

BETTER REYKJAVIK

2016 Nominet Trust 100 Winner

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2016

ONLINE DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM CONNECTS CITIZENS TO CITY HALL

By Citizens Foundation

Project URL: <http://www.citizens.is/portfolio/better-reykjavik-connects-citizens-and-administration-all-year-round/>

Project Twitter: [@CitizensFNDN](https://twitter.com/CitizensFNDN)

Organisation URL: citizens.is

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- Community Engagement
- Internet

When the international banking crisis hit Iceland, many of the country's major banks went bankrupt. Unemployment tripled, supermarkets were rumoured to have run out of food, and people's trust in their government plummeted.

Better Neighbourhoods is a project from Better Reykjavik – a city-wide consultation initiative that developed an open-source community platform where residents can upload proposals on how to improve the city, with ideas ranging from building playgrounds to planting trees to developing new transport connections.

All ideas are considered during neighbourhood meetings, and local councils have a final decision on which ideas should be included in a shortlist. Residents then vote online for their favourite project, which receives a share of the 300 million ISK (£1.4m) allocated each year for public-driven initiatives.

The project offers Reykjavik's citizens influence beyond what is normally seen in a representative democracy, which has helped to restore the population's faith in their political leaders.

The system really does work. A nine-year-old pupil called Kolla proposed more field trips for her school. Her idea was up-voted on the website, passed by the City Council and then implemented. Over 58% of the city's population have used the website, and over 700 ideas were submitted in 2015, with 420 ideas implemented between 2012 and 2015.

Better Reykjavik won the European award in the e-Democracy Awards in 2011, and the platform is available free of charge to any group, city or country interested in using it to source ideas from citizens. The idea has spread to countries like Estonia, where 50,000 citizens used the platform to submit 2,000 proposals to government, 15 of which were taken to parliament, and seven of which have become law. To see if the website would work well in your city, visit: <https://betrireykjavik.is>

Image courtesy of Christophe PINARD

Last updated: 13th of September, 2016