Experiences of Following-up and Evaluation of ESF Projects in Eastern Finland

This report deals with the follow-up and evaluation of the ESF employment projects in Eastern Finland. ESF part-financed projects are monitored by the national EURA2007 system and the quality and effectiveness of vocational labour market training are followed by the national student feedback system (OPAL). Furthermore, the projects follow and evaluate their actions themselves. The study was implemented through an online survey, which was send to all priority axis 2 employment projects in Eastern Finland. Priority axis 2 aims to decrease structural unemployment.

According to the survey results, the Eura2007 system and Opal student feedback system measure only a part of the outcomes of the projects. They seemed to be suitable for the measuring outcomes and results of projects focused on unemployed people. The project leaders of projects, which participants were mainly displaced workers or job seekers threatened by unemployment, were also fairly satisfied with follow-up and feedback systems. Only some of the project leaders of youth projects considered that the follow-up functions relatively well. In the follow-up systems, most problems were experienced in the projects which had been focused on migrants or the representatives of organisations. If the follow-up criteria would be differentiated according to the types of the projects, follow-up data could be more widely used also in the evaluation. The follow-up data is mainly quantitative and for this reason not enough attention has been paid to the results that require qualitative indicators.

In the use of the follow-up and evaluation data attention there would be worth paying also to the fact that the information about the results of the evaluation would return to the project actors. The questions of the student feedback are emphasised to the contents' of the education but the participant's self-assessment is not included in it (the commitment to the training, the employment path). However, the participant feedback is important to the projects and the organisers of the training from the point of view of the developing of the training.

It is also expected that the projects create new operating models, services, products or cooperation networks. However, a part of the effects of new operations models can be evaluated only after a long time. To evaluate long term effects studies, comparisons and evaluations to be done afterwards also are needed. The information needed in the evaluation is transmitted from a project level but the actors do not get enough feedback about the effectiveness of projects. The evaluations could be developed so that also regional level information on the effectiveness of projects would be produced.