

ACTING AGAINST ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT
SUMMARY REPORT ON THE EQUAL POLICY FORUM
HELD IN
PARIS ON 22 AND 23 NOVEMBER 2007

CONTEXT

In autumn 2006, the French EQUAL Managing Authority, working in close cooperation with Germany and Sweden, launched a European Platform to stimulate the mainstreaming of those outcomes from EQUAL that have proved successful in tackling racial discrimination in employment. The Paris **Policy Forum “Acting against Ethnic Discrimination in Employment”** was the culmination of a series of transnational activities initiated by this Platform. These were all geared to presenting and validating, at European level, strategic lessons from the experience of EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) that had been operating in this particular thematic field.

Despite significant changes and progress induced, in particular, by the EU’s Anti-Discrimination Directives but also through its employment and inclusion policies, discrimination against ethnic minorities is still a daily, and arguably an increasing, reality in the labour markets throughout the Union.¹ However, the successful approaches that have been developed and tested by EQUAL DPs offer benchmarks for innovative action and provide models of good practice that could be further disseminated and mainstreamed by the ESF. The priorities established for the operation of the ESF during the period 2007 to 2013 include a strong emphasis on supporting measures to combat all forms of discrimination in the labour market and on specific action to increase the participation of migrants in employment. Thus, the Policy Forum took place at a timely moment in terms of providing assistance to those who will be responsible for implementing these priorities. Outcomes from EQUAL can also underpin strategic action to combat discrimination against ethnic minorities within the wider framework of EU Employment and Social Inclusion policies, particularly as they can be harnessed in different ways to improve their delivery.

As the Policy Forum was only one - though the final - stage of the joint initiative by France, Germany and Sweden, it should be considered in the context of the entire proceedings of the Platform.

THE MAINSTREAMING PLATFORM



The European Platform was launched within the framework of the common work programme for mainstreaming at

EU level that had been agreed, in 2006, between the European Commission and the EQUAL Managing Authorities in the Member States. The Platform provided structured opportunities for transnational learning from innovative EQUAL DPs that had successfully tackled ethnic discrimination in employment. It aimed to stimulate further debate on the dissemination of the good practices that have emerged, with a view to adding new dimensions to these practices and to identifying and addressing gaps in current policies. Therefore, the Platform also offered a forum for decision makers to discuss recommendations that could inform the implementation of

¹ See context notes

(http://admin.kermeet.com/Data/kmclientv6/block/F_3e6f2fe8d2135ffd20a652923582b5a0473c264f3c265.pdf)

the 2007/2013 ESF programmes and that could also introduce a greater degree of innovation into the main EU employment, anti-discrimination and inclusion policies. All Member States were invited to participate in the Platform's activities.

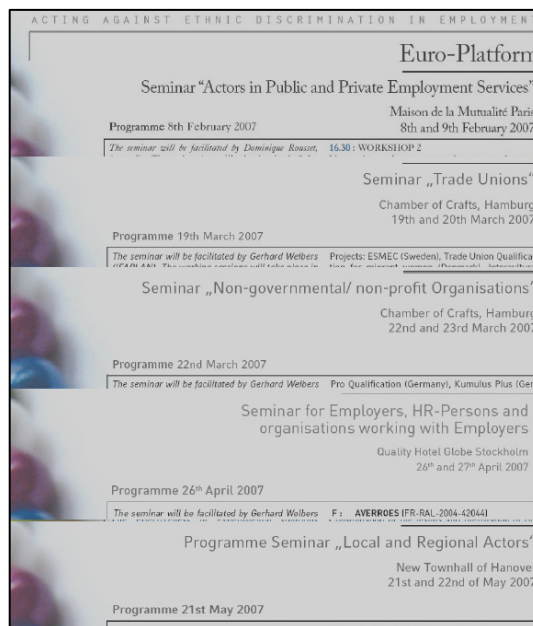
The critical mass of experience drawn on by this platform is impressive: More than 350 DPs had piloted new approaches to preventing and overcoming discrimination against immigrants and ethnic minorities. With EU financial support from EQUAL in excess of 500m €, these DPs represent a substantial European investment in the development of innovative action in this field. Of these DPs, some 80 were selected by the EQUAL Managing Authorities to participate actively in the Platform's activities.

