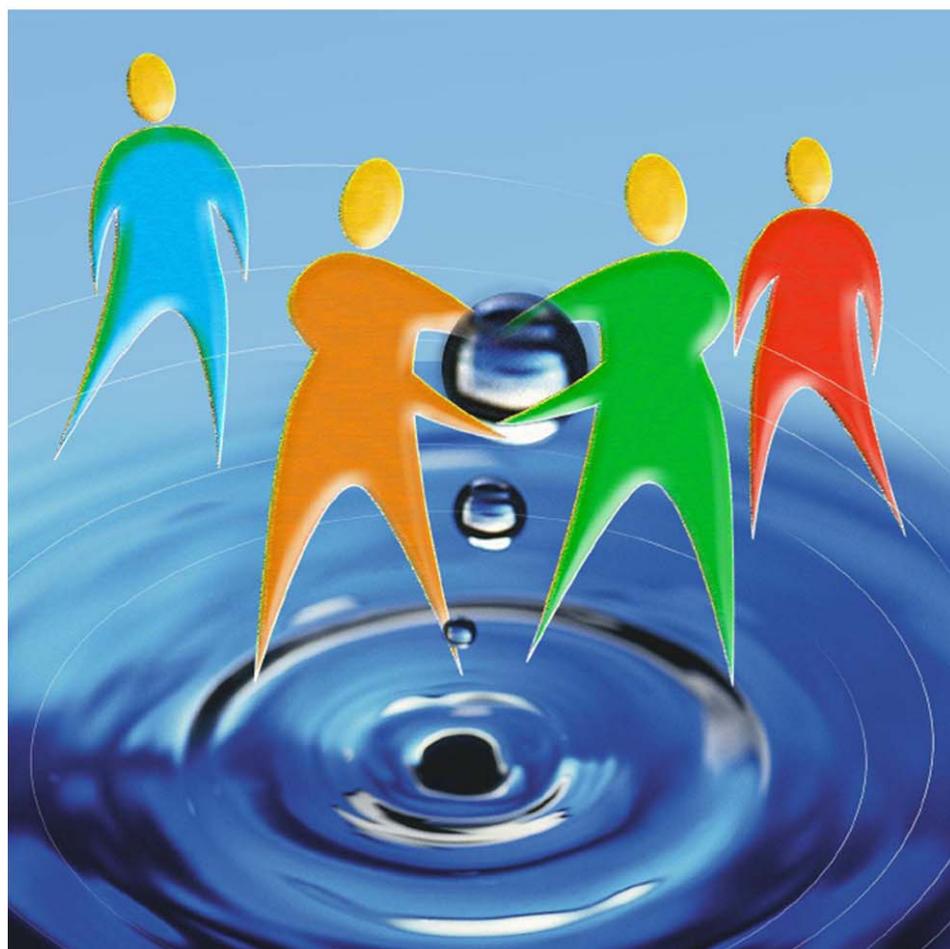


The principle of **Innovation** in the new ESF programmes (2007-2013)

A framework for programming



*Report by an ad hoc working group of Member States
on Innovation and Mainstreaming*

**EQUAL Managing Authorities of
Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom (GB)**

June 2006

Background

Designing effective support for the promotion and mainstreaming of innovative activities is a challenge to ESF programmers. Recognising the benefits of learning from one another, government officials involved in the management of the EQUAL Community Initiative and in the planning of the 2007-2013 ESF programmes agreed to set up an ad hoc **Working Group of Member States on Innovation** in July 2005. The Working Group comprised Member State representatives from Poland, Portugal, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Spain. Its mandate was to act as a platform for Member States to share the lessons learnt in the current period, particularly under EQUAL, and to exchange ideas and plans on ways to use the ESF to maximise innovation and learning.

This report is the result of the work of this Working Group. A summary of its first conclusions was presented to the ESF Committee on 23 September 2005, and was subsequently developed into a reflection note which formed the background to a seminar involving more than 100 representatives from all Member States on 8 December 2005. It addresses the principle of **innovation, exchange of good practice and its integration into policy and practice (mainstreaming)**.

Status and purpose of this report

Innovation and mainstreaming is not an option for new ESF programmes – it is a **regulatory obligation**.

