitoring, etc.	x
	Audience/forum	
	Poll/referendum	
	Citizen jury	
	E-government/open government	
	Citizen initiative	
	Others (say which one):	
Objective of the experience	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation and to incorporate diversity as a criteria for inclusion	
	Community empowerment	x
	To empower non-organised citizens	
	To increase citizen's rights in terms of political participation	
	To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem"	
	To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy	
	To improve the quality of public decision making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy	
	To improve the evaluation and accountability of the mechanisms of participatory democracy	
Territorial area	All the territory	

	District	
	Neighbourhood	X
Thematic area	Governance	
	Education	
	Transport	
	Urban management	
	Health	
	Security	
	Environment and/or urban agriculture	
	New social movements and associationism	
	Culture	
	Housing	
	Job creation	
	Decentralization	
	Local development	
	Training/learning	
	Economy and/or finances	
	Legal regulations	
	Social inclusion	
	All	
	Others, violence, safety, future for children	X

### Objectives

#### **Main objective of the innovative experience:**

Community empowerment.

**"Life without violence"** is a citizen dialogue about complex issues, with a focus on making it possible for children to grow up in a society without violence. The methodology we have used has been developed in cooperation with and support from SALAR (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions).



### How have you achieved this objective?

In the first step of the process we interviewed 40 parents from two preschools in the area. The interviews were held at the preschools to make it easier for parents to participate. Each interview took about 1 hour and involved two interviewers. The questions we asked in the interviews were: *"What is important to change to make it possible for children to grow up without violence in this area?"* and *"What do you need to have in order to be able to contribute?"*. We also met the children in the preschool and talked to them about their future, what they wanted to work with and what their hopes are for the future.

We were told by several parents early in the process: "Finally you are doing the right thing by talking to the right people about this issue." It was easy to get the parents to come and meet us and many of them showed up very well prepared. This made us confident that we had identified an important question. At the end of each interview we asked the participants who else we needed to talk to about this and were referred to an additional 40 people. The suggested names included other citizens, civil servants, politicians, ex-criminals - and they all contributed with their own perspectives. Everyone who was interviewed was later invited to join five workshops with the aim to find solutions that would make it possible for *children to grow up without violence*. Using interviews and follow up questions as a method to reach beyond those groups that we tend to talk to has been very successful. The relationships that have been built up during the interviews have been motivating and have made it easier for people to join later in the workshops. We experienced the importance of listening in "360 degrees"; which means listening to people both within the organization and people outside in the community. This principle enabled the participation of as many as possible at the actual meetings and gave them a voice in establishing the outcome of the dialogues. Listening in 360 degrees made us understand the complexity of the issue and made sure that all the different perspectives were listened to. It is important for both policymakers and officials to be engaged in the process, in order to make sure that the participants suggestions are realistic, and to strengthen their legitimacy.

To keep the momentum of the process going in-between the meetings and to make the workshops meaningful we kept in continuous contact with the participants. Maintaining the relationship between the process leaders and the participants, through text messages, phone calls, and e-mails, has been crucial. This was time well spent since we wanted to reach the people that usually are hard to involve. Neutral moderators led the workshops. During the workshops seven suggestions were produced by the participants. It was important that the suggestions were urgent and important, meaningful and doable. Many of these suggestions have been or are being implemented: a camper van has been purchased and now functions as a mobile citizen advice office, a meeting place for young LGBT-persons has been set up and a group of parents are now meeting regularly to speak about what matters to them as parents. Also, an independent advisory group of citizens from the community has been formed where the citizens can bring up important questions to the district director and be "critical friends" of the district. One of the members of the advisory group is a young woman who grew up in Biskopsgården. She still lives there with her family and works as a preschool teacher in one of the preschools. She told us that she never got engaged in anything before, but that she during this process was longing for every meeting and then she was sure that she wanted to continue to be engaged in the advisory group to be a part of a better future in

Biskopsgården.

Many people came to the workshops, about 60 every time. The 40 citizens that we interviewed in the first stage became 80 at the end.

#### To what extent has this objective been achieved?

- We have tried out a new methodology in working with citizen dialogue around complex issues.
- We have listened to new and different voices than we usually do. In total there were 120 participants in the process, of whom were 80 citizens.
- The goal of all the seven proposals that came out of the dialogue process was to decrease violence. Five of the proposals are now being carried out, two of the proposals require further work.
- The City of Gothenburg has asked questions through the SOM-institute (Society Opinion Media; **The SOM Institute is an independent survey research organisation at the University of Gothenburg**) about how satisfied the citizens are with the state of local democracy and about levels of trust in politicians and city district operations. In our district Västra Hisingen the metrics for **trust** and **credibility** have increased since the year before. Hopefully the dialogues in "Life without violence" contributed to this result.

