

Focus Experience

#12

Educating Cities
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Title

The Bureau of Tranquillity

A project of permanent attention to the problems of Toulouse's citizens

Basic data

City: Toulouse

Country: France

Number of inhabitants: 437,100

Topics: Civics and coexistence, information, politics and administration and social welfare.

Principles of the Charter of Educating Cities: 1, 4, 5, 10, 11, 20

Summary

The Bureau of Tranquillity arose from having seen that after 6 pm there were no city municipal services available to respond to the needs of the citizens - except emergency services which are often saturated. Citizens frequently do not know where to turn when they have a problem and run into difficulties in working out conflicts with their neighbours without the support of third parties. These situations feed a sensation of insecurity and abandonment that can generate tension, affect coexistence and lead to acts of violence and the like that could be avoided through hands-on preventive measures and mediation.

That is why, and in order to respond to this situation, the City Council of Toulouse opened a new municipal service in October 2009 called **the Bureau of Tranquillity**, which answers the calls of the citizenship 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Through this service we solve problems faced by the citizens of the city, provide they fall within the remit of the Bureau: disputes between neighbours, graffiti, vandalising of public spaces, traffic and damaged urban fixtures, illegal dumping and dumping of large objects, lost or dangerous animals, animal droppings, badly parked cars, victims of violence, (non-emergency cases), disturbances caused by noise, specially from bars and other nocturnal establishments and also from construction work, etc.

Through these preventive measures the citizen can be attended to when they have a problem even though the appropriate services are closed at that time.

Objectives

- To listen to and guide citizens based on their demands.
- To prevent conflicts through mediation.
- To observe and follow up problems that disturb the peace in the city and its neighbourhoods.



The contrast between day and night in Toulouse streets
Foto: Ekhinoz

Methodology

The Bureau of Tranquillity forms part of the agenda of the municipal team in relation to prevention and safety. Once the general objectives of the service and the fundamental operational principles are defined, the functions of the service's experts are designed.

A toll free number, 3101, is available to all the inhabitants 24 hours a day, all year round. Thanks to a telephone platform, a team of 25 operators work in shifts to listen, inform and make referrals towards the appropriate municipal service or city collaborator (technical services, associations, municipal and national police, community health services, social development service, etc.).



25 operators answer citizens' demands
Photo: Toulouse City Council

For more complex issues there is a team of 10 who guide the operators and solicit for support from the appropriate services. On the other hand, thanks to an IT system, it is possible to generate intervention or information files as well as refer problems to other services and monitor results.



Mediators in action
Photo: Toulouse City Council
Patrice Nin

Staff of the Office also includes mediators who intervene on the ground, and that work in collaboration with the close-contact municipal police. They work in pairs from Tuesday to Saturday from 4 pm to midnight and their active public presence contributes to the restoring social order and solving problems that disturb the peace. Moreover, they are sensitive to the demands of citizens, participate in patrolling the area, while networking with other municipal, community or collaborating services. The nature of their intervention cannot be coercive. Based on the character of the needs, the mediator fosters dialogue between the parties involved, helps to calm the people involved in a conflict, guides them towards collaborating services that can solve the problem and informs them on general legal points.

In the cases in which the conflict cannot be solved through mediation, the Bureau of Tranquillity refers and accompanies the citizenry to other municipal or collaborating services.

Social and urban context

Toulouse is located in the southwest of France and is the fourth largest city: 449,204 inhabitants (2013 data). The city has grown substantially in demographic terms in the last few years. The youth population represents more than 45% of the total population.



Toulouse City Hall
Photo: MarsuMic

The city has numerous high-tech industries in aeronautics and IT, and has numerous research centres. It is also a student city, with more than 90,000 students.

The target public of the Bureau of Tranquillity is made up of all the citizens facing problems that disturb the peace.

Assessment

The city had not integrated tools to take on and monitor the demands of the citizens. The creation of the Bureau of Tranquillity has made it possible to create a basis on which to set in motion the monitoring and evaluation of action.

One of the main reasons taken into account in relation to the decision to set up this service was that the National Police (tel. no. 17) was receiving calls from citizens reporting situations that were not emergencies, as well as the fact that this line was frequently saturated. The phone operators of the National Police could only devote a minimum amount of time to listen, given that their priority was to put through emergency calls. The Bureau of Tranquillity now allows the city to respond to this social demand.



More than 500,000 calls have been answered in 2 years
Photo: Toulouse City Council
Patrice Nin

The objective of the first year of the Bureau was to identify the social demand regarding cases of disturbing the peace. With more than 500,000 calls in two years, the objectives have been achieved. The service responds to all the calls, offering initial information which is often sufficient to give the caller calmness (information on time during which home-improvement is permitted, or noise relating to a cultural or sporting event, construction work, etc.).

This initiative is based on the principles of collaboration and transversality. That is why certain specific agreements have been adopted with emergency services (national police, fire-fighters, emergency medical care, etc.). Progressively, new collaborations have been created in order to meet new situations within a logical, permanent adaptation of this initiative vis-à-vis the needs of the citizenry.

The initial data show that relations between citizens have improved and this can be seen in half the interventions of the mediators. On the other hand, more than 90% of the people surveyed have stated their intention of using this new form of conflict resolution when necessary.

Future proposals:

- To increase the publicity for the Bureau of Tranquillity amongst the population.
- To diversify the responses depending on the characteristics of each district.

Short documentary on the Project (in French)

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xhsybb_la-ville-devant-soi-3101-office-de-la-tranquillite_news

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xluead_les-mediateurs-de-l-office-de-la-tranquillite-une-alternative-a-la-repression_news

Resources

Contact

Organisation: Toulouse City Council

Department of Economic Development

Contact: Mme Valérie Griffi

Officer of Municipal Educational Project

Email: valerie.Griffi@mairie-toulouse.fr

Phone: +33 567738238

Web : <http://www.toulouse.fr/municipalite/office-de-la-tranquillite>

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<http://w10.bcn.es/APPS/edubidce/pubPortadaAc.do>

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