EVPA CoLab AWARD
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"SOCIAL INNOVATION NEEDS A MAKEOVER": USING OPEN SOCIAL INNOVATION AS A COLLABORATIVE ACTION FOR DRIVING SOCIAL CHANGE

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BACKGROUND

A. Which **type of organisation** are you (tick all that apply)?
   Primary role:
   - A Capital Provider (grant maker): An engaged grant maker deploying financial capital and other resources for impact (Bertelsmann Siftung, Robert Bosch Foundation, Stiftung Mercator, and BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt (regional partner))
   Secondary role:
   - An Intermediary: an advisory, capacity building organisation or research organisation supporting capital providers, impact delivery organisations and other stakeholders and/or enhancing knowledge in the impact economy. (Bertelsmann Stiftung, BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, and Vodafone Stiftung Deutschland GmbH)

B. Please briefly summarise your **mission**

   UpdateDeutschland is a future lab initiated by the non-profit organisation ProjectTogether as a follow-up to the hackathon #WirVsVirus (2020) and its implementation programme. It is being realised together with N3xtcoder under the patronage of the German Chancellery, supported by the state governments of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Hesse, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein, as well as by numerous municipalities.

   UpdateDeutschland's **mission** is to "have a **social impact on several levels**: A community supported by a digital platform enables citizens across Germany to develop, test and

implement innovative solutions for future social issues. In addition, a new way of solving social problems was **tested with the methodology of Open Social Innovation**."[1]

Open Social Innovation stands for "a broad participation process (Open) to address social challenges (Social) with new solutions (Innovation). Open Social Innovation focuses on the parallel testing of numerous solution approaches - in order to quickly find out what works and what does not. Proven solutions are put into practice through cooperation - and ideally consolidated."[2]

C. Which of the **use cases** does your practice(s) apply to? Please tick all that apply!
- Social innovation in public services / with public authorities
- Open social innovations
- Building impact (investing) ecosystems

D. Which **system practice field(s)** does your practice apply to? Please select the most relevant (max three).
- Systems diagnostics
- Management, learning & adaptation
- Collaboration

E. Please give us a brief background 1) what motivated you to act and who initiated the practice(s), inside or outside your organisation, and (if applicable) 2) describe the event that triggered your engagement.

- The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the dysfunctionalities as well as the areas where Germany can do better. However, Corona is not the only crisis that requires our action and reinforces social inequalities (the pandemic related to Covid-19 is a global crisis).

- We are facing a major transformation and many challenges such as climate change, social injustice, erosion of democracy etc.

- With UpdateDeutschland the goal was to develop solutions for current challenges with a new participatory strategy called *Open Social Innovation.*

- The participatory strategy of bringing governments, businesses and civil society together to address the challenges that affect us all and to develop solutions that benefit us all has been first proven by the German #WirVsVirus hackathon in 2020 that was organised by seven civil organisations. One of them is ProjectTogether.

- ProjectTogether initiated UpdateDeutschland to further develop the participatory approach of *Open Social Innovation* by inviting the civil society to work together on innovative solutions for the most pressing challenges of our time.

THE PRACTICE(S)

F. Briefly **analyse the situation before you introduced the practice**. What contributed to maintaining the status quo and producing (undesirable) results, e.g. resources (or lack of resources), rules (informal and formal), roles (relevant actors from the public, private and

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[1] Update Deutschland – Die Community der Macher:innen (in German), accessed on 8th September 2021.

[2] Ibid.

social sector, their legitimacy or effectiveness) and/or the kind and quality of relationships (informal and formal cooperation, power dynamics, information flows).[3]

- There is a lack of **resources** with regard to funding and access to relevant partners in order to sustainably develop social innovations. Social innovators face substantial challenges in building and scaling their solutions.

- State organisations and actors in the public sector have a limited understanding of the **role** those public actors can play in supporting and scaling social innovation. Regional governments as well as stakeholders at the national level are often not aware of the transformational power that the state can have by working with and integrating new solutions in the public sector.

- Prior to UpdateDeutschland there was a lack of space to interact and to grow **relationships** between civil society organisations and the state as well as across federal levels within the state.

G. Please describe the **actual results** you sought to achieve with your practice, **the parameters you sought to influence most**; roles, relationships, rules, and resources and how?

- By using modern technologies such as an online collaborative platform and video group call, the programme changed the **rules** of interaction and participation. It created an immersive online environment that helped bridge gaps that would usually exist in both space and traditional cooperative models between local governments and civil society, and NGOs. As an effect, dialogues and teamwork were carried out "at eye level", thereby **breaking up hierarchies and providing a level playing field** for all actors, regardless of their institutional affiliation. Agencies and institutions from across all federal levels have worked together to solve education, sustainability, and more challenges. The approach had a real effect on how the new **relationship** came into existence and was cultivated.

