

Summary. The AGORA Project

AGORA is based on the project “Juvenile Alcohol Scenes”, financed by the FUND HEALTHY AUSTRIA, which has shown that there is poor respectively lacking cooperation of professional groups structuring the public space. The general goal of AGORA is to contribute to the further development of cooperation between selected occupational groups; the project focus is on the mutual coordination of the activities of the Police and of Social Work. A cooperatively designed public space – so the assumption –, in the words of the World Health Organization promotes the “well-being” of the collaborators as well as of its users. Moreover, it contributes to social integration and has a democratic-political function.

The project design is committed to the qualitative approach; the survey methods used are observation, interview, content analysis and group discussion. In order to meet the differences in public space and in the problems in big cities and in rural and small urban areas, AGORA has been conducted in three heterogeneous districts of the provinces of Vienna and Lower Austria.

The European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna acted as carrier organization, the partner organizations were the universities of applied sciences of St. Pölten and Campus Vienna, whose students conducted the fieldwork under guidance. In the context of the Steering Group, the project team collaborated with representatives of the Vienna and Lower Austria police. Work on the project began in May 2012 and ended in summer 2015.

The results show significant differences in the current cooperation between Social Work and Police in the two provinces: In Vienna, where Social Work active in public space has expanded and is diversified, the two professional groups cooperate far more intense and manifold than in Lower Austria. In Lower Austria the Police dominates the public space, its activities are focused on young men.

AGORA takes into account the differences of the current cooperation in the work on the (further) development of cooperation: In Lower Austria, district policy has been integrated, which has proved to be an appropriate interface for cooperation between the two target groups. Given diverse but also confusing networking, Vienna’s district politicians, however, showed limited interest to be involved in cooperation agreements. It remains to be stated that – regardless of networking needs and networking interests at district level – cooperation agreements require structural anchoring and a legal framework on the national level.

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