



Follow up studies on the Profiling courses in Germany



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“Profiling”- Measures on behalf of the Labour Office

The aim of the “profiling”-measures on behalf of the labour office is to improve the access to the labour market through a weak form of competence assessment. The main scheme for the assessment of competences focuses always on job opportunities or mostly even only on employability. There is no formal system of accreditation but non-formal and informal learning is taken into account (although in a weak way).

The target group of the “profiling”- measures are all unemployed with meagre job prospects. It mostly focuses on people with medium to low qualifications and among them mainly on the long term unemployed.

Most of the participants have achieved a vocational qualification in the crafts or in retail, few of them have worked in the administration sector.

Participants without vocational qualifications have worked in the service sector, e. g. as taxi or pizza drivers or in the building sector.

There are two fundamental principles

- I) Principle of giving support and demanding activities (Fördern und Fordern) which was introduced through the JobAqktivLaw in 2002 (pilots started in 2001) and further developed in the Hartz laws (2002-2004/5)
- II) New steering principles which combine demand orientation (that is employability) and efficiency of the labour market instruments.

There are two main measures for achieving that “Profiling” and “Case management” as will be explained below there is still no common policy across the regional labour agencies

The aims of profiling are in detail:

- to identify the vocational and particularly the “personal suitability” of a candidate
- early examination of the abilities/capabilities to fulfil job demands
- to identify barriers and their reasons for finding a job
- to build categories of customers according to their demands for assistance
- to identify the amount of help needed
- to create a basis for the individual’s self-reflection process and a realistic idea of own opportunities in the labour market
- to develop an action plan for each customer including a variety of steps towards employment

The main new aspect of the Profiling was the examination of the “personal suitability” While before the vocational qualifications and experiences had been more in the focus. The steering function which is carried through by a “clearing agency” of the Profiling encompasses:

- to identify systematically the demand of support through CVT-courses
- to make a selection between the customers:
 - o customers who just need information
 - o customers who need guidance
 - o customers who need support

Very important is the idea that the Profiling offer is to be adapted according to this selection amongst the customers.

Against the background of the results of the Profiling the labour agency (careers adviser) decides about support, CVT courses and further funding. This means if a customer does not turn up at the Profiling course in time his social benefits will be reduced. The Profiling is thought to be activate the customers who are supposed to be too passive or even too lazy. In case of a high demand of guidance or support a so called “in depth Profiling” was planned to be carried through. These should include psychological and content related testing.

The “short Profiling” (Entrance check) and the “in depth Profiling” follow different schemes and are carried through by CVT companies according to their own curricula. Even step by step procedures between the entrance check and the “in depth Profiling” should be put into force.

A typical example of the “in depth profile” is given below:

Time table of a “profiling-scheme”:

1st day:

- Rights and duties of unemployed people in Germany (social regulation law: SGBIII)
- professional biography self-image of unemployed person
- aims and assistance of the course

2nd day – 4th day:

- curriculum vitae
- further development of IT-skills/of an individual
- application letter
- understanding of working references

5th – 6th day:

- searching jobs in the internet
- working through job advertisements in local newspapers
- discussing what is meant by “team-work”, “flexibility” etc.
- judging to what extent these demands of the market are fulfilled-
searching for examples
- test one’s own key competences and value the key competences of a partner
- which support can be received by the labour office for improving own job
opportunities

7th – 8th day:

- developing realistic ideas of potential future jobs assisted through testing own
strengths and weaknesses and personal guidance
- telephone application
- email application

9th-10th day:

- verbal and non-verbal communication
- appearance of applicants
- training interviews in pairs/ in front of a camera
- reflection on interviews
- feedback to trainees
- filling in profiling form

It has to be pointed out that the Profiling of personal competencies is only carried through during half a day (see 6th day). It has turned out that there is a very severe difference between obligatory profiling and voluntary profiling where strengths and weaknesses are evaluated together with the client.

Originally it was planned that the “in depth profiling” should examine vocational abilities, social problems but especially social competencies with regard to the customers labour market interests. It was planned to formulate a detailed analysis about the customer’s suitability for specific work demands, occupational alternative and proposals for CVT. In fact, however because of the large number of customer only a very superficial questionnaire that summarises these aspects is filled in in reality. Below there is an example for aspects which are assessed according to an official assessment sheet:

Example of Assessment:

Former occupational experience:

- very comprehensive
- comprehensive
- medium level of experience
- apprenticeship in a different field
- no occupational experience

Further categories:

- content related knowledge
- mother tongue
- foreign language(s)
- IT-skills

Additional are considered particularly informally acquired experiences (especially e.g. in charity work)

Further features:

- if regional mobility is possible
- how many working hours the person is available
- what are the persons salary expectations
- how big the efforts for former job searching was/is

To be informally assessed by the trainers:

- general attitudes
- particularly initiative
- appearance

Outcome in the overall categorisation:

- unrestrictedly employable
- employable
- employable only after comprehensive qualification
- employable only in co-funded job schemes
- not employable in the near future (problems with drugs, debts. etc.)