- As the UpdateDeutschland program has allowed civil society actors, local and state governments, and non-profit organisations to put aside their conventional **roles**, they have worked together more freely. Conventions that would usually have dictated the modes of collaboration (and potentially the project's outcome) were mostly avoided. As a result, the process freed up creative capabilities and resources within participating organisations and helped build something "that is highly unlikely to happen" in a standardised setting.

- UpdateDeutschland has also raised awareness of the need to provide more **resources** to social entrepreneurs and civil society initiatives for them to tackle pressing social, ecological, cultural, and economic issues. Local and state governments pledged financial scholarships throughout the program to support individuals as they worked on challenges.

- UpdateDeutschland has offered the government(s) the opportunity to rely on proven capabilities, tools, and resources and the chance to interact and engage with society in new ways to develop ideas and solutions. Following discussions and debates during the programme and the run-up to the federal election of 2021, major political parties

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[3] See more details on using the 5R framework (Results, Ressources, Rules, Roles, Relationships) for systems analysis for example here Ashoka Online Guide on System Change, part 3 ' based on USAIDs Programm Cycle.

have included pledges to support social innovation efforts in Germany more rigorously should they form the next government.

H. Please describe the **intended results** you sought to achieve with your practice and **the parameters you sought to influence most** – if considerably different from the actual results described above.

- Prove that a new way of collaboration is possible and further developing existing practices in order to establish a new perspective in the public sector itself

- Create atypical alliances and cooperation across different sectors by opening a space for participation

- Lay the foundation for pilots and experiments between the public sector and social innovators

- Scale social innovations by adapting existing and working solutions in the public sector

- Exchange experiences and knowledge between social innovators and the social innovation community as well as deepen relationships between them

- Establish exchange between civil servants of different administrative levels across the country

I. Please specifically explain the **role other actors and collaboration played** in this practice (if not the main practice itself) and insert a figure that illustrates the main stakeholders and partnerships that play a role in the practice you are presenting here.

- ProjectTogether coordinated the collaborative process by providing digital community calls, a digital resource and communication platform. It also initiated partnerships and supported the social innovators by providing coaching calls and financial resources.

- Institutions from the public sector, the social sector and individuals submitted challenges to get new input and ideas that are suited for collaborative solution building.

- Strategic partners consisting mostly of foundations and civil society organisations supported the process with communication, by inviting their communities to participate and with individual skills and resources.

- Regional innovation actors supported the process by inviting their own communities and partners to participate in the process, by being contact points as well as by initiating relationships between innovators and regional partners.

- Financing partners enabled ProjectTogether to staff a dedicated team to work full time on the project for seven months and to provide financial resources for social innovators.

- Social innovators and their teams submitted solutions to the challenges and closely worked with implementation partners on bringing the solutions to life or to scale them.
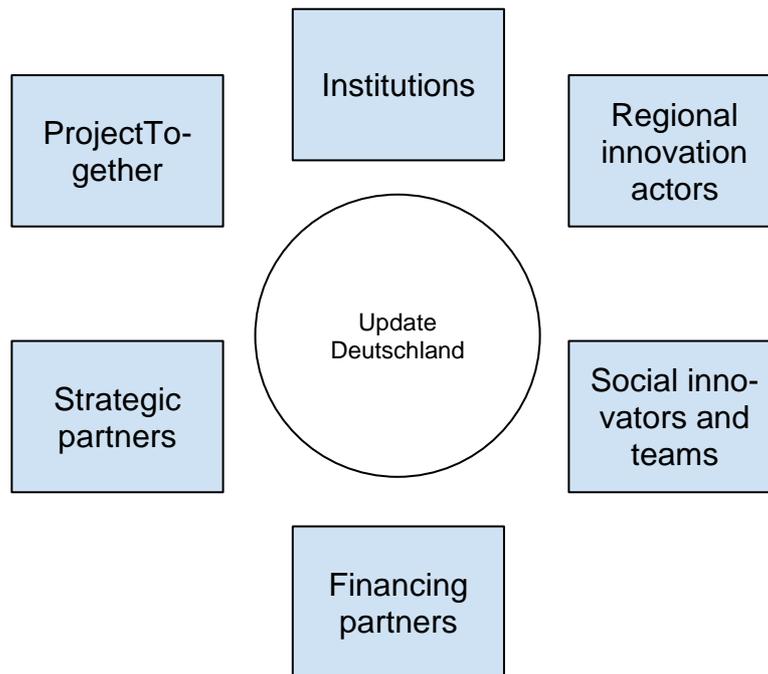
UpdateDeutschland in numbers

