

FACING CHANGE WITH A COMMON VISION

ENGAGIERTE STADT FORST & ENGAGIERTE STADT WEISSWASSER
GERMANY



CATEGORIES

E Joint local engagement for the common good

PRESENTER

Romy Ganer, Projektleiterin Soziales Netzwerk Lausitz

Manuela Kohlbacher, Leiterin Kompetenzzentrum Forst

DESCRIPTION

In the Engagierte Städte Weißwasser and Forst mayors, municipalities, NPOs, and citizens work together to overcome societal fractions caused by major structural changes in the region. They join forces and learn from each other in order to build cohesive communities – and have fun while doing so.

MOTIVATION

Mayors and municipalities, civil society and local economy find solutions for societal problems by listening to each other and working with each other. We bring together our individual expertise, knowledge, opportunities, and with this, achieve a wider impact with our actions. The aim of the Engagierte Stadt is to establish sustainable structures for civic engagement through common activities under the involvement of municipalities, non-profit organizations and the private sector.

PROBLEM ADDRESSED

- social division caused or increased by structural changes
- administrations and civil society often work against each other or just coexist rather than working together
- solution statements, brought into action without participation of those who will have to live with them, are less efficient and less sustainable compared to those that are developed collectively

MORE DETAILS

The Lausitz, a rural region surrounding the cities Forst and Weißwasser, is undergoing a major transformation: the end of the coal mining industry and the development of mining succession landscapes. This transformation has fundamental effects on society: some people lose jobs and prospects, and fear loss and changes; others see a chance in building a new future for the region. These sentiments cause division in society and affect the atmosphere and everyday communication in the two cities, even amongst those who aren't directly affected. However, Forst and Weißwasser work actively against these divisions by joining forces. In both cities, an active civil society works together with local politicians, the municipality, and the private sector to find solutions and shape the future together with all citizens.

OUTCOMES

- Exchange and cooperation between civil society organisations and the municipality on a regular basis through collaboratively designed working groups, cross-sector roundtables etc.
- Overcame barriers between groups which polarizing in their positions
- Raised awareness about ambiguity and nuance: sometimes there are several truths – we can see this as an opportunity and still to work together
- Strengthened the self-efficacy of the actors and had constructive debates
- Created a common vision for the future