
Report on Valorisation Workshops in Austria

Within the LLL ENEVA Project

0. Preliminary Remarks and Concrete Tasks

Within the ENEVA project it is the goal of the project partners to create a methodological frame regarding the valorisation of projects, including indicators to measure valorisation processes. Within this context different country-adjusted methodologies were applied to address this issue within national contexts.

The Austrian national context in this field can be seen as primarily based on NGO activities as most of the institutions working with persons with disability are, seen from a structural perspective, NGOs, which are subsidised by mostly local governments. Therefore a central data collection process had to be replaced by personal contacts and by structured communication within the two national workshops. The following paper is therefore based on:

- a. personal contacts with project coordinators regarding Austrian and international projects within the field of disability
- b. two national workshops organised in November 2008 in Graz (40 participants) and in June 2009 in Hartberg (53 participants)

The two seminars focused on two different target groups:

- a. The seminar in Graz focused on stakeholders coming from the field of professionals or project coordinators in the field of disability (national and international). Therefore the specific input and discussion was much more focused on the conceptual issue of valorisation and sustainability. The process of the workshop included a key presentation by my institution and discussions based on prepared papers regarding valorisation.

- b. The 2nd workshop focused on the active participation of persons with disability in terms of self-advocacy. In this workshop the focus layed on the perceived experience and valorisation of the the target group.

Both workshops can be regarded as big success, especially the 2nd one. Participants highlighted the active participation of persons with disability in the whole process.

1. Common Features

Starting Point for both seminars was the attempt to define the word valorisation. In both seminars participants highlighted that the word valorisation is not very common as it is not a German word and as it is mixed with dissemination, sustainability, exploitation. Generally the participants found a consensus that valorisation mainly focuses on activities or experiences after the finalisation of a project. It means valorisation for experts in the field of disability and person with disability themselves is seen as the future usability.

The participants within the second workshop in Hartberg were primarily persons with disability who reported their personal experience within EU-projects. The focus of this second seminar therefore primarily highlighted the personal transferability of experience into daily life.

2. Valorisation

2.1 The need for a definition

All participants in both workshops and the personal talks highlighted that the concept of valorisation is not well known within the field of persons with disability. One reason for this is that the German word “Valorisation” is not used; other concepts are included under the roof of “Valorisation”. It is highlighted that valorisation is very closely connected with the concept of sustainability, exploitation and that valorisation needs active dissemination and active management processes. Furthermore there is a consensus that valorisation focuses primarily on processes after the end of project. Valorisation can be described as processes to ensure that project results, products, changes in attitude, changes in policies or mainstream integration are performed after a project ends. To do so most of the participants highlighted that an active

management and preparation process for the valorisation for a project is needed. However the participants also highlighted that there could be a need for further promotion and further explanation, what valorisation is, in the German speaking context. It is also, due to German terminology that exploitation focuses much more on the economic factor of project results. However exploitation also includes added values which might not have a direct impact on economic factors. However there is a big consensus that the term valorisation has to be operationalised and promoted.

2.2 Levels of Valorisation

Especially the heterogeneity of the participants in the different workshops showed that valorisation of projects in the field of disability has to include different levels. Participants in the workshop highlighted that especially in the field of persons with disability the primary experience level of persons with disability can be seen as an important factor regarding valorisation. Persons with disability report valorised effects if they had real contact with other persons in other European countries or if they underwent daily life experience with other persons in other contexts or other countries.

The level of valorisation was described by project managers in terms of changing of daily practice in institutions or change of attitude. This can be seen as an effect of valorisation that taking part in European projects normally produces observable changes regarding attitudes and in most of the cases observable sustainable changes regarding daily practice in work processes with persons with disability. Based on dissemination processes most projects show sustainable effects on community level in terms of change processes, in terms of identified European activities or in terms of structural changes within or between institutions. Most participants highlight the transfer of ideas or of practice into existing structures which is seen as an effect of valorisation. However, especially project managers and stakeholders indicate that the general goal of valorisation and sustainability is the mainstream implementation of project products or results. This is seen as a major goal within European projects. However, project managers are a little bit careful regarding their assessment whether in reality this transfer effect is always possible. Mainly financial restrictions are reported to be the main impairment towards mainstream integration. Especially political decision makers highlighted the effect of European projects regarding policy.

In terms of a framework and indicators to assess valorisation the findings indicate that any kind of assessment of valorisation has to include the aspects of heterogeneous levels of valorisation.

