



HOTEL

How to analyse life quality

An accompanying measure within the EU Fifth Framework Programme

Keyaction "Improving the Socio Economic Knowledge Base"

Contract No.: HPSE-2002-60057

Newsletter II

"Workshop I"

Public newsletter of Work Package No. 2

September 2003

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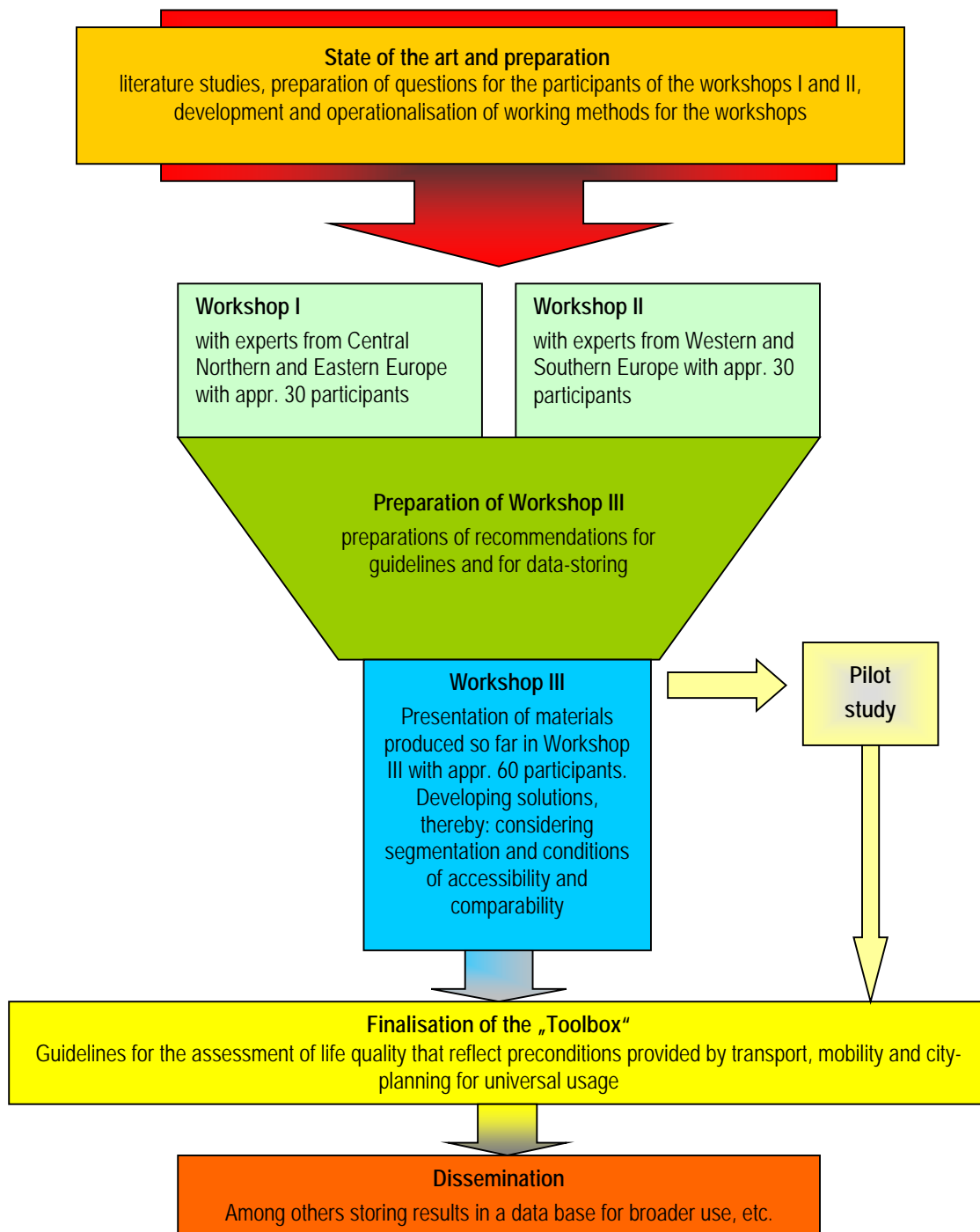
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Preface

HOTEL – How to analyse life quality– is an accompanying measure in the key Action “Improving the socio-economic knowledge base” of the EC Fifth Framework Programme.