The work of the Platform was organised in two stages. The first stage comprised a series of peer review seminars involving actors from different Member States who either had been working in the EQUAL DPs, or were the "users" of the innovative approaches developed by them. In the second stage, the main lessons and conclusions from these seminars were presented and discussed at the Policy Forum in Paris

PEER REVIEW SEMINARS

Different groups of actors have a particular role to play in combating ethnic discrimination in the labour market. Therefore, the work of the European Platform started with a series of five **Peer Review Seminars**² each involving one group of actors:

- **Actors in public and private employment services**
Paris, 8 and 9 February 2007 (for further information on the proceedings and results of this seminar can be downloaded from this [hyperlink](#));
- **Trade Unions**
Hamburg, 19 and 20 March 2007 (for further information use this [hyperlink](#));
- **Non Governmental Organisations**
Hamburg, 22 and 23 March 2007 (for further information use this [hyperlink](#));
- **Employers and Human Resource Managers**
Stockholm, 26 and 27 April 2007 (for further information use this [hyperlink](#));
- **Actors from Local and Regional Authorities**
Hanover, 21 and 22 May 2007 (for further information use this [hyperlink](#)).



These seminars analysed the practices that had been piloted in EQUAL and identified the most successful approaches that could best be replicated or adapted in the future. Each seminar brought together participants from some 20 Development Partnerships and also a small number of resource persons, who were "critical friends" or experts from outside the EQUAL Initiative. The approaches that were identified during the seminars mirrored the diversity of concepts in Member States' strategies to improve the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities. In the discussions, two main strategies for action were contrasted:

- The first strategy relates to impacting on the existing systems or, in other words, changing the organisations and institutions that are involved in the labour market. DPs presented successful approaches to encouraging public services and private organisations to make an open statement of their commitment to ethnic diversity explicitly and to adopt a clear strategy for increasing their capacity to counteract discriminatory practices. This "capacity building" included the development and implementation of new training programmes for professional

² Reports on these seminars can be downloaded from:
http://www.equal-europlatform.eu/?Jpto=116&KM_Session=b28bcf4c649bccba991ca155fc2db94b&CurrentNode=2600&Lang=GB&IdNode=2596

staff and management at all levels, enabling these individuals to identify, and cope effectively with, instances of discrimination in placement and recruitment processes and also in the workplace;

- The second strategy concerned new approaches to assisting immigrants by offering them support and services that had not, as yet, been provided by the current systems. DPs have established innovative forms of vocational and labour market guidance that are tailored to the specific needs of people of ethnic minority origin and which facilitate their access to mainstream employment and training intermediaries. They have also demonstrated the effective use of intercultural mediators or counsellors, both inside and outside public services, and piloted new approaches to cooperating with organisations representing the interests of ethnic minorities.

Most participants agreed that these two different priorities should not be considered as being mutually exclusive and some DPs presented integrated approaches that involved an effective combination of elements of both concepts.

FINAL CONFERENCE - THE POLICY FORUM

Just over 300 participants attended this final event, including key actors from the different Member States and the European Commission, ESF Managing Authorities, Trade Union and Employer Federations, company managers, NGOs and other relevant organisations from civil society, and representatives of most of the Development Partnerships that had participated in the Peer Review Seminars.

The [Conference Programme](#)³ was divided into three main blocks:

- Opening Plenary;
- Forum Sessions with Key Actors;
- Final Plenary and Conclusions.



Jean Gaeremynck, France

During the **Opening Plenary**, leading officials from the Employment Ministries in France and Germany and from the European Commission highlighted the key issues that must be tackled if ethnic discrimination in employment is to be overcome and stressed the urgency of addressing these issues more effectively.

