



On behalf of



**8th Status Report
Participatory Budgeting in Germany
Buergerhaushalt.org**

June 2015

In cooperation of:

Federal Agency for Civic Education
Service Agency Communities in One World

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the landscape of participatory budgeting (PB) in Germany has evolved to become much more multifaceted. To trace these development processes, every year Germany's **Federal Agency for Civic Education** (BpB) and the **Service Agency Communities in One World** (a division of Engagement Global gGmbH) publish a status report on participatory budgeting in Germany. The present report is now the eighth of its kind. It documents the trends in PB in Germany in detail, and relates them to a set of status categories. The Status Report on Participatory Budgeting in Germany has been published online at *buergerhaushalt.org* since 2008.

As PB procedures in Germany became more established – and diverse – we were also able to refine the analytical framework. Since 2013 we have been able not only to analyse the PB processes covered in relation to status categories (see page 6), but also to capture other differences using comparative criteria such as mode or channel of participation. This has enabled us to describe and compare specific types of PB processes and their various features.

The Status Report 2015 is based on comprehensive research on local authorities that were registered in the *buergerhaushalt.org* database as of 6 February 2015. The present Status Report covers **435** local authorities – three more than the preceding report. As in previous years, all the research was conducted online. The database published on the *buergerhaushalt.org* website contains information on all the local authorities in Germany with a population of more than 40,000, as well as information from smaller municipalities that were included in the database in the course of regular reporting on participatory budgeting in Germany.¹ This database is freely accessible online, and can be downloaded using the open data interface on the *buergerhaushalt.org* website. It is also updated continuously in the course of the regular reporting performed by the editors of *buergerhaushalt.org*.²

N.B.:

We always welcome your feedback and inputs. Should you have any more recent information on a local PB process, please feel free to let us know. We regularly update the information published at *buergerhaushalt.org*.

When drawing up the Status Report, we record comparative data on the specific contours and current status of the various PB processes using a system of standardised, pre-defined analytical categories. The research in general, and the status categories in particular, are based to a significant degree on the definition of participatory budgeting developed by Herzberg et al.³ They define participatory budgeting as a process that meets the following criteria:

- Participation revolves around financial matters.
- Participation takes place at the level of the city as a whole, or at the level of a district that has its own political and administrative competences.

¹ As well as local authorities, the entities listed also include rural districts, urban districts, federal states and the federal government.

² To access the open data interface, click here: <http://www.buergerhaushalt.org/en/map>.

³ For more detailed information on the definition of participatory budgeting according to Herzberg, click here: <http://www.buergerhaushalt.org/en/article/history-and-definition-participatory-budgeting>.

- The procedure is designed as a permanent one that will be repeated regularly.
- The procedure is based on a public deliberation process, conducted online or at public meetings and gatherings.⁴
- Some form of accountability must be provided for the outcome of the procedure.

Both the present Status Report and the previous ones were based on the aforementioned definition. This basic definition also underpins the status categories used to classify the procedures. The key below explains each of the status categories in detail.

Status	Explanation
Discussion	The introduction of participatory budgeting is being discussed within the municipality. PB is being called for e.g. by a political party or a non-governmental organisation. Introducing PB is often controversial. A council decision has not yet been taken. The most recent call for PB to be introduced was made no longer than two years ago.
Decision	The council has decided (preferably unanimously) to introduce participatory budgeting. A council resolution is in place.
Provisional	The procedure currently being implemented by the municipality to enable citizens to participate in the budget does not yet meet all the criteria for participatory budgeting. To do so it would require broader forms of interaction with administrators and/or policymakers. These might be created for instance in the form of an online platform for participation, or public meetings for citizens. A constitutive element of PB is the possibility of a public discourse on the budget. If the only possibility of participation is the submission of proposals by e-mail, then the procedure should be classified as 'provisional'. Participatory procedures with this status do not offer opportunities for interactive discussion of the budget, although the municipality does explicitly and visibly invite citizens to participate by providing feedback (see above). This status is assigned to municipalities that describe the way they involve citizens in the budget as 'participatory budgeting' (even though this is de facto not yet the case).
Introduced	Participatory budgeting is being conducted for the first or second time. The public is not only being informed about the budget (for instance through a brochure), but also consulted. Citizens are able to prioritise proposals made by the administration, and/or submit, discuss and prioritise proposals of their own. Furthermore, the municipality intends to provide accountability concerning whether and how the citizens' proposals were included in the budget. A procedure can only be classified as 'introduced' if the last participatory budget was no longer than two years ago.
Established	Participatory budgeting is being carried out for the third time or more. It is now finally emerging that citizen participation can become or already is a fixed and permanent component of the budget planning procedure. A procedure can only be classified as 'established' if the last participatory budget was no longer than two years ago. If it is more than two years since the last participatory budgeting procedure the status 'discontinued' must be assigned.