- 600 Challenges
- 4000 participants in 48-hour sprint
- 330 initiatives
- 100+ partners
- 80 Communities, 11 Regional governments + Federal government
- 7 Regional clusters
- 600 Networks, 16 Networking events
- 74 Scholarships (480k in total)
- 27 Community calls and innovation academies

One example showcases how the formats such as WirVsVirus and UpdateDeutschland enabled cross-sector cooperation and new cooperations. "After the covid crisis revealed the fragility of the German health care system, people asked themselves: How can digital innovations in the public health service be better networked or established on a broad scale? The Innovation Network Public Health (InÖG) is the answer to that question. The InÖG is a consortium of several open social innovation projects that focus on digital solutions for the public health service and originated from the implementation programme of the #WirVsVirus Hackathon. The InÖG acts as a mediator between politics, the public health care system, non-profit initiatives, and companies and networks at the federal, state, and district levels. Through UpdateDeutschland, the IRIS connect project initiated by InÖG has received a strong boost. The gateway solution connects health offices with many different application solutions for digital contact tracing. NRW and Thuringia have started operating IRIS connect, others will follow soon. During UpdateDeutschland, another network was formed by multiple initatives, focusing on fighting loneliness."[4]

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[4] UpdateDeutschland: 12 Projekte für die Lösungen der Zukunft (bundesregierung.de) (in German), accessed on 15th September 2021.

YOUR INSIGHTS

J. What went well and why? What were the challenges you faced and how did you overcome them? What would you do differently today and why?

The will was there and the stakeholders did not need much convincing to join the project. The COVID crisis gave a sense of urgency to change the status quo and this was felt across the stakeholder network. The spectrum of partners from the government, the innovators, the funders brought in the much-needed holistic perspective on problem solving that ensured that the ideation phase was as close to reality as possible.

Learning for the future:

- **Mission orientation**: A thematic narrowing down to a selection of focus topics (missions) enabled the development of a closely networked community, bundling of resources and the focus on common goals. This kind of resource pooling/topic focus is the way forward as the next phase of Open Social Innovation could be even more sector/issue targeted. The switch from an extensive to an intensive approach would result in an efficient and effective collaboration. This would also help in faster scaling of the prototypes/ presented solutions.
  Process Optimisation: To facilitate the implementation and transfer of solutions, there is a need for targeted exchange processes, tried and tested templates and blueprints to get collaboration off the ground efficiently.
- **Transparency**: There is a need for a transparent listing/highlighting of solutions so that there is a better matching between the common problems that are present in multiple communities and the available solutions that come up through Open Social Innovation. This would optimise the matchmaking as well as reduce duplication of solutions.

K. Which three pieces of advice would you give to your peers?

We would encourage other foundations and grant giving organisations to explore the format. Open Social Innovation is one of the ways to genuinely support a grass root initiative with participation from a broad sector of actors. Though the process might look chaotic compared to a linear problem-solving approach, the results are inspiring and gain better acceptance due to the bottom-up approach. Do calculate more time and resources when bringing in such a variety of actors together!

L. Any other information you would like to share

This was the first edition of the Update Deutschland and we are thrilled to be a partner. We see it as a first step in a new process of grass roots innovation and participation to solve social problems. Going forward, our support would be targeted and thematically focussed.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Please add links to additional information, reports etc.

1. Gegenhuber, T., Mair, J., Lührsen, R., & Thäter, L. (2021). *Policy Brief: Strengthen Open Social Innovation in Germany*. Berlin. Retrieved from https://www.hertie-school.org/en/news/detail/content/strengthen-open-social-innovation-in-germany
2. Gegenhuber, T., Mair, J., Lührsen, R., & Thäter, L. (2021). *Policy Brief: Strengthening Open Social Innovation in Germany*. Berlin. Retrieved from https://hertieschool-f4e6.kxcdn.com/fileadmin/2_Research/5_Policy_Briefs/OSI_Policy_Brief_2021_EN.pdf

3. Mair, J., Gegenhuber, T., Thäter, L., & Lührsen, R. *Learning Report: Open Social Innovation: Gemeinsam Lernen aus #WirvsVirus*. Berlin. Retrieved from https://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-hsog/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/3782/file/Hertie-School_LearningReport_210318.pdf

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