



HOTEL

How to analyse life quality

An accompanying measure within the EU Fifth Framework Programme

Keyaction "Improving the Socio Economic Knowledge Base"

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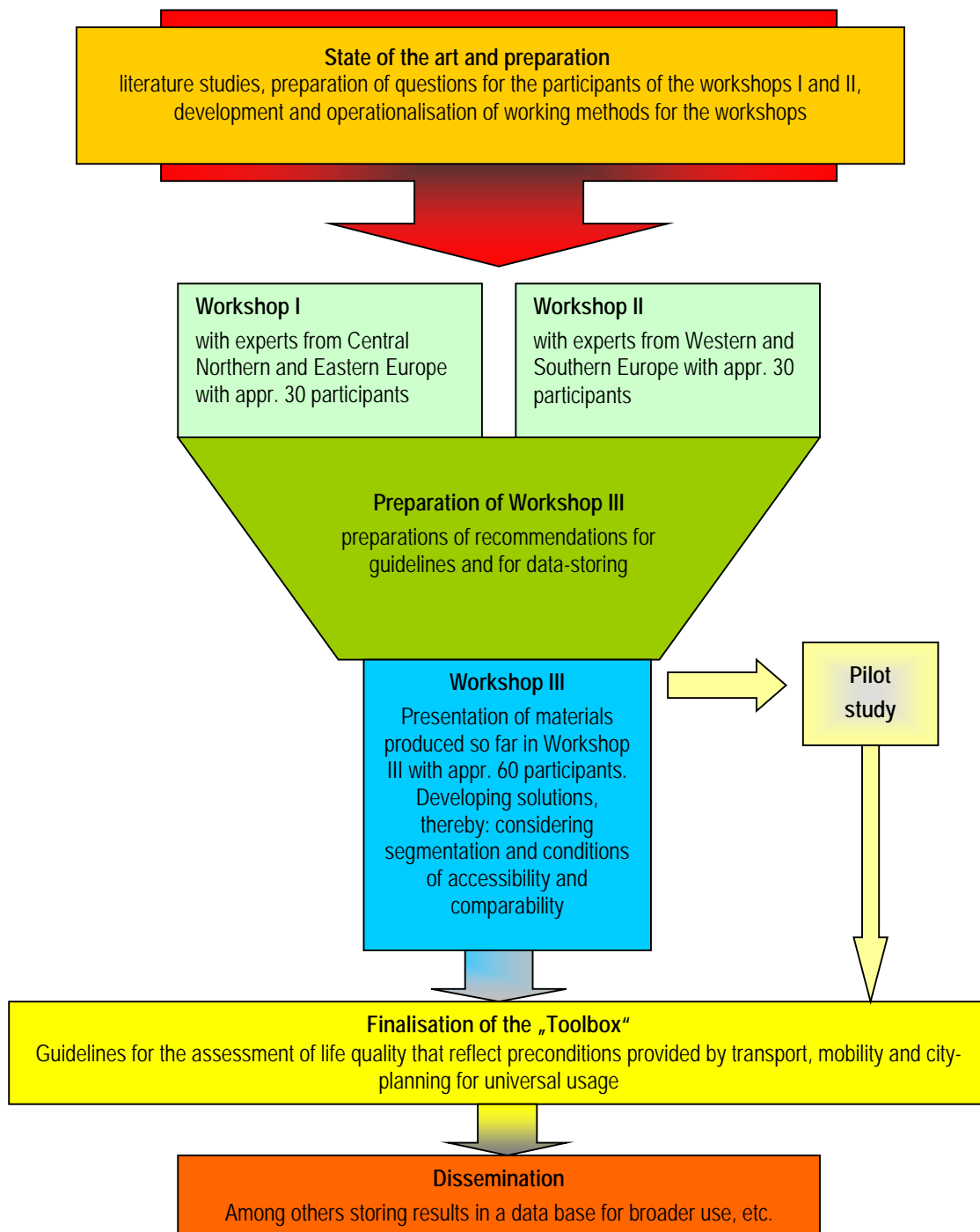
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Preface

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



Objectives of the Toolbox work

The Toolbox resulting from the State-of-the-art work and the activities of WP1 (state of the art) WP2, WP3 , WP5 (Workshops I, II & III) and WP 7 (pilot study) will have the shape of preliminary guidelines for research on and implementation of quality of life (QoL)-aspects that, once finalised in further applied research projects, can be used in all European countries. These guidelines will include recommendations how to measure/consider QoL in connection with traffic and town-planning. The assessment modules should be flexible, in order to make it possible to consider characteristics of different groups, regions, or occasions appropriately, but nevertheless to reach comparable results that can be stored in data bases. It should not be necessary to design an instrument for every new project about in connection with QoL and mobility-issues, nor that results of new studies regularly turn out not to be comparable with other – earlier - results. I.e., comparability should be in the focus, which will make assessment of QoL in Europe easier, better understandable, and more accurate.

How to get started?

In each project to be implemented, objectives should be set up together with strategies to achieve them, as well as the methods of result assessment and evaluation. This all should happen in the frame of a long-term plan. First of all the participation of citizens seems to be a necessary precondition for success of any project that wants to consider QoL. Participation is a sign of QoL per se because it is an important component of democracy. At the same time, participation helps to create a common vision of future development based on a joint analysis of the present situation. The common vision ensures that the planned solutions will not be disintegrative, nor of a short-term character, nor in conflict with other municipal plans, nor in favour of only one segment of the population or one interest group. The planned solutions should rather be systemic, democratic and they should support a sense of community and mutuality.

