

Balancing Life in Europe Dialogue Seminar – transnational evaluation

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This paper is a documentation of an evaluation dialogue seminar with the steering group, summing up the joint transnational work.
The document was sent out to the partners a week after the seminar, in a draft version, so that the partners could add more reflexions on transnational work. These later comments, sent in by email, are marked in *italics*.

Dialogue seminar transnational evaluation

During the September session for TCA Balance in Life in Sweden, there was provided an opportunity for the national partners to jointly evaluate the transnational co-operation. This took the form of structured reflections, taking departure in key indicators: Relevance, Effectiveness, Sustainability, Efficiency and Management, appraisal and monitoring. The participants – the steering committee of the TCA – have been asked to give further comments after the seminar, if they so wished.

The main purpose of this dialogue seminar was to look back and see what learning and/or added value there has been in the Equal construction of a transnational co-operation of national DPs in this specific case. The focus was on transnational co-operation as such (not primarily on the national activities).

Method – plus, minus, interesting

Before the seminar, there had been sent out the headline for the analyses, with the five indicators. The partners had been asked to prepare themselves.

At the seminar, participants worked together in respective countries, and gave key-words to aspects of the indicators. They could give key-words of three kinds: plus, minus and interesting (meaning aspects that were respectively positive, negative or that had content that leads further). They gave those key-words for all the indicators separately, and then gave clarifications in plenum. Last, the group discussed the total picture jointly.

Indicators for project success

Relevance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the objectives deal with the problems that were supposed to be addressed? • Were objectives appropriate to the physical and policy environment within which the TCA operates? 		
Plus	Minus	interesting
More or less. In general – yes (Sv)	Isolation of activities (Cz)	
Exchange of information (Cz)	Could have been more innovative (Sv)	
We have detected a common reality (Es). <i>After these two and a half year now, we have realised that – in spite of the many differences in our social systems - women remain in almost identical situations in the three countries when it comes to work-life problems. Besides this, women also share the same concerns, most of them coming from a need of joint responsibility from the part of men.(Es)</i>	Awareness of the dimensions of the problem (Es). <i>This can be interpreted as a minus or plus aspect, depending on the approach. What we tried to illustrate with this statement was that the awareness of the dimension of the problem of living a balanced life provoked us some kind of sadness, such as when one knows that he/she is facing something so huge that feels defeated beforehand. (Es)</i> <i>However now, looking at this statement again, I consider it to</i>	

	<p><i>have a positive quality: at this point, after more than two years working at both national and transnational levels with this issue, we are much more conscious about all the shades involved by this problem, we perceive it in a much more integral way, which I consider positive since it enables us to empower ourselves to provide solutions. (Es)</i></p> <p>Language skills of target groups (Cz)</p>	
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Effectiveness		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the project planning and logic work? Was the design feasible? • Did the DPs have sufficient capabilities to manage the innovative initiative? • Did activities achieve outputs and do outputs achieve TCA Result? • Did the project contribute to the expected impact or are there good indications that it will? • Did the TCA succeed in learning lessons from action? 		
Plus	Minus	interesting
<p>Planning and logic worked out as expected (Sv)</p> <p>Learning process (Cz)</p> <p>Times were generally respected (Es). <i>Now I can tell it's very difficult to lead a group in working jointly. None of us has devoted to this full time, so I understand sometimes it's difficult to meet the deadlines when you are doing hundreds things more. But I consider quite positive the fact that all of us have kept ourselves in a quite open attitude and mind when it has been necessary to readjust calendars, modifying dates and adopting new ways of doing. (Es)</i></p> <p>Outputs achieved, closer connections established (Sv)</p> <p>Broadened our perspectives (Sv)</p> <p>Transference of ways of doing (Es).</p>		<p>Outputs not always close to TCA result (Es)</p> <p>Broadened our perspectives (Sv) <i>Products: different solutions to common problems (Es). It has been interesting to note that common problems are addressed in different ways, depending on the country and social system. All of us have seen this at the Thematic seminars and Study trips events, which have proved to be good indicators of each one's ways of doing things (daddy leaders in Sweden, a deep concern on social services from the municipality level in Czech Republic, raising awareness of the importance of men's involvement in equal opportunities issues by means of men's associations for equal opportunities (AHIGE) in Spain, etc.). These events have provided a basis for individual reflection on the degree of transferability of other countries' tools into our own contexts, making us aware of handicaps and limits from our</i></p>

		<p><i>contexts we were not aware before.</i> (Es)</p> <p>Language and conceptual diversity (Sv)</p> <p>Three different cultures: south, central and northern Europe (all)</p>
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Sustainability

- What learning has taken place in mainstream organisations?
- Does this result in a flow of benefits to the disadvantaged?