This report was developed by Member States for Member States and therefore **reflects the experience and opinion of this working group**. Its purpose is to assist those responsible for developing ESF Operational Programmes so that effective provisions for innovation and mainstreaming can be included in order to maximise added value.

The report presents good practices and lessons learnt in promoting and mainstreaming innovative activities and provides practical proposals for implementation. It is based on a critical review of the experiences made in managing the EQUAL programmes.

- The **first part** of the document focuses on the social and economic relevance of innovative action and on the advantage to be gained from its integration into ESF programmes. This part may be of particular interest to **decision-makers responsible** in the Member States **for the strategy and priorities of the ESF** and their consistency with the priorities of the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion.
- The **second part** is aimed at those responsible for **drawing up the programming documents** and ensuring good governance of the programmes in terms of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This part identifies implementation options at Operational Programme level, and highlights some implementing provisions critical for success.
- **Annex 1** summarises key issues, in the form of **checklists**, to assess how well innovation has been integrated into a new ESF programme.
- **Annex 2** provides references and links to relevant Guides and tools.
- **Annex 3** presents four case studies that illustrate how EQUAL Development Partnerships have addressed innovation and mainstreamed the results of their work.

1. Relevance of innovative action for ESF programmes

Actions to promote growth and jobs are at the heart of the renewed Lisbon reform agenda. Reforms affecting the strategy, design and delivery of labour market policies at national, regional and local level are essential in order to respond to the rapidly changing structural environment of labour markets and related policies. Today's policies are challenged by technology and globalisation, demographic aging and expectations regarding social justice. In addition, new solutions are needed to adapt established delivery systems in order to exploit the opportunities for integrated approaches which cross traditional institutional responsibilities. To meet these challenges there is a need to modernise existing policies and adapt to new social and economic realities. This requires new solutions to develop actions across a broad range of policy areas and delivery mechanisms.

The revised Lisbon Strategy states that "knowledge and innovation are the beating heart of European growth", and that Europe needs to remove obstacles to, and provide incentives for, technological and eco-innovations in order to improve the quality of work and life, and to generate jobs and growth.

The strong emphasis on activating knowledge, boosting education and promoting innovation in the renewed Lisbon strategy does not only hold good for technological innovations; it is equally relevant for **social innovations**, i.e. changes in organisational values, structures and processes, and in linkages between institutions.

Social innovations are important motors for two dynamic processes supported by the Lisbon strategy: modernisation of the economy, and reform of employment and social inclusion policies and actions. We can therefore understand social innovations in two contexts:

- The **modernisation of the economy**, and in particular its transformation into a knowledge-based economy requires not only investment in new technologies, but also investment in organisational innovations facilitating the acquisition of skills and competencies, the adaptation of work organisation and business routines, or the establishment of business networks and partnerships between stakeholders.
- Implementing **policy reforms** to meet the Lisbon targets by stimulating employment, promoting social inclusion, and activating knowledge and learning requires investment in policy innovations, developing and testing new policy approaches and new ways of delivery.

The priorities in the draft ESF regulation are fully aligned with the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs to ensure synergy between the European Employment strategy and ESF interventions in the next programming round. It is in this context that the new ESF regulation provides a framework for Member States to promote innovative activities in their ESF programmes. Innovation in ESF provides the means to test alternative ways of investing in human capital and to ensure that all groups, particularly those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market, can participate fully.

EQUAL evaluations at Member State level identify the need for formal mechanisms to facilitate innovative labour market approaches and testing of new ideas in order to improve employability, adaptability and to promote social inclusion. Innovation and the transfer of results is a highly interactive process and the results take time to be realised. Nevertheless, the evaluation makes clear that EQUAL has already demonstrated the potential to contribute to new orientations of current employment policy, the inclusion of new target groups and the promotion of the quality of employment.

2. Value Added

Experience from EQUAL has demonstrated the added value that innovation brings to the design and delivery of inclusive labour market policies. The advantages of innovative approaches include:

- Innovative actions can address areas where there is a need to change legislation, or policy approaches or delivery, in an unbiased way, and without pre-committing stakeholders to a particular solution. Innovation can assist in exploring the conditions for pursuing alternative approaches. By involving stakeholders in a collective learning process and by participating in developing and testing new approaches greater ownership and commitment to change can be achieved.
- Innovative approaches to develop, test and validate alternative arrangements and ways of delivery can be developed on a small scale initially. When the new approach shows clear advantages over current policies it can be integrated into mainstream policy and practice. This can save costs and time in a reform process, by minimising costly "fine-tuning" or even corrections to reform measures that were introduced immediately on a full scale.

