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Summary

Balancing Financial Sustainability with the Institutions' Social Mission

Obtaining funding, in particular public funding, as well as securing it for the future becomes increasingly difficult for lifelong learning providers. More and more, educational institutions therefore strive for diversification of funding in order to ensure financial sustainability. Among the most popular funding tools are different kinds of public funding such as programme, formula and project funding, but also funding through philanthropic organisations as well as public-private partnerships. Participant fees, and in some sectors of education also loans, are a steadily growing component of the funding of lifelong learning providers, alongside tax incentives, learning vouchers and other financial tools. What most of them have in common is that they are only given to specific programmes or projects with pre-defined target groups or objectives. Annual applications for grants as well as reporting are becoming common practice for many institutions.

Which implications does that have on the social mission of institutions? Lifelong learning providers adhere to values such as accessibility of lifelong learning to citizens through low-threshold educational offers, reaching out to disadvantaged groups, community development, social inclusion, promotion of active citizenship and sustainability. Will short-term funding change these values? Which financial tools can ensure a certain sustainability of funding, while holding on to the social mission of institutions?

In many countries, we can observe a shift away from the financing of general educational offers to more formal forms of education such as continuing vocational education and training. These forms of education promise almost immediate results for the labour market, other than general lifelong learning where benefits are visible on a longer term. Which consequences does this trend towards learning outcomes and their measurability have on educational providers? What does the new paradigm of "social added value" mean?