

Introduction

This guideline explains the community development approach and relates it to the ACCESS context to illustrate how the ACCESS actor network can be understood and developed as a community. It outlines the strength of the community approach, what makes a vibrant community and how it can be the engine for successfully realising an attractive core idea.

The guideline begins with an introduction that defines the concept of community and distinguishes it from other terms. The following sections present nine key building blocks that can be used to promote the process of community development. The text concludes with a note on the approach. References to the ACCESS context are made in each section.

It is desirable to disseminate this approach among ACCESS project officers and throughout the network to stimulate the development of ideas and actions from the community perspective at different levels.

ACCESS

ACCESS, a four-year project, started in April 2020 and aims to increase the employability of graduates from African universities and to open up attractive career prospects for them on local labour markets. These goals are to be implemented by the 25-member ACCESS project team, which will initiate corresponding processes among the teaching staff of the six partner universities from Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Tunisia via four project pillars. This, in turn, should lead to the African partners winning at least five further partner universities in each of their countries for the project and involving them in target-oriented processes.

Challenging project goals meet an international and decentralised network that already exists in parts, but in its entirety is still a vision. In order to achieve the project goals, it is necessary to further develop the network and align it with the project goals. It must be possible to stimulate a continuous commitment in the sense of the project goals, which makes their realisation tangible for as many network participants as possible and thus creates a sense of belonging.

Due to its internationality, decentralisation and not least the Corona pandemic, the project team as well as the entire network is primarily dependent on virtual channels. Although these channels have great strengths and possibilities, it is nevertheless challenging to design them in such an effective and attractive way that continuous and lively contact between the many different actors in the network can be established. And it is unfortunately not foreseeable at the moment how the possibilities for international travel activities will develop, which would of course represent an invigorating and enriching addition to the relationship building in the network. A permanently successful interaction of the relevant groups of actors and thus the establishment of a community is crucial in order to be able to achieve the project goals. At best, community development succeeds in activating the power of the entire community in such a way that the community becomes self-perpetuating and is thus multiplied on a broad basis - in the case of ACCESS, this would mean the lively further development of a sustainable community even beyond the funding period.

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