- a) The level of personal experience for persons with disability in terms of exchange processes.
- b) The level of personal exchange of attitude and daily practice in institutions.
- c) The change of community structures.
- d) The change of educational systems in terms of implementation in mainstream education.
- e) The change of socio-political strategies or laws.

Finding 1: Valorisation might be successful if it can perform changes or give impulses on all five levels and if these impulses are observable and can be measured.

2.3. Valorisation and financial resources

Especially project managers highlighted that valorisation processes need financial resources. Especially the dissemination processes of results, the creation of structures to sustain processes require financial means which normally are, within the project circle, always available. Therefore lack of sustainability or lack of valorisation is mostly seen as a problem of financial resources. However, the problem is not primarily an issue of information and dissemination. Most of the project managers report that a lot of energy is invested regarding dissemination processes but the problems seem to be structural changes which normally require in depth change processes. Information itself is useful and helpful in this context but in depth discussion, own experience and political will to change systems can be seen as more relevant impulses to sustain products or results. Because of this valorisation processes and sustainability have to be an integrative part of every project and have to start very early. Especially project managers point out that short term projects in terms of e.g. two years might have some problems to initiate valorisation, as creation processes of projects normally take quite a lot of time.

Finding 2: Valorisation of projects requires management and financial means within the project process itself and should focus on structural changes. An indicator for good valorisation processes therefore can be whether the project structural management

manages structural change processes and describes a clear strategy towards change management.

2.4 Tools of Valorisation

Valorisation needs concrete tools. As the term valorisation itself in the German language is quite unusual, project managers at first reported some kind of helplessness regarding the question which concrete tools can be used to increase valorisation. Generally project managers highlight the tools of a marketing plan, dissemination strategy and tools and socio-political lobbying. However it is highlighted that there is a high need to make the term valorisation itself more concrete.

On the other hand persons with disability highlight that their added value within European projects is the concrete experience of change or exchange. Therefore definition or indicators of valorisation should include different levels of observable behavioural, conceptual or structural changes on different levels. On the other hand it is highlighted that in terms of business plans valorisation very often focuses on economic factors and that some of the institutions working with persons with disability not always show sufficient screening or expertise to create sustainable business plans. It is also highlighted that at the very beginning of projects persons with disabilities should be included much more in planning and management processes and in processes regarding valorisation. This will increase the validity and sustainability of the projects themselves.

Finding 3: Valorisation can be assessed as to which extent the primary target group of persons with disability is included in all stages of the process cycle, meaning in planning, performing, finalising and sustainable transfer processes.

5.5 Valorisation and local networks

Especially project managers highlight that a project can be sustainable if a good implementation of a project within local networks, together with local socio-political stakeholders is carried out. Local networking in local contexts therefore can be seen as a key factor of valorisation. Practice examples in the field of valorisation show that local stakeholders (majors of cities, local political decision makers, local synergy of networks) create the necessary impulse to sustain projects. However, it is highlighted that especially this

networking process within projects should be coordinated and managed. Some project managers highlighted that his principle of proximity of projects within local network to a high extent increases the probability that the project will survive after the end of the project cycle. This principle of proximity also includes that local political decision makers are included in project activities. It is highlighted that in this context a person with disability can, in terms of self-advocacy, reach much more than every project manager.

Finding 4: An indicator of valorisation is local networking and a creation of a local network of stakeholders to create maximum synergy within one project.

3. Final Remarks

The workshops in Austria within the ENEVA project highlighted the importance of valorisation in the field of persons with disability. It can be generally said that valorisation for the target group itself (persons with disability) is high if the persons with disability are personally involved in different levels of project processes. This can be seen as a main finding for future projects in the field of disability to highlight the active and full participation of persons with disability to increase the impact and increase sustainability or valorisation. Valorisation processes on the level of mainstream integration or socio-political change to a high extent depend on the principle of proximity and local networking highly correlated with the issue of financial means. However the workshops show that some consensual indicators could be found:

- a. The indicator of the diversity of levels.
- b. The indicator of necessary tools and definition processes.
- c. The indicator of necessary management and financial processes.
- d. The indicator of local proximal networks.

However, the most important finding of the 2 Austrian workshops emphasis the importance of full participation of persons of disabilities in the whole project cycle:

Projects are sustainable and show valorised (added) value, if persons with disability fully participate

- a) in the planning processes of a project
- b) the performing, controlling and monitoring processes
- c) and the evaluation processes of a project

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