The integration of innovative good practices brings value added because:

- It can lead to improvements in existing policy and practice
- It can help to fill gaps in existing policy frameworks by supporting the development of new policy
- By building on innovative and validated good practices it helps to avoid expensive policy development and the need to 're-invent the wheel'.

However, effective innovation strategies also address ways and means to overcome barriers to innovation such as in-built resistance to change and a preference to maintain the status quo.

3. Scope and scale of innovative activities

The nature of social innovations

Technological innovation leads to new or improved products, processes and services. These give the innovating firm a comparative advantage on the market. Technological innovation has a lot in common with social innovation, which aims to realise alternative approaches or practices to achieve social and political goals. Therefore, we can learn a lot about social innovations from studies on technological innovations. For examples, we can assume that some of the success factors for technological innovations also apply to social innovations. Successful innovations are often:

- Led by people with an entrepreneurial spirit, that have a vision and are willing to take risks,
- Orientated towards satisfying the needs of the users of the innovation,
- Underpinned by sound management in order to integrate relevant competencies and interests of the different players involved,
- Monitoring relevant developments systematically across national borders, in order to benefit from new ideas, and to avoid duplicating work or following blind alleys,
- Organised to create confidence in the advantages of the innovations in terms of cost-effectiveness, quality or additional features.

Designing support for social innovations under the ESF should ensure that these success factors are taken into account. Only well designed innovation schemes have the capacity to contribute to the two relevant fields of action: the modernisation of the economy and reform of employment and social inclusion policies and actions.

Innovative activities that do not lead to the desired changes do not necessarily have to be regarded as failure as they constitute an investment in knowledge and learning.

In contrast to technological innovations which are market driven, social innovation often responds to deficiencies in social policy. They need to address cross-cutting issues involving actors from different policy areas with different levels of responsibility.

Scope of innovative activities

Evaluation reports suggest that there is a widespread need for innovation throughout the policy and programme cycle, from design to delivery and evaluation. The second interim EU wide evaluation report of EQUAL stresses the importance of clearly defining the innovation objectives and the nature of innovations planned from

the outset. This implies a thorough analysis of the problems to be tackled, and, on that basis, to determine if the focus of innovative activity should be:

- To develop new methods, tools and approaches or address improvements to existing methods;
- To formulate new objectives e.g. opening up new areas of employment in the labour market; or
- To address potential changes to policy or institutional structures.

For support under the ESF, a **broad definition of innovation** should be applied for defining **eligible activities** that covers all phases of a successful innovation, ranging from the identification and assessment of policy needs to guiding and training the responsible managers and employees or target groups affected by organisational or policy changes.

EQUAL has shown that social innovations can successfully be organised in different dimensions and across a **broad range of fields**. These include

- reaching out **to integrate disadvantaged target groups** into the labour market, such as migrants or people with disabilities
- **developing effective links** to the labour market e.g. between education and work; work and life-long learning; inactivity and work; prison and work; migration and work; family/private life and work
- **adapting economic sectors** such as care services; the social economy, or micro-firms;
- **Improving the quality of the work environment** through working time arrangements or work organisation
- Developing new synergies at local, regional and national level ("**systems innovations**") by establishing new interfaces between organisations; new modes of coordination and cooperation between institutions and support organisations; or networking and partnerships between stakeholders
- More effective **policy delivery and support structures**, such as pathways to integration and employment, or new training approaches for lifelong learning

For support under the ESF, each Member State has to **identify and select specific fields** in which they see a need **to promote innovation**, that are:

- **coherent** with the frameworks for policy reforms and for the modernisation of the economy;
- **flexible** enough to accommodate emerging issues.

Scale of impact of innovative actions

Innovation is not an objective in itself; it is a means to achieve better quality, higher productivity, and additional functions. Innovations are successful if they are widely used.

