

Project information

Starting point

Demographic change is transforming our society forever: it is becoming older and more diverse, and this is affecting almost all areas of politics. The process can be felt and perceived especially clearly in the municipalities – in cities, counties and communities. However, over the course of time different local authorities are affected to varying degrees, meaning that customised overall strategies are required on the local authority level.

The Demografiewerkstatt Kommunen (DWK, [Municipality Workshop on Demography]) project does not simply address individual aspects or isolated fields of action; it puts the focus squarely on the municipality in all its facets and political and administrative processes. The oft-called-for “de-pillarization” within local authorities is an issue that can be addressed through this project, as can participation processes and the development and implementation of networks.

The municipality umbrella organisations, the districts of Dithmarschen in Schleswig-Holstein and Düren in North Rhine-Westphalia, the district of Emsland with the community of Vrees in Lower Saxony, and the Saarbrücken Regional Association were selected for participation in this project. Furthermore, the towns of Riesa and Adorf (Vogtl.) in Saxony, Grabow in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, and the city of Dortmund in North Rhine-Westphalia were also selected.

By selecting regional authorities that are very different both structurally and in terms of size, the divergent starting points in the various municipalities* are taken into account. Germany’s decentralised settlement structure and its regional and cultural diversity are part of the Federal Republic’s economic success story. However, there is a danger that existing imbalances between regions and within regions could be exacerbated, with out-migration and aging putting the economic viability of infrastructure facilities in doubt and meaning that local public services can no longer be guaranteed everywhere. There is no panacea for the challenges associated with these developments.

Objectives

The objective of DWK is to make municipalities “demography-proof”. What exactly “demography-proof” means depends on each respective municipality. The eight municipalities selected here have to be considered in a differentiated way, taking into consideration their particular character and distinctive features. This will allow the processes leading towards a demography-proof municipality that are to be developed over the course of the project to function as a model for other, similar local municipalities.

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It is important that, by the end of the project, structures and processes have been permanently established and that these are transferable to other municipalities facing similar challenges. In particular, it is important that ...

- ... after the five-year consulting and support period, the municipalities have developed action approaches and a methodological “toolkit” that are also applicable to other municipalities.
- ... people are encouraged to remain independent and proactive into old age, that young people are inspired to participate and to develop their potential, and that the compatibility of family and work is promoted, and that these goals continue to be pursued as a political mission.
- ... diversity is understood as a naturally cross-sectional task.
- ... the experiences gathered are evaluated, prepared for circulation and fed into the demography strategy, so that municipalities, federal states and government departments can use these experiences as reference points, and that these are also communicated internationally.

Project description

Over a period of five years, the municipalities selected to take part in DWK will be supported and assisted in designing demographic change locally by external consulting teams, who will be working with the individual needs of the municipalities in mind. This process is organised by the DWK office, which is based in the Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit e. V. (Competence Centre Technology-Diversity-Equal Chances) in Bielefeld. Concrete projects are to be launched, and existing initiatives involved and linked together in a meaningful, effective and sustainable way.

Launch events will be held in all participating municipalities during the first six months of the project. Following that, stocktaking reports are produced for each municipality and these will feed into a “municipality profile”. On that basis, in a future workshop held with the municipality, a binding “workshop plan” is to be developed, which will then form the foundation for further steps and for the work with external consultancy teams. There are also plans to encourage municipalities to exchange experiences and to network together, and to help them establish links to other projects run by the ministry, the federal government and third parties.

As part of this, it is extremely important that a differentiated view is taken of the life situations of different groups within the population, e. g. men and women, young and old, with and without migration background, and various living patterns such as one-person households, families, single-parents and cohabitation.



The process sequences leading to a demography-proof municipality are systematically described and evaluated. The stocktaking step, the preparation of a municipality profile, and the evaluation are developed and implemented by the Forschungsgesellschaft für Gerontologie e. V. (Research Association of Gerontology) at the Technische Universität Dortmund (TU Dortmund University). Based on insights acquired in this way, action recommendations and practical suggestions will be prepared for a large circle of municipalities.

Subject-specific support will be provided by experts and multipliers at DWK events; meetings of the supervisory group – which is made up of representatives of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), the umbrella organisations of municipalities and the Deutsche Fernsehlotterie (German TV Lottery) – are envisaged as special milestones in the project.

* In DWK, “municipality” (Kommune) is used as a synonym for all regional authorities.

Contact

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