

Measuring the Conditions for Participation in Germany for the Next Few Years

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Paper Abstract: Within the research project “socioeconomic reporting” (Sozioökonomische Berichterstattung, soeb 3) the socioeconomic modelling (soem) (Drosdowski et al. 2014) provides data based evidence on socioeconomic interrelations and developments. The focus lies on the macro and meso level. In order to assess the socioeconomic changes, a reference value has to be chosen as a baseline. One possible reference point is participation – a measure that represents individual welfare in the research network. However, participation is perceived in the life of individuals and is individually experienced. Analyses should hence be conducted on a micro level. But the individual welfare positions cannot only be explained by an exclusive focus on the individual level. Reasons and explanations for accomplished or changing individual participation can rather be found on the meso and macro level because at this more aggregated level social resources for participation are generated and distributed (Mayer-Ahuja / Bartelheimer / Kädtler 2012:15). In other words, while on the micro level the realisation and changes of (individual) participation can be shown, the macro and meso level offers the opportunity to describe the development of participation conditions. Participation conditions are not the same as participation itself as they represent only possible existing capacities for participation. Depending on how the conditions are used and transformed by the society, the (realised) participation of different population groups can change. The aim of this paper is to offer an indicator, that measures the existing and changing conditions of participation.

Indicator systems and composite indicators are suitable for illustrating complex multidimensional problems (OECD 2008: 13). In order to achieve high credibility and acceptance of the indicator system or the composite indicator, it is important to make the design and combination of the individual indicators transparent (ibid.: 19). The high degree of freedom in the construction of such composite indicators require a detailed documentation of the individual steps and decisions taken: from the selection of indicators, over the interpretation, to the point of the aggregation of the single indicators to an indicator system. A huge variety of indicator systems for many different aspects already exists. In particular, sustainability is often measured by indicator systems. While most of the existing sustainability indicators focus on the economy and/ or the environment, the proposed composite indicator emphasizes the socioeconomic side and tries to contribute to the measurement of social sustainability. It takes into account the postulation of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi-Commission to construct more group-specific indicators and to use projections for the assessment of sustainability (Stiglitz / Sen / Fitoussi 2009).

The remaining paper is structured as follows. In the next section the steps that led to the composite indicator on participation conditions are described. In section 3 the composite indicator is applied to German data. Also, past and projected results are given. Section 4 gives a conclusion.