Planning

Planning consists of the following stages:

- analysing the main problems of a particular city,
- creating a common vision, participation,
- defining long-term, mid-term and short-term objectives, main strategies how to achieve them and also clear markers of success or failure,
- monitoring and feedback – an information flow among experts, politicians and the general public

This a linear explanation of the planning process used to simplify the subject. Planning and realisation are not always two separate processes. In practice, the sequences are often overlapping in time. In this way on each stage of planning and realisation there exists some kind of feedback, which provides a chance to recognise failures and to improve what is going wrong.

Another important precondition for success is an interdisciplinary collaboration of experts. To achieve this it is necessary to build effective communication links among experts from different disciplines (architects, technicians, urban planners, sociologists, ethnographers, sociologists, social psychologists). One example of good practice is to bring them together at the beginning of any project. Various social-scientific work methods (workshops, discussions, focus groups, etc.) and related social events that are not scientifically structured (heuristic procedures) represent opportunities for exchanging views.

Due to the fact that the implementation of any project needs some political support, it is important to carefully build a communication link among politicians, local authorities and experts. The obvious problem is that the politicians favour short-term objectives much more than long-term ones in those cases where these types of goals contradict each others and where the short term results are inconvenient, at least for some relevant groups. Another problem is that the interests of those who provide financial resources could prevail, while the needs of people belonging to weaker groups are neglected. Examples are the elderly, disabled persons, pedestrians & cyclists, and measures may be labelled as "too costly" and "simply not affordable" (whether this is the real motive or not).

The instruments in the QoL-toolbox

From all previous work-steps of HOTEL, and under special consideration of the heuristics developed in the discussion above, as a main result of the expert discussions in the three HOTEL workshops, a number of issues were listed that should be considered when assessing QoL. The "general public and relevant sub-groups of the general public" are in the centre of these heuristics. Another important aspect that was underlined was the communication between different groups of experts and decision makers and the public. These aspects as well as the issues that are – or seem to be – important for all target or population groups, but to a different degree and in different combinations, have to be considered in the HOTEL toolbox. The "heart" of this toolbox is an interview- viz. survey instrument, i.e. a questionnaire that includes open questions that allows to measure satisfaction with situations and their changes that have shown to be constitutive elements of QoL.

Such instruments have to be based on assumptions of what elements should be included in order to get a clear picture of QoL and its changes. The list of elements that are relevant according to the findings of HOTEL were listed in what we called a **QoL-checklist** of relevant issues that together constitute QoL.

On the basis of this list the **QoL-questionnaire** was developed that was used in the frame of the pilot study in Kristianstad. The city of Kristianstad was chosen for a pilot study (see HOTEL Deliverable 7 on The Pilot Study) where the toolbox could be tested. Larger parts of the inner city had been redesigned and rebuilt, among others with one decisive goal: to improve "liveability". Kristianstad thus seemed very appropriate to test the contents of our toolbox. We also found out that in Kristianstad the planners and decision makers responsible for the innovations there had considered roughly the same aspects as we had done in the HOTEL project.

In parallel, **QoL-guidelines** for planners and decision makers were generated. For the politicians and decision makers the results of the application of the toolbox instruments, later on, should help to implement the right measures in the right way, and to present them according to the relevance attributed to them by the public. The pilot study in Kristianstad should provide information on whether this can be achieved with the toolbox in its present format, and these results will be considered and shown in the appropriate report (HOTEL Deliverable 7).

Finally we have created what we called and "embryo" for a potential **QoL-database** with recommendations of how a data base could be implemented, how to handle qualitative data to achieve harmonisation, and how a library of QoL-studies could result in a dissemination of knowledge about QoL. With these recommendations for a data base we expect to make evaluations in the field of QoL easier. The results of this work will be an integrated part of the HOTEL-website.

Application of the HOTEL- toolbox

Both the character and the application of the HOTEL toolbox are summarised and put into a comprehensive frame in the graph below:

The ideal case referring to the application of the toolbox-instruments can be seen as an open loop with a twofold use, at least, of the questionnaire. I.e., in the after phase repeated studies could be done to analyse the development of QoL-assessments after implementations. We are of course not able to force those who are in charge, i.e. decision makers, to use certain instruments. But as psychologists and/or sociologists, who are invited to assess QoL aspects and how they are influenced by different types of implementations, from the planning phase to the very last step of practical application, we certainly recommended to proceed according to the graph:

Figure: Application of the HOTEL-toolbox



An application of the toolbox

The HOTEL-toolbox for the assessment of QoL in connection with city planning, transport and mobility consists of several instruments:

- A checklist containing the indicators that are considered relevant for the QoL of citizens
- A QoL-questionnaire (see annex) which was pre-tested in the pilot study in Lund
- QoL-guidelines for planners and public decision makers
- recommendations for a database where results of QoL assessment at different occasions could be stored

The guidelines were tested and their relevance was demonstrated in the frame of a pilot study in Kristianstad (Sweden). There, satisfaction of citizens with some selected innovation at this site were assessed. It was analysed to which degree the aspects that according to HOTEL are relevant for QoL were considered as being relevant by the citizens (of Kristianstad), as well. Results of this study are summarised in the next HOTEL newsletter, in Newsletter Nr. 5.

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