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MAKING CAPABILITIES WORK IN EMPIRICAL CASE STUDIES – A CROSSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK FROM THE EU-RESEARCH PROJECT "WORKABLE"

This presentation introduces the current cooperative EU project "Making Capabilities Work" (WorkAble), in which 18 European partners participate. WorkAble scrutinises strategies to enhance the social sustainability and economic competitiveness of Europe by strengthening the capabilities of young people to actively shape their personal and work lives in knowledge societies and cope with today's economic, cultural, demographic and technological challenges. The project looks at problems of transition of young people moving from school to employment.

The basic question is which personal, social and institutional conditions are necessary not only to succeed in the labour markets of European knowledge societies (Human Capital Approach), but also to maintain autonomy and freedom of choice (Human Development Approach). The project comprises qualitative as well as quantitative research and draws on the justice-based Capability Approach.

In this presentation two partners out of the project - from Germany (Bielefeld) and Denmark (Aarhus) - will focus on their national (qualitative) case studies and will provide first and basic empirical insights. The overall research design is threefold: Firstly, the needs, perspectives and prospects of youths and young adults are analysed; secondly general aims, patterns of interpretation and practices of professionals working in transition programmes are taken into consideration and finally the normative judgments and political strategies of local decision makers whose work is related to the topics in question as well as interest/pressure groups in the youth welfare and labour market sector are focused.

The first empirical insights raise several important questions: Are there any informal or formal rules tending to enable or constrain capabilities for voice, capabilities for work and capabilities for education? Whether and how is the balance between a work-first and life-first approach assured within the pedagogical processes? In which manner are the (job-related) desires, resources and competences of the target group on the one hand and the general aims and ends of an active labour market policy (ALPM) and its activating measures on the other hand negotiated? If and how are biographical, professional & institutional reflexivity enabled and embedded? The reasons for these questions will be discussed and possible answers are given.

Further on methodological questions how capabilities can be operationalised in empirical work will be raised as well as how a crossnational perspective on the transition from school to work can be tackled.