

direktzu Stuttgart 21

Involve public opinion in major public projects

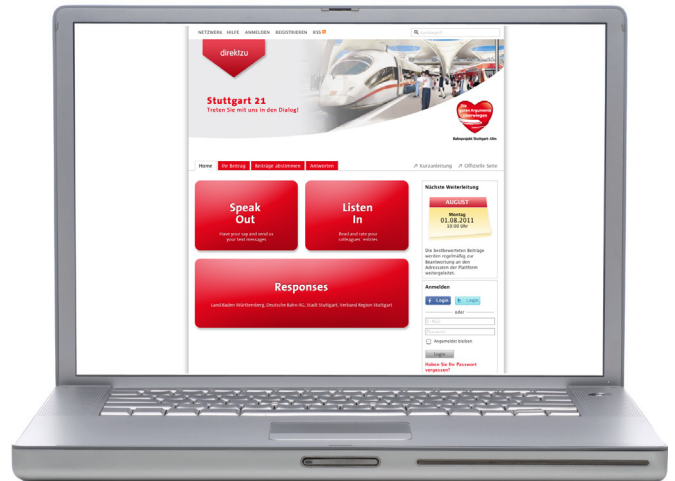
One of the world's most controversial public works projects in recent memory, the Stuttgart 21 rail repositioning project turned to **direktzu**® to establish a direct dialogue with citizens in the local area and across Germany to help turn the tide of opposition.

“There have been a lot of emotion around this issue,” says Wolfgang Dietrich, spokesperson of the Bahnprojekt Stuttgart-Ulm project. “Part of these emotions were fuelled by a sense that the project was progressing without proper public input. And while Stuttgart 21 had previously met all consultation and planning requirements, this perception was nonetheless damaging for the project. Moreover, this effort reflected a larger issue in Germany and generates the question: do Germans still have the appetite for large-scale projects, particularly in their major cities? This means the success or failure of Stuttgart 21 could have massive repercussions across the country.”

The project would replace the 17 platform terminal (which requires transit trains to reverse to continue their journeys) with an eight-track underground through station which would significantly decrease travel times on main European rail routes. The relevantec GmbH was engaged to reopen a channel of direct discussion between the project and the public, coping with the hundreds of citizen requests coming in through all channels. The main purpose of employing the **direktzu**® platform was to provide a basis for an open, broad-based public discussion of the issues surrounding Stuttgart 21. The platform is equally accessible to proponents and opponents, and feedback is submitted to the programme rather than to a single individual. Furthermore **direktzu**® helped to address the expectations of citizens for greater information, transparency, and opportunities to participate in the discussion, and ultimately, to defuse the conflict.

A major factor in improving the discussion was in the platform's technical attributes that facilitated this dialogue by combining citizen feedback semantically. Another key element to **direktzu**®'s success in channelling and diffusing the intensity of the discussion has been the adoption of a schedule for Stuttgart 21 to respond to the “top 5” feedbacks each week. Limiting the discussion to the most popular feedback makes the process more arguable and more practical, freeing the organisation from addressing hostile feedback that lack real public support.

In the first nine months, 772 bundled feedbacks (including consolidation of similar entries) were submitted and 18,120 votes were cast. Of these feedbacks, 297 were answered by the Stuttgart 21 leadership, accounting for nearly 9,698, or one half, of the submitted votes. By opening public discussion, and allowing the citizens themselves to prioritise the feedback, the project owners of Stuttgart 21 achieved what had seemed to be impossible: engagement in robust public dialogue with minimal effort, and success in toning down the emotional intensity of the discussion.



Screenshot of **direktzu Stuttgart 21**

Between September 2010 and September 2013:

- 1.347 feedbacks submitted
- 32.231 votes cast
- 4.852.080 page impressions
- 669 feedbacks answered by the Stuttgart 21 management

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