“In our country, the armoury of anti-discrimination law is well established, but laws by themselves are not enough,” explained Jean Gaeremynck, Delegate for Employment and Vocational Training in France. He believed that *“If discrimination is to be eliminated, individuals’ attitudes and*

behaviour and the practices of institutions and organisations have to change”. Referring to the situation in Germany, Christoph Schumacher-Hildebrand, Director General at the Federal Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, emphasised the need to *“mobilise all actors who can contribute to the social integration of immigrants”*. He explained that the German Government has recently launched a National Integration Plan to implement a programme of 400 different measures. This plan had been developed in collaboration with public authorities and a wide range of stakeholders and experts, including the social partners and representatives of civil society and migrants’ organisations.

Lenia Samuel, Deputy Director General for Employment, Social Affairs and EQUAL Opportunities at the European Commission, drew attention to the main policies and efforts at European level to enforce EU anti-discrimination legislation, to improve



Lenia Samuel, EU Commission; and Christoph Schumacher-Hildebrand, Germany

³ http://www.equal-europlatform.eu/?Jpto=116&KM_Session=26c421677320b03bbe17a724ce92b6ea&CurrentNode=2596&Lang=GB&IdNode=2593

immigrants' labour market integration and to promote the social inclusion of ethnic minorities. And she added that “only if we have reached a stage when the labour market performance and the situation of immigrants and ethnic minorities is really similar to that of the other members of the host society will we have achieved our objectives in these fields”.

All the key note speakers expressed real expectations that the outcomes and lessons from EQUAL would be harnessed to improve the delivery and development of their policies.

The main discussions during the conference focused on recommendations for action that were addressed in six interactive **Forum Sessions with Key Actors** which were organised in two waves of parallel workshops.

Five of these Fora examined and validated the outcomes from the work of the different actor groups involved in the Peer Review Seminars. The recommendations related to each group are listed below.

- **Employment and Training Intermediaries:**

- ⇒ *Integrating skills for dealing with discrimination into the working practices of employment intermediaries*
- ⇒ *Developing new services and new forms of co-operation in order to facilitate the integration of minorities facing discrimination*

- **Trade Unions:**

- ⇒ *Putting the fight against racial discrimination at the heart of Trade Union action: appeals, collective bargaining and regulations*
- ⇒ *Reinforcing the role of the mediator in Trade Unions in order to provide specific assistance to immigrant workers*

- **Non Governmental Organisations:**

- ⇒ *Increasing the level of co-operation between non profit-making organisations, employment services and enterprises, for the better integration of migrants into the labour market*
- ⇒ *Recognising skills and experience, and promoting the development of new occupations*
- ⇒ *Combining the fight against ethnic discrimination with gender mainstreaming*



Discussions in the Forum Sessions

“conference pack”. This document also explained the problems and issues that the individual recommendations address, descriptions of the EQUAL approaches that had proved successful in tackling these problems and questions for further discussion (for direct access to the document use this [hyperlink](http://admin.kermeet.com/Data/kmclientv6/block/F_f49a0ecd496951ea465276a2c66276cc473c96a6ca78b.pdf)⁴).

- **Employers and Companies:**

- ⇒ *Making sure that competencies, not appearances, are the main criteria in recruitment procedures*
- ⇒ *Ensuring diversity in the workforce for better economic effectiveness*

- **Local and Regional Actors:**

- ⇒ *Giving priority to activities carried out by local authorities, the relevant level for comprehensive action plans to fight discrimination*

Details on these recommendations were provided in a comprehensive document that all participants received as part of their

⁴ http://admin.kermeet.com/Data/kmclientv6/block/F_f49a0ecd496951ea465276a2c66276cc473c96a6ca78b.pdf

The sixth Forum concentrated on the outcomes from the parallel European level mainstreaming platform on [Media and Diversity](#)⁵ which had been launched in 2006 by the Swedish EQUAL Managing Authority, supported by Ireland and Finland, and was concerned with promoting diversity in the media and especially in television.

