

The image on the right is from the original article in German,

as published on the State of Vorarlberg's web site, at

<http://tinyurl.com/VRLBRG-const-amend>

The English translation below is courtesy of DiaPraxis.com



The screenshot shows the website for Vorarlberg, Austria. The header includes the logo and navigation links for 'Tourismus' and 'Gemeinden'. A main navigation menu lists various topics such as 'Land & Politik', 'Geschichte & Statistik', 'Umwelt', and 'Zukunft'. The 'Zukunft' section is expanded, showing 'Büro für Zukunftsfragen' and 'Bürgerschaftliches Engagement'. The main content area features a news article titled 'Vorarlberg verankert erstmals in Europa partizipative Demokratie'. The article text discusses a constitutional amendment in Vorarlberg, Austria, which introduces direct democracy. It mentions that the amendment allows citizens to convene a Citizen Council by gathering 1,000 signatures. The article also notes that direct democratic instruments were already mentioned in the state constitution and that the new law moves the state closer to that direction. A small photograph of a group of people is included in the article.

Vorarlberg is the first in Europe to anchor participatory democracy in their State Constitution

It is a first for Vorarlberg, and also for Europe. On January 31, 2013, the Vorarlberg State Parliament adopted a constitutional amendment that includes a commitment to direct and participatory democracy. What this means for Vorarlberg is detailed in this revitalizing constitutional amendment. A first step was taken by creating a State policy for the implementation of Citizen Councils. Interesting note: In the future, citizens will be able to convene a Citizen Council by gathering 1,000 signatures.

One of the goals of this constitutional amendment, is to further the establishment of a new culture of participation in our State. Specifically in (Article 1, paragraph 4) : "*The state is committed to direct democracy in the form of referenda , plebiscites and surveys and also by promoting other forms of participatory democracy. "*

These instruments of direct democracy have already been mentioned elsewhere in the state constitution and this new law simply moves us closer to that direction. With the newly added commitment in paragraph 4, the importance of direct democracy in the existing forms of referenda, plebiscites, and surveys is being explicitly underlined. At the same time, the constitutional amendment is creating for the first time a legal basis for supplementing representative democracy (rule of the people by the people through

elected parliamentary representatives) with participatory elements. The additional opportunities for political engagement and participation can be a helpful way to counteract the growing gap between the legislative and administrative branches on the one hand, and on the other, the citizens who tend to increasingly be relegated to the role of political observers, yet upon whom government depends for its legitimacy.

A greater commitment to Citizen Councils

The example of Citizen Councils has been found to be a promising method for participatory democracy. Within the framework of citizen councils, as they've successfully taken place in the past on the initiative or with the support of the state, a randomly-selected and intentionally diverse group of people is invited to meet in a well-structured process. They explore either a general or a more specific legislative or administrative topic, and come up with recommendations for the relevant government decision-makers. The influence that Citizen Councils exert upon government is indirect; the method aims to generate mutually beneficial feedback (and thus stronger interactions) between participating citizens and public decision-makers. The development of the Citizen Council method is probably far from complete. Nevertheless due to its increasing popularity and use, it has become necessary to define key points and quality criteria. Therefore, a policy has been developed for how the state government will convene and conduct Citizen Councils and follow-up processes. The findings from previous applications of this model have been used to create a standardized form for hosting Citizen Councils, as well as greater commitment with regard to responding to their results.

The entire policy can be found here:
<http://www.vorarlberg.at/pdf/buergerratrichtlinie.pdf>

Bürgerbeteiligung



"Bildung muss uns mehr wert sein!"

Am 24. und 25. Mai 2013 fand der landesweite "Bildung muss uns mehr wert sein!" statt. Die Präsentation und Diskussion der Vertiefungswahl wurde in Vertiefungswahl-Bildungsorganisationen mit konkreten Umsetzungen der vorläufigen Dokumentation zum Bürgerbeteiligung



Bürgerrat und Landtagsenquete: Wie gelingt Nachbarschaft?"

Am 9. und 10. November 2012 fand der vierte Bürgerbeteiligung "Wie gelingt Nachbarschaft?" statt. 11 Personen erarbeiteten Lösungsvorschläge und präsentierte Landtagsenquete.



Landesweiter BürgerInnen-Rat: Was ist die Vorarlberger Landesregierung hat zur

zukünftigen Generationen attraktiv gestalten zu können einberufen. 16 per Zufallsprinzip ausgewählte an wichtigen Fragen für die Zukunft.



Erster BürgerInnen-Rat Pielachtal

Ziel des BürgerInnen-Rates der Gemeinde Pielachtal: „Wie soll die Entwicklung der Gemeinde aussehen?“ zu konkretisieren. Welche Themen sind Ihnen wichtig bzw. wo sehen Sie Verbesserungen?



BürgerInnen-Rat der WITUS-Gemeinden

Fünf Wäldergemeinden setzen auf Kooperation: Der erste BürgerInnen-Rat im Bregenzerwald und Wälder konnten dadurch ihre Ideen für die Wälder an einem Tag diskutieren.



BürgerInnen-Rat macht Schule

Am 23. März 2012 fand erstmals ein Schulerbeteiligung über wesentliche Fragen der Schulleitung in einem "Wir-Gefühl". Erste Schritte zur Umsetzung.

This image is from a State of Vorarlberg web page listing the 20+ Citizen Councils hosted to date, each with further links to full documentation. Page is at <http://tinyurl.com/VorarlbergWC>

Thank you for your interest in public engagement and participatory democracy!
This translation has been brought to you by www.diaprxaxis.com.
As active members of the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation here in the U.S.,
we are happy to share this information with you.