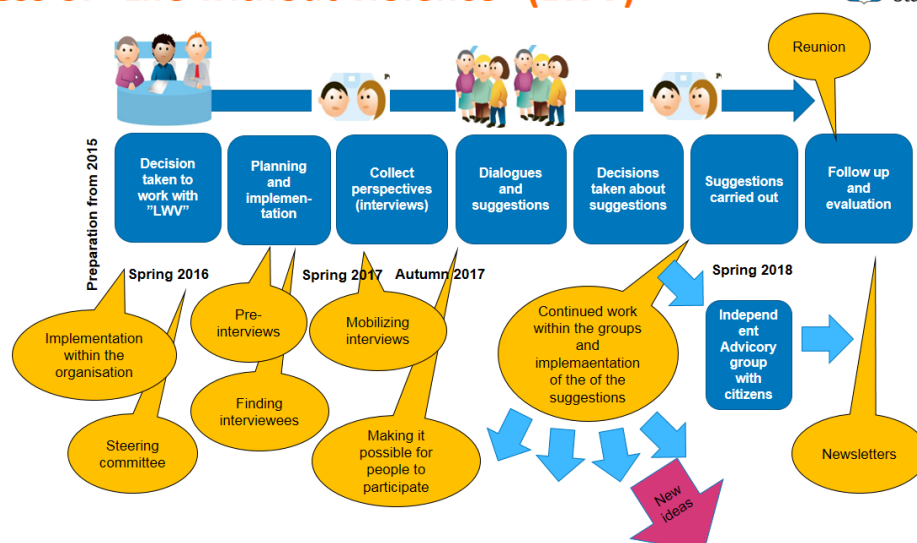
#### Dimensions of the experience

##### Which is the most innovative aspect of the experience?

The most innovative aspect was that we could reach groups of citizens we usually do not reach and that we were able to have a dialogue about a complex societal issue, in this case violence.

- Using interviews as a method to reach new groups of participants than we usually do was very successful. The relationships that were built during the interviews acted to both mobilize and motivate further participation in the later workshops.
- Apart from the interviews we also set up pre-interviews with key actors in the community so that they would give their "approval" of the work. In this way they could let new voices be heard and let other people take place in the dialogue instead of acting as gate keepers.
- Listening in "360 degrees", which means listening to people both within the organization and people outside in the community was innovative for us because it enables the participation of as many as possible. Listening in 360 degrees was also necessary for us to be able to understand the complexity of the issue and to make sure that all the different perspectives were listened to.

#### Process of "Life without violence" (LWV)



### To what extent is the procedure transferable?

We believe that the approach is transferable. The attitude that everyone is important in developing the area made a new kind of dialogue possible. Regardless who you are: politician, civil servant or citizen, everyone was given the opportunity to share their perspective and knowledge about the area, its needs as well as ideas about solutions. We find that this is a useful methodology and approach that helps us to have meaningful citizen dialogues about complex issues. What will we do different the next time? We have many complex issues to deal with that affect people on both a practical and emotional level. In the future we would like to further narrow down the question to be able to go deeper.

### Why do you consider that the experience is feasible?

Biskopsgården is a segregated part of Göteborg where there has been a lot of violence in the last years. The unemployment rate is high, school results are low and the rate of electoral turnout is also low. Fortunately, the year of 2017 was a calm year in the area and that made it possible for us to do this work and focus on long-term issues rather than immediate crises. "Life without violence" started out with the goal to make it possible for children to grow up in a life without violence. To enable as many as possible to take part we served food at the beginning of each meeting, we had translators in different languages and we offered babysitters for the small children. The cost of the process has mainly been time. Time for the process leaders to plan and implement the process and the time all the participants (citizens and civil servants mainly) spent.

### How has the experience been coordinated with other actors and processes?

We invited other actors from the area to our meetings. For example: police, school, the municipal housing company, social services, church and people from the local mosque. This was because we wanted the meetings to link to and support other, already ingoing processes rather than undermining them, and competing for the scarce time of citizens.

### Which has been the level of co-responsibility?

Everyone joined the meetings at an equal level and were all contributing with their experience, knowledge and perspectives. The Chairperson of the city district committee introduced the first meeting and in this way gave the work public legitimacy. The participants were a mixed group of citizens, politicians and professionals. At the last meeting the suggestions were handed over to executive officer of the city district committee and a local politician. This was the strategy to ensure the suggestions were important and urgent, meaningful and doable.

### Which evaluation and accountability mechanisms were used?

#### Interviews with participants

##### What was it like to be interviewed?

"Finally you are doing the right thing and you are talking to the right people about this."

Great! Good that you talked to the parents at the preschool. It made me think, this is what it's like in my Biskopsgården. I view people in a different way now."

##### What was good with the meetings?

"We brought up important issues about society that we haven't discussed before"

"That we met to discuss different problems out of different perspectives and tried to find solutions together."

"Politicians, civil servants and people who work in the area came to the meetings and listened to citizens' opinions."

"I've got hopes of a better Biskopsgården, that we will achieve something."

##### What did the meetings give?

"It gets serious when you call me and it makes me feel important. It's good to feel important!"

"I've found new friends and now I now we say Hi to each other when we meet. This gives good expectations for the future, especially for the children."

##### What could have been better?

"Spread the result among more people"

"That we continue meeting and develop even more."

- The above figure shows some of the comments from participants after the process.
- Regular newsletters are being sent to all the participants.
- Workgroups continue to meet with the aim to make some of the suggestions even more concrete.
- Follow-up meetings with all the participants have been / will be held.
- Information to the city district committee - local political committee.
- Small workshop with the management of the city district.
- Continuous meetings with the steering committee.
- Five of the seven suggestions have been carried out and are ongoing and active.