Managed effectively, innovative activity allows experimentation to take place at a micro level enabling new approaches to be tested on a smaller scale to find out what works, what does not and in what circumstances. That is why sound procedures monitoring, validating and assessing innovative results are so important. Without sound and agreed process and performance indicators, innovations cannot be tested, and results cannot be measured and compared. Validation in this context means proven evidence of feasibility, suitability, transferability and acceptability of the innovative approach¹.

It is obvious that social innovation in isolation does not make an impact on economy or society. Organised diffusion ("mainstreaming") of the innovative results matters. Key factors that promote diffusion of innovations are that:

- they address real needs,
- the results demonstrate clear advantages over existing practice, and
- potential users are prepared and assisted by mechanisms in place that facilitate the transfer of that good practice into policy and delivery systems.

Innovative approaches are therefore a cost effective and sustainable way of introducing change.

¹ These concepts have been elaborated in the Report and Sourcebook on sound planning resulting from the ESF Seminar in Vilnius 17-18 November 2005

4. *Implementation at programme level*

The central importance of innovation, exchange of good practice and mainstreaming the lessons learnt is a key principle underpinning the new ESF regulations:

- Article 3 (4) of the ESF Regulation requires Member States to support the promotion and mainstreaming of innovative activities.
- Article 7 requires that in the framework of each operational programme particular attention shall be paid to the promotion and mainstreaming of innovative activities. Managing Authorities shall choose the themes for the funding of innovation in the context of partnership and shall define the appropriate modalities of implementation.

So, promoting innovation should be an integral part of all Operational Programmes.

In order to make an impact, the support of innovations should

- be targeted towards real policy needs,
- be supported by adequate resources, and
- generate confidence in the benefits of changes in orientations and approaches, structures and delivery mechanisms.
- Be integrated into the policy cycle at a high level and not seen as add on activity
- Be distinguished from support granted under standard schemes and subject to feasibility and transferability testing
- Incorporate top down and bottom up mechanisms to address key challenges and priorities
- Address improvements or new approaches to mainstream policy and practice by:
 - ensuring that support for innovative activity addresses issues where current actions are no longer a **suitable** approach. In other words, is current policy still adding value?
 - proposing innovations that are **feasible**. For example, are there the resources available to address the issue and sufficient commitment amongst the stakeholders for innovation, good practice and continuous improvement?
 - Being **acceptable**. This implies the question: Is there sufficient political or public support and understanding for the need to change?

In planning to implement innovative approaches in the new ESF programmes, Member States have flexibility to implement arrangements that best meet their needs. The most obvious implementation option is to **support innovative activity within each or certain priority axes**. Effective implementation will require a certain degree of co-ordination between the priorities such as common selection criteria and requirements for projects, methodological guidance, and coherent mainstreaming mechanisms.

5. *Implementation provisions*

Under EQUAL, the themes for innovative actions were agreed with the Member States at the outset reflecting key issues for transnational learning.

For the new programmes, the draft ESF Regulation:

- specifies that Member States choose the scope of innovative activities, i.e. the themes for the funding of innovation in the context of partnership
- asks that the types of activities are described
- gives Member States flexibility on the scale of the innovative actions, i.e. on the allocation of resources,

Sound programming should rest on four pillars²: i.e.

- strategic orientation and coherence
- stakeholder engagement,
- monitoring and evaluation, and
- planning for effective delivery.

For innovation, these pillars can be translated into implementing provisions as follows:

- a) linking themes for innovation to** problems and needs addressed in the programme, and linked to the Lisbon reform agenda

It is for Member States to identify and justify the themes for innovation. In each Operational Programme Member States should describe how innovative themes will be identified and specified, in the context of partnership, how results and good practices will be shared at national and European level and what mechanisms for mainstreaming will be established and applied. For the new programmes, innovative labour market interventions will need to be considered on a more focussed theme basis to improve the potential for future mainstreaming. At the same time, the identification of themes will need to be sufficiently flexible to enable changes to planned themes, to take account of changing priorities and emerging issues.

Themes for innovation need to be linked to the National Strategic Reference Framework, which reflects the strategic orientations of the renewed Lisbon strategy. In this way, innovation in ESF can focus on areas where there is a clearly identified need for the development of current national labour market and social inclusion policies.

- b) Ensuring user orientation**

Social innovations oriented towards reforms need to be linked to policy agendas and actors. This ensures relevance of proposed innovations. Using planning tools such as the EQUAL toolkit³ can empower stakeholders to participate at all stages.

