



Newsletter No. 11

Hamburg, 14th July 2003

Dear Partners and Friends,

We are pleased to inform you about the ongoing process in the Hamburg partnership. Starting point of a debate during the last weeks has been the discussion and conversations in Lidingö about services in Hamburg. Hopefully with the two articles it succeeds to give an overview of what is going on in our partnership.

Comments, reflections and questions are appreciated. As well we are always interested in information about the other projects and partnerships.

With good wishes for the summer

Dorothee Bittscheidt

Michael Langkanky

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A glimpse at the Hamburg Partnership

by Michael Langhanky, Hamburg

At the Lidingö-Conference and even in Rotterdam the International STEPS-network intensely discussed the development of services for people with learning disability in Hamburg. The Hamburg partners explained the development from big institutions to more user-oriented and community based services offered by providers as Alsterdorf or 'Das Rauhe Haus'. Our colleagues from Sweden and England pleaded very clearly for closing down the institutions. This discussion was accompanied by supportive conversations and talks during the Conference which help us to clarify the problems and different views.

Back from Lidingö we were convinced that - to get forward - it is necessary to change the way of working in the Hamburg partnership. This newsletter seeks to describe this development.

To start the discussion it was useful to remind the starting points of STEPS:

- ?? Three Hamburg partners (Alsterdorf, Das Rauhe Haus, the local authority/administration) have had the intention to develop user-oriented and supportive service structures together.
- ?? They looked for European competence to build an expert-network.
- ?? They hope to find good and best practises in Steps.

This intention has led to

- ?? a Hamburg partnership which concentrate too much on intellectual discussions. Contrary to the other local partnerships Hamburg hasn't yet agreed on a practical project with a clear question, clear aims and concrete results yet.
- ?? a predominately self-critical presentation of deficits and problems of the service structures in Germany.
- ?? taking on the part of consulted partners in the middle of consultants.
- ?? a growing consciousness for questions and problems of the other local partnerships.

Additionally I would like to mention the following aspects, which make it more and more difficult to stimulate the Hamburg discussion:

- ?? the election of a right wing government of Christian democratic party, Free democratic party and the so called "Schill-party" (according to the founder Ronald Schill).
- ?? an administration that is still waiting for clear political statements and precise instructions of it's new leadership concerning STEPS.
- ?? very restrictive economies and savings in services
- ?? a dispute between the three partners about resources an their distribution

Based on a first evaluation of the Lidingö-Conference and the Hamburg Partnership from the point of view of the project management (please see the summary below), we have restarted the discussion in the Hamburg partnership with the aim to find a clear commitment and to agree a concrete joint project in Hamburg for the next 12 month.

We met on the 1st of July for an open workshop about obstacles in the previous month, possible improvements and our future work. During the meeting we realised that all Hamburg partners

- ?? agree on the general aims in learning disability services
- ?? share basically the same visions about services in the future
- ?? detect the same basic obstacles from different points of view

This last item – the basic obstacles - is not only crucial for the development of the Hamburg partnership but as well for the improvement of services in Hamburg. The root of the matter is a competition of the provider: According to article 93 of the federal social assistance act the present finance system should be displaced by a new systems which should take into account the different levels or categories of needs of the people with learning disabilities. The new system isn't realised yet but implicate that some providers will loose funds, others will receive more. This situation leads to a total blockade in the Hamburg partnership and a hard competition stamped by mistrust and a double bind-communication.

In our meeting, we all agreed that at first we should clarify the problem in an open discourse to get over the blockade. The aim is to find starting points for concrete activities for STEPS. We have arranged to meet for one and a half days on the 29th and 30th of September to work on the following topic:

**Financing and financing-obstacles on the way from
residential to non-residential services
(taking into account the development of
categories of needs of people with learning disabilities).**

We all hope that we will have a constructive and fruitful problem-solving discussion and that we will be able to develop to concrete options. We will keep you informed!

The Lidingö-Conference and the Hamburg Partnership

A first evaluation from the point of view of the project management in Hamburg

by Anne Ernst, Hamburg

The following items has been compiled in preparation of the Hamburg meeting at the 1st of July *at the end of June*. Consequently the Hamburg partnership has been in the centre of attention. They represent the point of view of the project management and has helped to restart the discussion in Hamburg.

Detection of the Conference in Lidingö

?? At the Conference in Lidingö the International partnership has collected many experiences and knowledge. The different presentations and, above all, the Swedish experiences provide useful starting points to improve services for people with learning disabilities.

We clarified different positions and problems of the involved organisations. Many ideas and approaches have been discussed and will be summarised in the Conference documentation. All together everybody has hopefully gained a more differentiated knowledge about developments and services in the different countries.

?? The exchange of information involves positive effects for the daily work of the partners (bilateral contacts between provider organisations, integration of people with learning disabilities and staff members in the project etc.)

?? At the Lidingö Conference the differences between on the one hand the English and Swedish development, characterised by hospital closure programmes, and on the other hand the German system with big provider organisations were in the centre of attention. As a result we concentrated too much on the question how to change the Hamburg structures.

?? From the point of view of the Hamburg Partners their represented developments and ideas have been estimated too negative. Indeed, the will to change the system has been doubted. At the same time it has become obvious that it is not simply possible to copy the English and Swedish way in Germany.

?? The Hamburg partners partly reacted with withdrawal, partly with defence. The project management – as part of the Hamburg partnership - moved between criticism and distance or defence of the Hamburg partners.

?? All partnerships are asked to make available further information about their systems and development with the help of the Comparative Framework. We should use the possibility intensively!

?? For the next Conference in Barcelona we should concentrate on shared questions on a very concrete and practical level. We would like to suggest to focus on case studies and user stories.

Detection of the Hamburg Partnership

?? Indeed, the Hamburg partnership partly seems to be paralysed. This blockade might be caused by political and economical developments and changes in Hamburg.

At the same time the Hamburg partners have a clear gain from STEPS: They take up ideas and suggestions of STEPS and co-operate with institutions of the other countries.

Positive feedback from people with learning disabilities and staff members shows positive effects in and between the organisations. With interest Steps is noticed by other providing organisations and self-advocacy groups in Hamburg.

Not least of all it is a great success that the involved partners in Hamburg are still discussing with each others how to develop user-oriented structures although the political and economic conditions tend more to support competition and standstill.

?? As a local project the Hamburg Partnership has agreed on developing proposals for community based services in Hamburg. Until now, it has renounced to arrange concrete projects with practical activities.

?? The project management of STEPS is responsible for the international network and for the local partnership in Hamburg as well. Therefore the Hamburg partners feel more as 'consumers' than the other partners in STEPS.

?? It is necessary to discuss the interests, activities and aims of the Hamburg partnership and to agree accordingly on clear responsibilities. This would support a commitment and productive results in the Hamburg partnership.

Replenishment from today:

The first meeting after the Lidingö-Conference on the 1st of July took place in a very open atmosphere. Reservations and reproaches have been clarified. All partners would like to continue with the project to support non-discriminative services in Hamburg. There are good reasons to change from having doubts to thinking positive!

Steps – Structures towards emancipation, participation and solidarity

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