In each Forum, protagonists from EQUAL DPs presented [examples of good practice](#)⁶ on which the recommendations had been based, and then five or six key actors who were potential “addressees” or “multipliers” of the recommendations were invited to comment on the relevance and practicability of the proposed actions, or cross-examine the presenters. This provided further input to stimulate a lively discussion with and amongst the wider audience for each Forum session.



The Round Table of "Key Witnesses"

In the **final plenary session**, the conclusions from these discussion sessions were reported back to all conference participants and to a Panel of six “Key Witnesses”.⁷ This panel involved high level representatives from different public authorities in France and Germany, the European Commission and a large Swedish company. They each gave practical illustrations of how the good practices and recommendations that were

endorsed by the Forum workshops were being or, could be, transferred for wider application in their respective fields of responsibility and through the operation of the European Social Fund.

In their closing comments, the heads of the ESF Managing Authorities in France, Bertrand Gaudin, and Germany, Michael Heister, stressed their intention to continue and extend the successful transnational cooperation the results of which had become visible at this conference. They emphasised the value of mutual learning that had resulted from contrasting and comparing practices and experiences from different Member States involved in the work of the European Platform. They also encouraged further action within the framework of the new 2007-2013 ESF that could help implement the recommendations of the conference. The German ESF Authority indicated that it was open to the idea of hosting a meeting with its counterparts from other interested Member States, early in 2008, to consider practical options for continuing and enlarging cooperation in this field.



Michael Heister (left), and Bertrand Gaudin

During the conference breaks participants had the opportunity to visit the project exhibition where many of the DPs involved in the work of the Platform presented the tools and other materials that they had developed. Detailed information is contained in two brochures, the “[Palette of Projects](#)”⁸ and the “[Portraits of Experience](#)”⁹, which can be downloaded from the Conference Website.

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/news/200710-mediadiv_en.cfm

⁶ These presentations can be downloaded from:
http://www.equal-europlatform.eu/?Jpto=116&KM_Session=a37999ae157ad7eabd05c0e1b8e3013e&CurrentNode=2594&ldNode=2594&Lang=GB

⁷ For details about the composition of the panel: see the Conference Programme.

⁸ http://admin.kermeet.com/Data/kmclientv6/block/F_3b48249ac084e940f6696186e2ff6731473c97740d82b.pdf

⁹ http://admin.kermeet.com/Data/kmclientv6/block/F_a550d51ba1eb44d44f381d38000d1a63473c985f2ef7f.pdf

MAIN CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FORUM SESSIONS

The synthesis of the broad range of topics that had emerged from the discussions in the six Forum sessions¹⁰ was presented to the conference participants and the Round Table of Key Witnesses under two different perspectives - one which put the focus on the nature of recommendations for action and the other that highlighted the role of the key actors.

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

Proposals for action came in different guises and some were explicitly presented as Recommendations. However, many others appeared to be implicit in the descriptions of good practice of the EQUAL Partnerships and related to the analysis of the problems that these projects have successfully tackled or the “Avenues for the Future” that they have identified. The main issues that the proposals embrace were summarised in five lines of action.

These lines of action are not alternatives - they are all indispensable, they complement each other and they require partnership between the actors who have complementary responsibilities in these fields of action. The first three reflect common priorities that were highlighted in all, or most of, the Key Actors Fora.

