

Case Study

IDEAS ON THE RUN (IDEE IN FUGA)

Participatory budgeting in the Bollate Prison, Milan

Between February 2019 and September 2020, BiPart successfully completed a project called “Ideas on the Run” (Idee in Fuga). It was a participatory budgeting initiative carried out in a prison in the Bollate district of Milan. The project provided an educative value for its participants. Throughout its duration, the prisoners met regularly to discuss and develop their project ideas. By doing so, they acquired and practiced active civic skills and participated in democratic discussions. Subsequently, the participants prioritized the proposed projects and continued to develop them into an implementable version. For this purpose, a total of 18 meetings in the individual prison wards and 2 joint meetings for both wards took place. The entire prison community then voted on the best ones of the implementable projects.



1. KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- Location: Bollate - open cell prison in Milan
- Project area: the entire prison
- Time period: February 2019 - September 2020
- Budget: n/a
- Scope of involvement:
 - 670 participants during the `support phase`
 - 1093 participants during the vote
- Project website: n/a (no longer active)

2. KEY ACTORS AND ROLES

Project team & suppliers

- BiPart

Project partners & other stakeholders

- Commune of Milan
- Metropolitan city of Milan
- Department of Justice
- Center for Social Studies, University of Coimbra

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Participatory process goals

- Initiating a democratic debate among inmates on budget priorities
- Facilitate the return of prisoners to society through discussions about everyday life in a community of individuals constrained by the fixed boundaries of prison techno-bureaucracy
- Improving communication between prisoners and prison management

Methodology

- **Discussion**
 - Within each ward, inmates take part in meetings to discuss and develop ideas for improving their living conditions in and out of prison.
 - In the so-called `support phase`, inmates evaluate the most shared and feasible proposals, which are jointly proposed and then voted on by the entire prison community to decide which projects need to be funded and implemented.
- **Communication campaigns**
 - Simultaneously, civic crowdfunding and external communication campaigns took place. Thanks to them, an added budget for other institutions has been collected, which was a necessary condition for the implementation of selected projects.

Tools used to involve the public and stakeholders

- Project website
- Crowdfunding platform

4. CONCLUSIONS

Outputs, results and impact of the participatory process

- **Results:**
 - 18 meetings in men's and women's wards
 - 2 joint meetings for both wards
 - 670 participants in the 'support phase' (out of possible 1278)
 - 58 submitted proposals (47 from men, 11 from women)
 - 10 proposals selected for further development
 - 7 final projects to vote on
- **Examples of winning projects:**
 - Job center and programme that connects prisoners with companies (men's ward)
 - Bathrooms renovation; Experimental self-management programme: wash, dry and take away! (women's ward)
- The increased level of communication between prisoners and prison administrators has made it possible to create space for further growth in cooperation and trust between the two communities
- In a survey conducted during the project, 69 % of respondents believed that this process could help better integrate prisoners back into society after their release from prison. At the same time, 81,3 % agreed that if the participants work properly, the project has the potential to improve relations between prisoners and prison management.

Limitations

- It was difficult to achieve set results due to the rigid bureaucracy. There was a risk that the process would be boycotted, indicating the need for a greater degree of support that is required to make the project work.
- Although positions towards processes are similar in both men's and women's wards, the project highlighted the differences in the environment that exist between women's wards, where many basic services are lacking or of poor quality, and men's wards. Such a difference in conditions puts a strain on the project and attainability of results.

Sustainability and repeatability

- The project took place on a voluntary basis and securing funding is one of the key challenges to ensure its sustainability.



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Additional materials

- <https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/RHSS/article/view/56703/58551>
- <https://participedia.net/case/5978>

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