

Case study: German Bundestag

Consultation on the website of the German Bundestag

dialoguebydesign
making consultation work

The Brief

The University of Applied Sciences, Cologne ran an innovative online consultation in partnership with Dialogue by Design for the Deutscher Bundestag (German Parliament).

The objective of the project was to find out what German citizens wanted from the German Bundestag in terms of its design and content. Creating a good online experience was a significant issue for a parliament wanting to involve people more closely in the political process.

“This exercise enabled a truly deliberative approach to consultation with very large numbers of people. We are extremely pleased with the participation rates and the results generated. Active cooperation between the Administration of the Bundestag and citizens has begun.”

- Prof. Dr. Simone Fühles-Ubach,
Project Director at the University of Applied Sciences, Cologne

The Process

Dialogue by Design devised a three-stage process for the consultation.

In stage one, participants were invited to enter short responses to the question “What information, functionalities and content offerings would you like the website of the German Bundestag to provide?” into a web-based form. Open text boxes were provided for people to enter up to 10 ideas for improvements to the Bundestag website.

In stage two, all the responses were collated, analysed and displayed back on the consultation website. Participants were then asked to review the findings and prioritise all the suggestions. At this stage many participants gave high priority to issues that they had previously not considered – illustrating the value of enabling participants to benefit from, and be influenced by, the opinions and suggestions of others.

In the third stage of this transparent process, all of the prioritised results were displayed online and participants evaluated the process. The Bundestag then published a response to the results explaining how they would address each issue raised.

The Outcome

The findings of the consultation were published in a report “How would you like it to be?”.

According to the report’s author Prof. Dr. Simone Fühles-Ubach, the online consultation process revealed points of criticism and suggestions from internet users that could not have been identified in advance, and would not have been revealed using previous consultation methods such as forums or questionnaires.

The key to the quality of the finding of this project was the multi-stage, deliberative nature of the online consultation process.

Over 1100 people registered to participate and nearly 500 people made more than 1100 comments in the first stage. This was an excellent level of participation given that the subject was relatively uncontroversial.