Plus	Minus	interesting
<p>Input for follow-up projects (Cz)</p> <p>Connections established (N2B2) (Sv)</p> <p>National DP with power to decide (Es). <i>In the case of Spanish DP, it is made up of organisations and institutions with a great power to take decisions and the possibility of achieve a real transference (trade unions, business confederation, federation of municipalities, immigrants associations federation).</i> (Es)</p>	<p>Limited usefulness for target groups (Cz)</p>	<p>Inspiration for future activities (Cz)</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>No visible impact at the moment – but probably in the long run (Sv)</p> </div>		

Efficiency

- Did the TCA provide the units at the budgeted cost?

Plus	Minus	interesting
<p>100 % of the budget</p> <p>100 % of the activities (Es)</p> <p>budget perfect (Sv)</p> <p>Budget (Cz)</p>	<p>Impossible to engage individuals outside of DPA (Cz)</p> <p>Strict national rules against efficiency (Es)</p> <p>Too different national budgets for TCA (Sv)</p>	<p>Making plural programmes/agendas (Es). <i>I think it's a good idea to make coincide transnational and national events, since this can be used to pay off infrastructures, as well as disseminate national activities and make national projects more relevant abroad.</i> (Es)</p>

Management, appraisal and monitoring

- How appropriate has the organisation and management of the TCA been?

Plus	Minus	interesting
<p>Framework good (Sv)</p>	<p>Irregularity (Cz)</p>	<p>Different cultures of decision-</p>

<p>Friendly and open environment (Cz)</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Very fixed (Sv)</div>	<p>making have met (Sv)</p> <p>Double regardless of “irregularities” ☺ (Cz)</p>
<p>Common learning throughout the way (Es). <i>A common concern always helps...because you keep your mind active in finding and learning other ways of doing things, and when you find something interesting, you go much more beyond the specific mechanism/tool/solution or whatever; and learn to establish relations, draw conclusions, infer not explicit knowledge... The problem is that all this reflections arisen are not normally shared, which would be very interesting and productive because it would generate much more added value.</i> (Es)</p>		

Other aspects.

Three different cultures: south, central and northern Europe.

Discussion with departure from the keywords

The discussions around the keywords circled around some key-topics; learning, exchange, perspectives, innovation. The following text tries to mirror the discussion. It is not always clear from the notes exactly who said what.

On results

- There have been a lot of outputs by the side.

On learning

Sweden

- The co-operation has broadened our perspectives. Perhaps there are not so many practical models that we can use, but we have learned a lot. It has been beneficial for us and for the Värmland region, it has made us more European. When we see how different we are, when we also see the similarities.

Spain

- The physical events have been very interesting in all cases. We can see that we have the same problems but different solutions. That has enabled us to reflect.

Czechia

- We use the same terminology, but our concepts are not the same. They depend on where you are in the social situation. This co-operation has been an inspiration for future follow-up activities. We can use some product – or actually all products.

- Considering the learning mainstream organisation, we can see no visual impact, but our work will have impact in the long run. Connections have been made, and results will be more visual in the future.

- The three countries have common objectives, and work with individual needs.

On project management

Czechia

- We have got questions and got no feedback. Then we were flooded with feedback. There has been irregularity. There has been periods of nothing, no feedback, and then too much of it. Be more careful. There are always changes in a project. But feedback should be continuous.

- Evaluation has been ineffective.

- Formative evaluation puts big responsibility on both evaluator and the others.

- There has been big problem with budgets – the national budgets are different. This should be brought up with Brussels.

- In a co-operation like this we would have needed to count not only travelling expenses, but also interpreters.

On innovation and perspectives

- This demand for innovativeness is silly. How can we be innovative? It is ridiculous. When it comes to social questions there can be no innovation – it is rather improvement. Maybe this concept should be more defined, and we could for example say that we are reinventing. It is a question of terminology: it would be better to say “to be open” or “to be flexible”.

- We have broadened our perspectives: meeting other people always does. In your own reality you think “I Know Everything”. The, when you meet people, you look on what they are doing and see many solutions.

On key words and concepts

- During our discussions in this cooperation we have seen different key words, and we have been rethinking on key words. Like this concept of “Fulltime jobs” – meaning quite different things for people in Spain, Sweden or Czechia. What are advantages of full time jobs/part time jobs? Are there drawbacks?

- We have learnt to be more open and more understanding. Ask ourselves: “What is behind decisions?” “Why do they do it?” Not only THAT they are doing it.