Involvement of stakeholders and users can be assured at two levels:

- At programme level, the involvement of all relevant ministries at an early stage, e.g. in form of an innovation steering group, is an essential pre-requisite for later adoption of the results of innovation.
- At project level, stakeholder involvement can help to agree on the relevant issues, and to create ownership on the innovative results by the users.

- c) Promoting a fine-tuned chain of activities**

Innovation in the broad sense defined in the context of the ESF covers the full activity chain from awareness raising and idea generation to change management.

Operational Programmes should therefore identify and illustrate the different types of innovative activities that can be funded, such as

² For further reading, see the Report and Sourcebook on sound planning resulting from the ESF Seminar in Vilnius 17-18 November 2005

³ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/data/document/pdtoolkit_en.pdf

- analysis of interrelated problems and issues within the scope of ESF actions, and identification of fields where social innovation could make an impact
- development and testing of new approaches in these fields
- monitoring of relevant developments, nationally and internationally, in these fields
- validation of good practice, peer reviews and benchmarking
- communication of lessons learnt to stakeholders through publications, events, networks etc.
- transfer of good practice and lessons learnt to users

d) **Validation of innovative results**

Successful transfer of innovative good practice to the mainstream depends on effective validation of results. This process should start as early as possible in order to be able to focus on promising results. This highlights the need for effective systems of monitoring, validation and evaluation throughout the entire innovation process. These include methods such as peer reviews and benchmarking, identification of success factors, assessment of the feasibility, suitability, transferability and acceptability of the innovative solution, and a clear communication of the advantages over current practice. Under EQUAL networks of key stakeholders, known as National Thematic Groups have been successful in sharing good practice, learning from each other, benchmarking and mainstreaming. Effective validation also enables the identification of what does not work and why.

e) **Mainstreaming mechanisms**

Without effective ways to transfer good practice into the mainstream the benefits of innovative activity cannot be realised. Mainstreaming is understood as the organised communication and transfer of the innovative solution and the lessons to multipliers, users, and decision makers defining standards for mainstream activities. Exchanges at European level allow experiences to be shared between Member States

EQUAL has shown that a sound mainstreaming strategy at programme level as well as the development of relevant skills and the application of professional tools are needed to support projects in their validation, communication and transfer efforts.

6. ***Resources and Coordination***

Resources

Innovation is by definition not a standard activity and does not follow a standard procedure. In the field of labour market policy and delivery, innovative actions tackle complex issues and may involve a broad range of actors. In order to be successful, innovations need to be based on a sound analysis, apply a robust methodology for testing, and implement an effective strategy for communicating the lessons learnt to stakeholders and potential users. There is a need to promote a culture of continuous learning which is fundamental to the development of innovative activities.

Therefore the support and management of innovative actions takes more time and requires more resources for planning, management, evaluation and mainstreaming than routine activities. Member States need to be prepared to allocate appropriate technical assistance resources to implement their operations for innovation, sharing of good practice and mainstreaming.

The EQUAL experience has shown that the availability of professional programme support services has a decisive impact on the quality of innovative actions and on their results. It has also shown, however, that in many Member States professional capacities are not easily available and therefore need to be further developed and maintained

Coordination

Effective co-ordination is essential if the benefits of planned innovative activity are to be realised and the results transferred into mainstream policy and practice. Co-ordination is required at various levels:

- **Within Member States** the identification of themes for innovation must be relevant to policy needs and the wider reform agenda. Policy makers need to be involved at the outset so that planned

innovations are based on a real analysis of need. Member States therefore need to develop and practice efficient ways to ensure inter-departmental co-ordination. And to ensure widespread support for reforms, there is a need to involve stakeholders at all levels, including governmental bodies, social partners and non-governmental organisations.

- Co-ordination of the support for innovative actions **between priorities** of an Operational Programme is key to success. EQUAL experience highlights success factors such as a single Political Steering Group for innovative actions representing the main users at governmental and stakeholders level, common selection criteria and mechanisms, joint support services to projects, coherent validation methods and transfer mechanisms.
- Co-ordination **between Member States** is also critical. As EQUAL has demonstrated much can be achieved through learning from other Member States. Effective co-ordination between Member States enables resources to be shared and lessons to be learned more widely so that new approaches can benefit from a wider context and experience. Transnational co-operation provides the means to involve a wide range of actors addressing common themes in a wide range of areas.
- **At European level**, co-ordination can strengthen the strategic dimension of cohesion policy to ensure that European-wide priorities are better integrated into national and regional development programmes.