⁴ This condition is the key criterion for distinguishing between PB proper and provisional PB, which was particularly important when performing our research for the Status Report.

Discontinued	Participatory budgeting, or provisional forms of it such as information events for citizens, are no longer being carried out. The council has rejected or for some other reasons discontinued the introduction or establishment of participatory budgeting. It is more than two years since the last participatory budgeting procedure or a provisional form of it. The local authority may have issued an official statement concerning the discontinuation of participatory budgeting. No participatory budgeting process is planned in the foreseeable future, nor is this a topic of discussion.
No status	‘No status’ is assigned particularly when a municipality has no plans to introduce participatory budgeting.

To ensure clarity, the key figures for the present Status Report are summarised at a glance in the table below.

Information on the database used for the Status Report 2015	
Total number of local authorities (including rural and urban districts) researched⁵	435
Total number of full current procedures included (status ‘introduced’ or ‘established’)	71
Total number of full current procedures included in both 2014 and 2015	53
Type of local authority included	All local authorities with a population of at least 40,000 plus a small number with fewer than 40,000 inhabitants.
Type of research	Online only

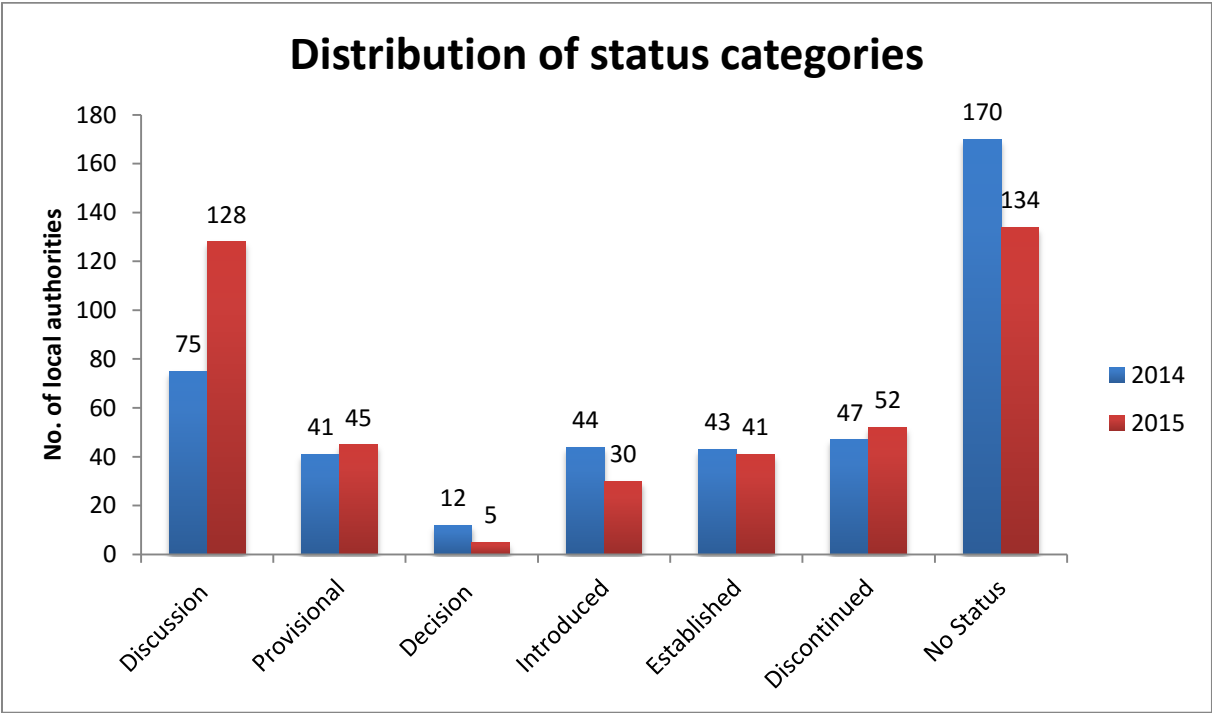
The Status Report provides an overview of the current distribution of the PB processes across the status categories, as compared to the data contained in the previous year’s Status Report.

⁵ A list of all the local authorities included in the present Status Report is attached as an annex.