The project HOTEL takes a starting point in a heuristic approach that focuses on different disciplines' practice in connection with the assessment and consideration of Quality of Life (QoL) and underlying mobility and transport preconditions. The core concept is to find out how aspects of QoL are taken care of in practice in the field of transport, mobility and city planning. With "practice" all kinds of activities are meant that set the scene for the living conditions of citizens. The responsible actors for these activities are politicians and decision makers, planners, implementers and administrators.

Fig 1: Graphical presentation of the project components



The Workshop – methodological aspects

Workshops are the central elements of the HOTEL project. The concept of a workshop implies to make various disciplines and professional groups related to the covered subject work together. Here, in the case of the concept of life quality, the participants are architects, town planners, engineers, social psychologists, public decision makers, territorial authorities, companies of transport etc., on all the levels of governance. In general a workshop is a heuristic approach appropriate for analysing a relatively unstructured universe of activities that are neither strictly theory-steered nor systematically knowledge- or rule based: Much work is unreflected routine, intuitive, steered by hidden agendas, following "private" hypotheses, done in the frame of certain schemes of distribution of power on the working place, etc.. The internal logic of such a system can be made better transparent with the help of heuristic methods.

In the context, the goal was thus to enhance the generation of new ideas and the clarification of habits and practices not structured consciously, by being confronted with unusual questions and by making use of working methods or practices that do not belong to everyday routine. For that reason the workshop was structured in such a way that multiple feedback and interaction between participants, but also between the participants and the organisers was possible. Small-group work in combination with plenary sessions seemed suitable for the achievement of our objectives, as it is an interactive method which is very motivating for the participants and allows efficient work. Besides, topics can be dealt with in detail.

The Lund Workshop – HOTEL workshop No. 1

Workshop I was held on the 1st and 2nd of June 2003 in Lund (Sweden). It was the first part of expert work in the frame of HOTEL. The main aim of this workshop was to summarise knowledge about QoL from experts in the field of traffic, mobility and city planning. The core concept of the workshop was to find out, how aspects of QoL are taken care of in practice. The following questions were of relevance for the workshop:

- ⇒ What kind of role does the concept of QoL play in the daily work of experts in the field of traffic mobility and city planning?
- ⇒ How is the concept of QoL verbalised in programmatic papers and in documents?
- ⇒ How is it specified and operationalised?
- ⇒ How is it evaluated whether goals to improve QoL have been reached?
- ⇒ If certain goals have been identified that have not been reached, what is done in order to improve this?
- ⇒ What kind of differences between points of view in different parts of Europe have to be considered with respect to the assessment of QoL?
- ⇒ What can be improved in the assessment of QoL?
- ⇒ What are the main barriers for improvements?

For the elaboration on the topics a group work method (small-group work) was applied for the workshop. It seemed suitable for the achievement of the objectives, as it is an interactive method, which allows efficient work and topics can be processed in detail.

Results

The role of the concept of QoL in the daily work

The general attitude of the experts was that traffic, mobility and city planning have a great impact on the QoL of people. In other words QoL is a topic in these areas. However, the concept of QoL and also its role is rather fragmented. An increase of QoL is equated with measures to make alternative modes more attractive, to improve the traffic safety, to reduce

pollution, noise and vibration, etc. However, there exists no generally accepted definition of QoL, which could be taken as a starting point for all these measures.

In addition it was mentioned that nowadays urban and traffic planners are more or less aware of the fact that there is the necessity to deal with the concept of QoL. They have to be trained in this area.