Links with other ESF principles

Innovation and the mainstreaming of results is a cross-cutting issue that can contribute to the delivery of all the ESF principles.

Member states will be required to choose the themes for funding innovation in the *context of partnership*. They are also required to inform the monitoring committee of the chosen themes and provide a synthesis of innovative activities, the themes, their results of their dissemination and mainstreaming in their annual reports.

Under the new regulations there are no direct links between innovation and transnational cooperation. The purpose of innovation and mainstreaming activities is to underpin reforms in labour market policy and delivery by providing evidence, experience and guidance on effective alternatives or improvements of current practice. Transnational co-operation has the potential to enhance the potential of innovative activities by taking account of experience and experimentation in different national contexts. However there are potential difficulties in combining innovation and transnational cooperation in a single priority whilst maintaining a higher co-financing rate for transnational activities. Therefore, effective provisions in OPs would need to ensure that all potentially relevant inputs are assessed, validated in terms of relevance, evidence and transferability, whether they are gathered through transnational or inter-regional collaboration, monitoring of good practice applied elsewhere, or resulting from original development and testing funded under the ESF OP.

To assist member States in their programming of innovation and mainstreaming, there are three Annexes attached to this paper:

- ↪ Annex 1 provides suggested information that might be included in the ex-ante evaluation and in the programming documents for ESF interventions
- ↪ Annex 2 provides references to relevant Guides and tools
- ↪ Annex 3 includes four case study fiches demonstrating how EQUAL Development Partnerships have addressed innovation and mainstreamed the results of their work.

7. *Member s of the working group on innovation*

Piotr Stronkowski Poland	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour Department for ESF Management	piotr_stronkowski@mpips.gov.pl
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Ana Vale Portugal	Gabinete de Gestao EQUAL	avale@equal.pt
Louis Geelhoed Netherlands	Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid	LGeelhoed@MINSZW.NL
Ken Lambert United Kingdom	Department for Work and Pensions ESF Division	Ken.lambert@dfes.gsi.gov.uk
Alicia Reyes Jimenez	Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales Unidad Administradora del Fondo Social Europeo	areyesji@mtas.es

ANNEX 1 – Self-Assessment Checklists

The following checklists have been developed to facilitate a robust assessment of how well innovative activities – both as regards legal requirement and good practice - have been integrated into a new ESF programme.

Following the programming procedure and the requirement to establish coherent programming documents, three checklists are provided:

- ↳ the first on ex-ante evaluation,
- ↳ the second for the National Strategic Reference Framework, and
- ↳ the third for Operational Programmes.

The checklists should not be considered as exhaustive. The analysis of every specific situation may lead to the integration of further points.

The checklists have been elaborated by a working group of Member States and reflect the opinion of this working group. Where they go beyond regulatory obligations, the working group took account of standards of good practice.

- **Check list on ex-ante evaluation**

The issues addressed refer to the Commission's Draft Evaluation Working Paper for the New Programming Period, 2007-2013 on Ex Ante Evaluation⁴.

- **Check-list on innovative activities in the National Strategic Reference Framework**

According to Art. 25 of the General Provisions Regulation of Structural Funds, the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) constitutes a reference instrument for preparing the Programming of Structural Funds.

The check-list below refers to different articles on the NSRF in the general provisions Regulation of Structural Funds.

