

# Public management gets fit for the future

## Reform projects in Austria

The Vorarlberg state administration is considered to be one of the most efficient and most innovative in Austria. Instruments such as a cost and performance accounting system or new public management were introduced throughout the state early on. The state budget is balanced and the level of debt is low. So why carry out an administration reform? And how can this be carried out from the given initial situation and yet still deliver viable results?

by Günter Kradischnig

At the beginning of the project, an initial situation analysis was conducted based on a comparison of budget data from all the federal states and on exploratory discussions with stakeholders within and outside the state administration. This analysis showed that the most important driving force would lie more in a strong common vision of the future and less in the discontent with the initial situation. Thus, it was a matter of consequently developing the administration, instead of an administration reform resulting from »strain of suffering.«

The results of this situation analysis were presented at a launch event opened by the governor. In this context, international experts presented the newest trends and the state officials from Upper Austria and Styria described their very different reform approaches.

### Core team of experts

In order to ensure that all of the various perspectives and interests were taken into account during this development process, a heterogeneous team of experts was established, which carried out the core work in the developmental process in four one to two-day workshops. The members of the expert commission were members of all the political parties represented in the federal state parliament (thus party representatives, a chairman of the parliament fraction and/or a parliament delegate responsible for administrative development), representatives from the Chamber of Commer-

ce, Federation of Austrian Industry, Austrian Chamber of Labor and Federation of Trade Unions, leaders from the central functional areas of the state administration, representatives from the Union of Municipalities and selected innovation municipalities, Court of Audit, regional People's Advocate's Office, state parliament directors and selected administrative experts from outside the state administration.

The initial situation was the center of attention of the creative work in the first workshops. Using various methods, the experts worked on the development of a common vision and searched for ideas of change. In the consequent workshops, the ideas were assorted, evaluated and prepared as a basis of decision-making for policy.

### Accompanying competence

The organizational unit Administration Development of the state of Vorarlberg and advisers of ICG accompanied this process. This included above all the preparation and follow-up of the workshops, so that the experts could concentrate on the core work. The following documents and materials were prepared, among other things, in the course of the process and/or were made available to the experts:

- Status and results of ongoing and already completed administration development projects and their assessment.
- Product catalogs of all services of the state and local administrations in Vorarlberg.

- Basic analyses of policy areas such as law, democracy and politics, health, society and social welfare, ecology, education, economy and work.
- Detail preparation of all measures from the creative phase in the expert team, as well as in other idea-finding approaches (for instance all employees of the state administration were asked to bring in their ideas or all department heads were invited to an idea-finding workshop).

### A look into the future

The outcome will be available in autumn of this year.

The central elements will be:

- a summary of the most important trends and challenges as well as action areas to the policy areas mentioned above.
- a vision of the future of the state and local administration and, derived from this, multilevel structural variations for the long-term organization of the public administration in the federal state of Vorarlberg.
- 60 sets of measures, that were prepared and assessed in great detail, as well as prioritization recommendations by the members of the expert commission.

It was amazing how constructive and fact-oriented the heterogeneous team of experts worked. The result will by no means be the smallest common denominator, but a strong vision of the future, which is carried by all members of the group. ●

## Task reform in Carinthia by Andreas Pölzl

Spring 2013: The new Carinthian state administration is sworn in and faces enormous challenges from the start. How can the province of Carinthia, despite its particularly vulnerable financial situation, actively shape the future? A comprehensive task reform was probably the only right answer. That is why since the fall of 2013, and with the support of ICG, all tasks and services have been thoroughly scrutinized. The department heads were put in charge of finding an answer to the question of which services should be made available in the future, to

what extent, and in which quality for what target groups. All departments were confronted with a consistent »hypothetical savings« of 25 percent of their (net) budgets. Additionally, every employee could submit proposals, anonymously if desired. Now, in the fall of 2014, 500 proposals with a sustainable savings potential (without one-time effect) are on the table. These will influence the next budgets significantly and moreover, initiate further reforms for a positive future development of the province of Carinthia.