Outcomes:

- the ownership of the profiling sheet is with the labour office
- the course is compulsory, not optional

- the effects of self-evaluation and guidance depend strongly on the trainers working in the scheme
- the participants get a disk with their own application and their curriculum vitae
- in relation to this it is hoped that the participants apply for jobs in a more sensible way
- the results on the profiling sheet are used by the labour office in order to find potential job offers for each trainee

Some problems have been faced:

- A clear causal relation between features of personality, evaluated through the profiling, and the opportunities of finding a job could not be established
- to evaluate a multitude of features of personality might hurt the personality rights

Evaluation of the course in the light of the European Common Principles

- the fact that the profiling sheet is owned by the labour office is contradictory to the European Common Principles
- the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formally and informally achieved competences plays an insufficient role in the “profiling schemes”
- no formal system of accreditation is possible
- Those under the age of 18 who have no traineeship contract in their pocket but are legally required to attend school part-time can also attend vocational schools.

In fact the results of the Profiling play an important role for question if people are supposed to be capable of taking up a job while living on social benefits. If they are evaluated as capable of taking up a job and do not show enough activity for fining one social allowance is reduced step by step.

The Profiling Courses, their actual use and the political context in Germany

The actual existence and use of the „Profiling Courses“ is unclear because the financing, the concepts, the length as well as the amount of courses carried through has been changed constantly during the last four years.

Introduced in 2001 it was originally planned that all people who are unemployed would have to participate in such a “Profiling course”. The aim of this obligatory participation was to draw a picture of the whole range of competencies of each individual facing unemployment. Against the background of this picture it was aimed to achieve a more suitable matching between the jobs on offer and the individuals who are searching employment. Soon it was discovered that the costs for such courses were enormous, therefore the lengths of the courses as well as the content were shortened. At some stage the Profiling Courses were only one week long and the amount of time dedicated to the evaluation of non-formal and informal competencies was reduced to a multiple choice test of 60 minutes and a short discussion. Recently we were informed that the new concepts for courses are designed again for a period of four weeks.

The five years history of the Profiling courses, including their introduction, their changes, and their reduction has to be seen in relation to the political, economic and social context they have been invented in.

One central aim within the German social and labour market reform was the restructuring of the Bundesanstalt für Arbeit, the German labour office. It was envisaged to restructure this state institution into an agency which works according to economic interests and acts as a modern third sector company. As a symbol for this development towards a modern company the name was changed from “Bundesanstalt für Arbeit” (labour office) to “Bundesagentur für Arbeit” (labour agency which means a more active body). Similarly the clients have been renamed into customers.

As already mentioned this process of restructuring was included into the social and labour market reforms, named “Hartz laws” after the former Chief Executive for personnel of the

German car company VW who was one of the central figures for the reform proposals which were then introduced by the Schroeder government.

To get a brief overview there are four central “Hartz-laws” which deal with the following subjects:

Hartz I	Hartz II	Hartz III	Hartz IV

The restructuring of the Bundesanstalt into the Bundesagentur had to face several problems especially with regard to giving more autonomy to the local agencies. In the process of this development the first leader of this new “state company” was sacked because of severe contradictions between the still vivid financing structures of a state institutions and new marketing ideas as an institution of the third sector. Severe problems were giving autonomy to local agencies and reducing administrative costs.

During the last year, since the coming into force of the Hartz IV law which..... the criticism against the social and labour market reforms is raising continuously. An important fact which promotes the criticism is the fact that labour market researchers found out that the improvement achieved through the “Hartz-laws” is little, with regard to some aspects the situation is even worse than before their introduction. The researchers state a rather negative influence on the individual situation and on the labour market situation through the “Personal Service Agenturen”(Hartz I) and the introduction of the “1-Euro-Jobs” (Hartz IV). Therefore these instruments are called into question because they are blamed to destroy real job opportunities instead of creating an easier way back into work for the unemployed.

At the moment the debate about the Hartz laws is low key. This makes it difficult to get a comprehensive overview on the use of specific instruments, like the Profiling Courses, which are used to improve employment.

There are two reasons for the silence: Firstly the change of government in October 2005 and secondly the VW-Sex-Affaire which led to the fact that the name Hartz is no longer mentioned in the press and as a result also in daily communication. The very common expression “Hartz IV” for the new (reduced) social benefit for longterm unemployed is now therefore mostly called “ALG II” (“Arbeitslosengeld II).

According to recent information from the circle of biat practice partners in CVT the number of Profiling Courses is raising again. Nevertheless it is not totally clear what the intentions behind this revival of the Profiling courses are because it seems that some are combined with the so called 1-Euro-Jobs.

Our further research will focus on initiatives combined with the Profiling Courses which are dedicated to families in which all members live of ALGII (former social benefit).

Literature:

Gesellschaft für soziale Unternehmensberatung (2003)(Hrsg.): Profiling - Neue Eingliederungsstrategien in der Arbeitsvermittlung. Berlin.