<i>Priority Issues and Lines of Action</i>
⇒ <i>Fostering anti-discrimination skills as a professional competence - Training and Capacity Building</i>
⇒ <i>Establishing new roles and offering new services</i>
⇒ <i>Promoting Diversity and Anti-discrimination Charters in enterprises and public services</i>
⇒ <i>Valuing and recognising qualifications and skills of immigrants</i>
⇒ <i>Giving priority to comprehensive territorial action</i>

- **Fostering anti-discrimination skills as a professional competence - Training and Capacity Building**

Professional competence includes all the individual capacities and the “savoirs faire” that are required to exercise a profession. Anti-discrimination skills,

such as cultural awareness, knowledge of relevant legal aspects and the capacity to evaluate one’s own potentially discriminatory practice are not, as yet, commonly recognised as being indispensable aspects of professional competence. All the Fora stressed, but in different ways, the need to provide structured anti-discrimination training for public service officials, HR managers, Trade Union representatives and members of staff of NGOs. They also endorsed the EQUAL approaches that had been piloted to meet this need.

- **Establishing new roles and offering new services that are not currently part of existing provision**

Many references were made to the crucial roles of intercultural mediators and counsellors in combating ethnic discrimination and to the need for new services, such as vocational training that takes account of immigrants’ existing skills and language needs, and for accessible sources of information on anti-discrimination legislation. The “NGO” Forum, in particular, highlighted the importance of “empowerment” action enabling the full participation of ethnic minorities in society.

- **Promoting Diversity and Anti-discrimination Charters in enterprises and public services**

Several Fora underlined the fact that Charters and Codes of Conduct will only make a lasting impact if their implementation is properly monitored and evaluated. The actions proposed included measures to ensure fair recruitment procedures and to raise employers’ awareness of the economic potential of a diverse workforce. However, a caveat was added to this last point as diversity should not be perceived exclusively in terms of financial returns and it may not always be possible to demonstrate its benefits by using economic criteria alone. The lead question in promoting, monitoring and evaluating diversity strategies should be: “What hinders the promotion of diversity and what are the drivers for its development?” It was also stressed that diversity approaches must involve a clear gender perspective in order to tackle the

¹⁰ The proceedings and outcomes of each Forum Session can be accessed via the Conference Website.

problem of double discrimination with which immigrant women are faced. The NGO Forum suggested a Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy, building on the example of, and drawing on the lessons from, Gender Mainstreaming.

Two further but equally important priorities emerged, each of which reflects the experience and concerns of a particular group of actors:

- **Valuing and recognising the qualifications and skills of immigrants**

The NGO Forum made a strong plea for action that would give more visibility to the existing skills and qualifications of immigrants from third countries thereby enabling them to find employment that matches their levels of competence. It advocated specific measures to ascertain, and facilitate the recognition of, such qualifications and approaches to provide more effective guidance on this issue to immigrants, employers and public and private organisations working with ethnic minorities.

- **Giving priority to comprehensive territorial action**

The experience presented in the Local Actors Forum demonstrated that discriminatory practices can be most effectively countered when different types of action are combined in a comprehensive territorial approach and also that the local or regional level is the most appropriate setting for such approaches.

Arguably, not all proposals for action in these fields genuinely reflected new ideas but they all spotlighted persistent gaps in the delivery of policies to combat discrimination. It was noted that such progress can be achieved through more concentrated efforts to implement existing concepts and approaches that have already proved their worth. It was also noted that all of the proposed actions are underpinned by validated experience that had the potential for being replicated and could also inform further wide scale strategic action. However, if this potential is to come to fruition, a firm stance would need to be taken by decision makers with responsibilities for policy design and delivery. An interesting proposal came from the NGO Forum: Each Member State should make a formal commitment to select, and take action on, three of the different recommendations that have been endorsed by this conference, which appear to be most pertinent in addressing existing implementation deficits in its national context.

THE ROLE OF THE KEY ACTORS

The peer review approach used to prepare the Policy Forum had highlighted differences in the roles of various groups of key actors but also their common priorities. The involvement of these actors is not optional – all of them need to play a distinct role and the partnership principle, which has been one of the most successful principles of the EQUAL programme, has demonstrated how these different roles can be combined to create a coherent and effective approach.