2. Trends in participatory budgeting in Germany: A synopsis

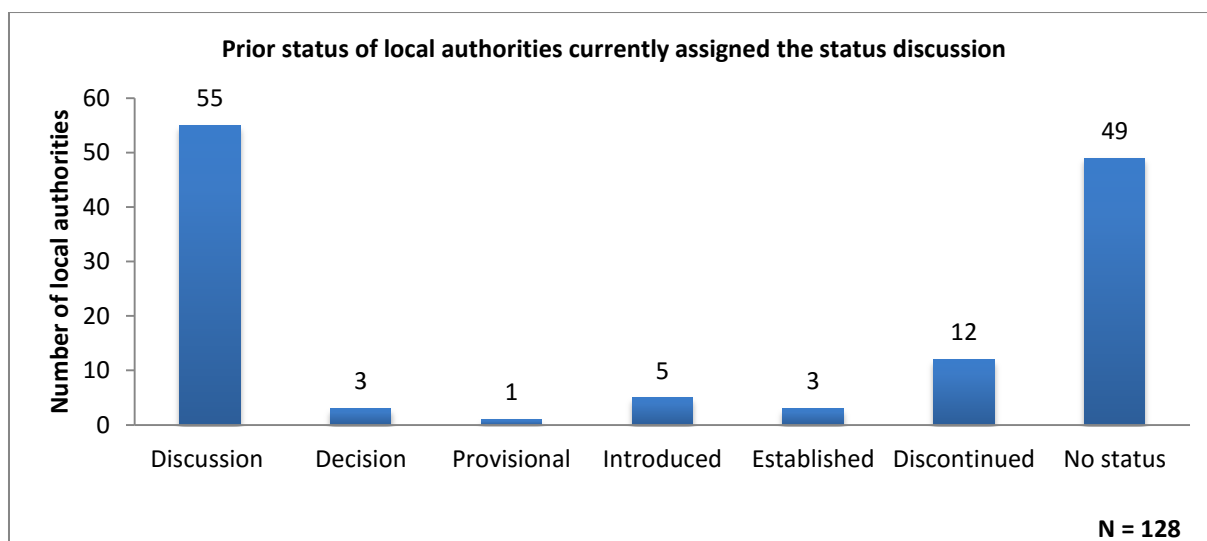
The diagram below provides a general overview of how we classified the PB processes in Germany according to the various status categories. One interesting departure from the previous year's Status Report here is that for the first time we have omitted the status category *information*. Last year, as in the present Status Report, we no longer included information on the category *information*, because it was no longer possible to guarantee that this category would be sufficiently distinct from the category *discussion*. In response to this, we refined the classification system by abandoning the category *information* altogether.

Here we see a comparison of the status data for the PB processes in the 435 local authorities, rural districts and urban districts researched in 2015 (as at February 2015), with the 432 PB processes researched in 2014 (as at February 2014).



Status category	Status Report 2014	Status Report 2015	Change
Discussion	75	128	+53
Decision	12	5	-7
Provisional	41	45	+4
Introduced	44	30	-14
Established	43	41	-2
Discontinued	47	52	+5
No status	170	134	-36
Total	432	435	+3

Comparing the data for 2014 and 2015 reveals the trend in the distribution across the various status categories. The largest change is to be observed in the category *discussion*. Fifty-three local authorities more than in the previous Status Report are currently discussing introducing PB. To analyse this trend more precisely, the diagram below shows the previous status of the local authorities currently assigned the status *discussion*. Here it is evident that many municipalities which were assigned *no status* last year have since moved into the category *discussion*. One reason for this are the major discussions held on participatory budgeting in the context of the election manifestos in spring 2014.



Last year, a total of 71 of the 435 local authorities, rural districts and urban districts covered had either already introduced PB (*introduced*), or are continuing to involve their citizens in drawing up the local budget (*established*). If we take the three status categories *provisional*, *introduced* and *established* together, we see that a total of 116 local authorities have either already implemented a PB process, are making concrete plans to do so, or have at their disposal procedures that display the first traits of participatory budgeting.