Verbalisation of the concept of QoL in programmatic documents

There exist many documents and papers from European level to local level, where the concept of QoL is somehow verbalised. The experts, however, complained that it is hard to get an overview of all these papers.

Besides due to different views on QoL, priorities are set quite differently in the various papers. Another problem, which was mentioned is that responsibility is often shifted from one level to the other one.

Specification and operationalisation of the concept of QoL

The concept of QoL is specified in general programmes and in special single actions. In both types of cases it is usually based on indicators. The experts pointed out the importance of using subjective and objective indicators. A number of indicators were mentioned by the experts: safety (e.g. accident figures, number of 30 km/h zones in an area), comfort (e.g. persons per square meter in the bus, space for pedestrians), aesthetics (e.g. noise limits), costs (e.g. budgets for the different mobility modes, cost benefit data), accessibility, participation, health.

Evaluation, barriers and ways how to improve assessment

Evaluation of QoL is done with quantitative and with qualitative methods, but the use of qualitative methods prevails. With respect to the evaluation, a number of problems were stated by the experts. The following table gives an overview of the problems mentioned and ways how to improve the present situation with regard to the assessment of QoL.

Table 1. Problems and ways how to improve it

Problems	Suggestions for improvements
QoL is only used as a keyword in political programmes, without being specified	QoL has to be clearly defined in the traffic, mobility and city planning area
Evaluation is not very widespread in the traffic, mobility and city planning area	Planners have to be made aware of the importance to consider the concept of QoL adequately, which automatically includes the evaluation of processes.
There is often a lack of time and a lack of human and financial resources, with the result that evaluation is not done in a systematic way. Steps are not well defined.	Politicians, administration, experts and the public have to be involved in the process of assessment. In this case importance of an evaluation becomes more transparent and it is more likely that more money and time is allocated, so that work can be done more systematically.
Surveys are often politically steered so that the evaluation is sometime too much orientated towards political goals. The results are often presented in a way to fit the goals.	Participation of the public might lead to a more thorough evaluation of results.
There is a lack of dialogue between politicians and the "rest of the world" (lack of participation)	Participation processes have to become more usual.
Different concepts of QoL are used, the question	QoL has to be clearly defined. A sophisticated indicator system with objective and subjective

Problems	Suggestions for improvements
is what is you actually measured.	indicators has to be developed.
Priorities are set differently by various people	Minimum requirements that include common priorities have to be defined.
There are still not the right questions asked, knowledge about long term needs of users is still missing.	Approaches for the assessment of QoL have to be integrated and interdisciplinary. Longitudinal studies are needed.
Often there is a lack of internal rules	Rules have to be set up; especially as many different partners are involved in an evaluation process there is a need for rules.
There exists no good data base, where you can look if evaluation has been done in this field already.	Data bases have to be installed
Mainly "hard" facts are evaluated with quantitative methods. Tools for evaluation of "soft" facts exist, but are not used to their full potential.	The importance of qualitative methods has to be more underlined. Urban and traffic planners have to be trained in this area.
Short term political decisions stay in contrast to long term political strategies	Politicians have to be reminded of long term effects

With respect to failure to reach the goals, experts identified three types of consequences. Either the failure is neglected and nothing happens, the objectives are "softened", or the responsible persons look for the reasons of failure and analyse what has to be done in order to achieve the goals. This last case is considered as being as exception.

Conclusion

The workshop was very productive with regard to the collection of practical knowledge about the role of QoL in the daily work of traffic and mobility and city planning experts. For the ongoing work in the EU-project HOTEL the following topics have to be further elaborated on:

- ⇒ Definition of QoL for the traffic, mobility and city planning sector
- ⇒ Specification of indicator systems
- ⇒ Evaluation problems and how to handle them?
- ⇒ What should a toolbox contain?
- ⇒ What should the database contain?

These issues will be further elaborated on in work-package 4.

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