Not surprisingly, each Forum stressed the crucial role of **employers and companies** in preventing discrimination. In a number of very successful EQUAL projects, large companies have played a lead role in developing methods and tools for fair recruitment and in implementing diversity strategies. They provide credible role models for other employers. However, progress was also made in mobilising **small and medium sized enterprises** which are often less concerned about diversity. Several levers have proved

effective, such as soliciting support from SME unions or associations or finding new ways of demonstrating all the benefits of ethnic diversity and not only those that have economic implications. An interesting new approach was illustrated by a large national bank which operated as a key partner in an EQUAL DP in Italy and provided credit facilities for ethnic minority and other small enterprises, which complied with the codes of conduct that were being promoted by this EQUAL project. Other levers were the different kinds of services that have been established, mainly by NGOs, to help SMEs to build up a diverse workforce, as it was the case in a UK DP which provided management support through ethnic minority post-graduate students who act as consultants. Key actor comments in the Enterprises Forum also emphasised that outreach to schools can help SMEs to appraise the potential of young immigrants, who may become candidates for a job in their companies.

All Fora also emphasised that the **Media** has an essential part to play in countering prejudice and raising awareness. The Media Forum highlighted a new and unique approach to transnational cooperation in this field. This initiative had brought together a number of EQUAL Development

Partnerships and members of the Intercultural and Diversity Group of the European Broadcasting Union to develop a Diversity Toolkit for the Media. The Toolkit concentrates on the representation of ethnic and cultural minorities and especially their portrayal in news and current affairs programmes. It is mainly aimed at journalists and teachers and students of journalism but it also provides useful information for HR departments and the management of broadcasting organisations.

In the forum sessions, a new emphasis was placed on the important, but not yet fully assumed, role that **employment and training intermediaries** should play in countering discrimination. This referred, in particular, to those who worked for Public Employment Services but also to members of staff of temporary employment agencies. Employment services provided co-funding for many EQUAL projects but they were rarely involved at an operational level. The few, but very successful, examples of good practice from EQUAL in which they had taken the lead represent a new approach to harnessing employment mediation as the driving force in combating discrimination. One outstanding case was an EQUAL project in France. It was the only Development Partnership that set out to mobilise the entire Public Employment Service (PES) and that laid the foundations of a comprehensive national action plan to improve the way in which the institutions of the PES handle or prevent cases of discrimination. Actors in almost every Forum stressed the need to ensure a stronger involvement of employment services and the importance of forging more effective cooperation with them.

Countering ethnic discrimination was also becoming a new focus of action for **Trade Unions**. Examples of good practice illustrated how Trade Unions have been able to induce change by including diversity and anti-discrimination issues in their dialogue with employers, by sensitising their representatives, by offering advice to immigrant workers and by seeking more Trade Union members from ethnic minority groups. Even though Trade Union participation in EQUAL was greater than in any other large scale European programme, these positive examples were still pioneering work that needed to be transposed into general practice.

Perhaps the most differentiated pattern was to be found in the roles of **Non-Governmental Organisations** and those associations that were engaged in countering discrimination against ethnic minorities and fostering the integration of immigrants. NGOs filled many gaps when other groups of key actors have restricted institutional responsibilities that limited their involvement. They were experienced in finding flexible, informal solutions and could also act as lubricants ensuring that cooperation between different groups of actors ran smoothly. NGOs represented, or maintained direct links with, immigrants and ethnic minorities and offered services and support to them. In this, they complemented the work of public services, whilst being largely dependent on public or third party funding.

Finally, **local and regional authorities** were in a unique position to bring together the different players. No other actor group had such a great capacity for leadership in this field. EQUAL experience has demonstrated how this capacity can be used to design local initiatives that adopt an integrated approach and involve all relevant public and private actors in their implementation. Such initiatives required a clear commitment from different local departments and effective coordination between them - but examples have shown that where these conditions have been met, local authority leadership has been a very strong factor in ensuring sustainable outcomes.

The proceedings of the Policy Forum can be downloaded from the Conference Website: <http://www.equal-europlatform.eu> .