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summary

Temporary organisations for permanent problems

Proposals from Theme Group Youth



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The reality described in this report is problematic in many ways and there appear to be inadequacies in projects in terms of the capacity to ensure that the activity continues and that lessons are incorporated into regular activities. The fact is that not all projects should be implemented and nor is this always the ambition. This may involve projects that do not perform well or that do not have owners able to fund their future. However, the ambition for most of the projects is that it should be possible to use the lessons and experiences developed in activities after the project has come to an end. As this has transpired to be difficult, we have several proposals that could improve the preconditions for implementation.

- When setting national priorities, the Government should emphasise to a greater extent that the Social Fund is to be reflected in regular activities and control how funds are used with the help of clear priorities and delimitations.
- The meaning of the term 'innovation', which often forms a basis for grants, should also embrace long-term sustainable organisational innovations, not just operational innovations.

- The coordination associations (Finsam) have a good organisation for running ESF projects directed at young people, but do so on a rather small scale. A special initiative should be made to increase the use of the European Social Fund by these stakeholders.
- Impose clear requirements during the current programming period prescribing that projects should explain in their applications how they will work to effect implementation into regular activities during the course of the project. The plan presented should also be supported by the project owner's senior management.
- All projects granted funding should be invited to a mandatory learning conference focussing on how they can and should work to implement successful methods and experiences into regular activities from the outset.

Summary

This document may be regarded as supporting information for decision-makers when organising activities requiring cooperation across organisational boundaries. Many cooperation projects are started and run within the public sector.

These generally involve dual-purpose change and development projects. First, short-term project objectives are to be achieved (for example, improving conditions for a particularly vulnerable target group and testing new methods and approaches within the project duration), and second more long-term outcome targets are to be achieved (for example, that the new methods and approaches 'are implemented', i.e. are utilised and continue to be operated, within permanent activities if they prove to function well). Seven ESF projects have been examined within this study, all focussing on the target group 'young people who are distant from the labour market'. The primary objective is to describe and analyse how experiences from the projects have been utilised and incorporated into regular activities. In order to understand the outcome of this outcome target, project objectives are also examined (i.e. what has been accomplished during the course of the projects). The target group addressed by projects is also discussed.

Theoretical points of departure include concepts such as sectorisation, cross-sector cooperation, implementation and reasoning concerning the relationship between projects and regular

activities. Set against this background, a brief description is provided of the projects studied, following which the results of the projects based on project objectives and outcome targets are analysed. The conclusions drawn are that projects may be described as 'heavy as lead' in terms of achieving project objectives – a lot of energy and money is invested in getting project participants into employment, education or training – but 'light as a feather' in terms of achieving the outcome targets and implementation into regular activities. The chapter explains how and why this is the case, with the key term being 'uncoupling'.

The study is concluded by two chapters that investigate various opportunities to deal with the implementation problem. First, four strategies are presented in one model; four possible ways of organising activities. Two of these – the 'Implementation Strategy' and the 'String of Pearls Strategy' – assume that the development work is being conducted as a project. The other two strategies – 'the Manager Strategy' and the 'Coordination Strategy' – assume that the development work is managed directly within the ordinary structures. There are pros and cons for all of these strategies.

The concluding chapter provides more substantive advice about what stakeholders at different organisational levels should consider when applying any of the four strategies.



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