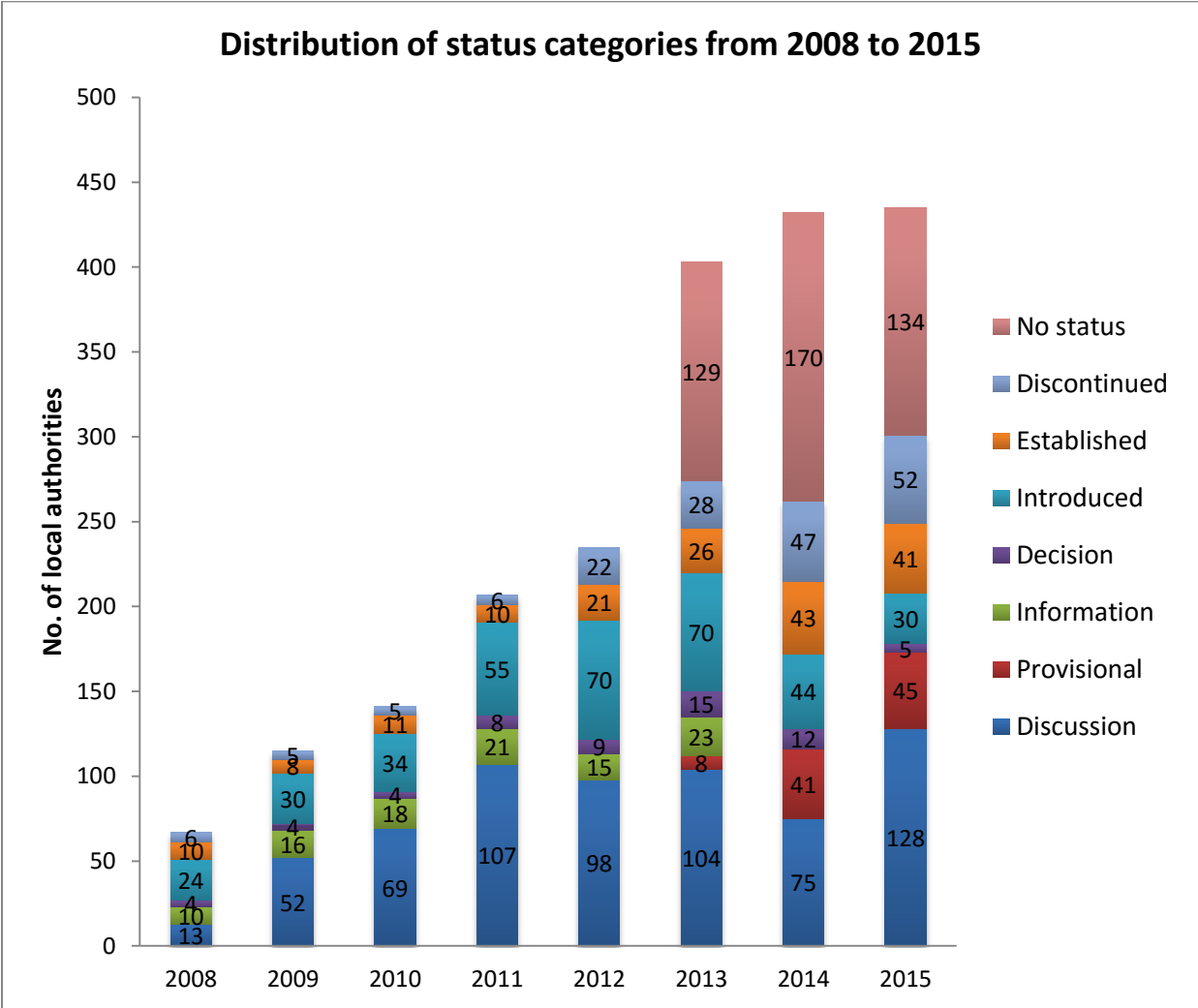
Five local authorities decided to introduce participatory budgeting (status *decision*). The previous Status Report identified twelve local authorities that had adopted a council resolution. The

number of local authorities that have abandoned participated budgeting (status *discontinued*) rose from 47 in the previous year to the current figure of 52.

There was a sharp fall in the number of local authorities whose budgeting procedures could not be assigned any status (*no status*). This year, 36 local authorities fewer than in 2014 remained without any status. As indicated above, this decline is related to the sharp increase in the status category *discussion*.

Comparing the data for 2014 with the data in the current Status Report demonstrates, as did the previous Status Report, that the landscape of participated budgeting in Germany is constantly evolving. The sharp increase in the number of local authorities that are discussing involving their citizens in the local budgeting process (status *discussion*) reflects the fact that a growing number of political parties and non-governmental organisations are placing PB on the local agenda. The number of local authorities that are continuing their PB processes for the third time or more (status *established*) remains virtually unchanged, whereas fewer local authorities are now in the process of *introducing* PB than was the case in the previous year.

The diagram below shows the distribution across the status categories since 2008. It provides an overview of the long-term trend in participatory budgeting in Germany.



At first glance it is clear that the number of local authorities covered this year is almost identical to the number covered last year. (This is not surprising, since all local authorities with a population of at least 40,000 were covered in the Seventh Status Report and were therefore already in the database.) By the same token, the sharp increase between 2012 and 2013 is explained by the fact that all local authorities with a population of more than 40,000 were included in the research at that point.

The above comparison across time also confirms the trend toward a slight increase in the number of PB procedures being *discontinued*. The number of local authorities with *established* PB procedures, which rose in previous years, fell this year. For the first time there were fewer PB processes in this category than in the preceding years. The diagram also clearly shows that this year a particularly large number of local authorities were discussing introducing PB (status *discussion*).