- **Check-list on innovative activities in Operational Programmes**

Art. 3.4 of the new ESF Regulation stipulates that "*the ESF shall support the promotion and mainstreaming of innovative activities in the Member States*". The check-list below refers to different articles in Titles III (Programming) and IV (Efficiency) of the general provisions Regulation of Structural Funds.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/working/doc/exante_sf2007-2013_en.pdf

Checklist for ex-ante evaluation

	Suggested information to be included in the ex-ante evaluation
Socio-economic analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the outcomes of innovative activities in 2000-2006 programmes (in particular EQUAL) and lessons that can be applied to the new OP. • Which policies or delivery systems to promote employment, social inclusion or investment in human capital need to be modernised, and are in need of evidence for alternative suitable, feasible, and acceptable solutions? • Which are the main (attitudinal, institutional, legal etc) barriers to social innovation, and how can they be overcome?
Assessment of the rationale of the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the potential added value of planned innovative activities • Assessment of how innovative activities will be integrated into the programme • Assessment of the financial implications of planned innovative approaches
Coherence of the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of how innovative activities will contribute to achieving the objectives for employment and social inclusion in the National Reform Programme. • Assessment of the likely impact on disparities and the modernisation or improvement of national, regional and local employment and inclusion policy and delivery arrangements • Assessment of the contribution of innovative activities to transnational and interregional co-operation • Relevance of proposed indicators

Checklist for the National Strategic Reference Framework

	Suggested information to be included in the National Strategic Reference Framework
Socio-economic analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT analysis covers innovative activities
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of how innovative activities will contribute to the strategic objectives of the NSRF (overall vision, relevance) • Short description of the main elements of the support for innovative activities (objectives, themes, user orientation, mainstreaming mechanisms, and support capacity)

Note: As regards "earmarking", the envisaged contribution to innovative activities could be attributed to the earmarking category "Mobilisation for reforms in the fields of employment and inclusion"

Checklist for an Operational Programme

	Suggested information to be included in Operational Programmes
Programme analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT analysis covers innovative activities • Description of the process for identifying themes for the promotion of innovation (involvement of policy makers and key stakeholders as “users”; role of Monitoring Committee) • Description the selected themes for innovative activities, and how these take account of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The main lessons learned from EQUAL and other ESF 2000-2006 evaluations on promoting and mainstreaming innovations (what has worked, and why, critical success factors; added value) ○ the findings of the ex-ante evaluation as regards the policy need, and innovative capacity and mainstreaming potential for innovative activities ○ the political agendas of key stakeholders at national, regional and local levels • justification of the selected themes and issues in terms of links /consistency with the overall socio-economic analysis and with the national reform agenda • main needs of social partners relating to capacity building in the field of innovative activities (for convergence objective)
Programme strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the strategy for the promotion of innovative activities (overall vision, relevance, specific objectives, themes, user orientation, types of activity, and support capacity; expected contribution to the Operational Programme's strategic objectives) • Description of how promotion of innovative activities will be implemented as a across cutting approach; • Description of the interrelationships between the promotion of innovation and the support of transnational and interregional cooperation • Description of coordination structures and procedures within the programme and with other Structural Fund interventions - in particular other interregional and innovative interventions – and with other innovative programmes in the field of education and training. • indicative breakdown by Lisbon categories Note: the envisaged contribution to innovative activities should be attributed to "Mobilisation for reforms in the fields of employment and inclusion"
Programme priority axes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of how innovative activities will contribute to the specific objectives of each priority axis (where appropriate) • Description of the target areas/themes, users and beneficiaries identified for innovative activities in each priority axis (where appropriate) and what flexibilities will be available to cater for new and emerging themes • List of indicative operations (forma and types of eligible activities) • Definition of specific objectives and identification of sound output and impact indicators (in case of a dedicated priority axis) • Description of how Technical Assistance resources will be used to support innovative activity (nature of support services envisaged; level of resources made available; management arrangements planned) Note: this may be described under a separate Technical Assistance priority
Implementing provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the mechanisms for ensuring that the funding of innovative activity will be maintained throughout the life of the OP • How will simple, flexible and effective management structures and eligibility rules be ensured at programme and beneficiary level? • How will management flexibility and sound financial management (at programme and project level) be reconciled? • What arrangements will be put in place to validate good practice emerging from innovations? • How will it be ensured that innovative activities deliver results (will the use of established project planning tools be required/recommended/supported)? • How will MA/NSS arrange themselves to make sure that the above mentioned provisions are professionally handled?

Annex 2

Relevant Guides and tools

Innovation is a key building block of the EQUAL initiative which provides a rich source of knowledge and experience. It provides a range of success stories, policy briefs, manuals, guides, reviews and evaluation reports both at EU and national level. EQUAL experience can therefore contribute to identifying innovation needs, designing the promotion of innovative activities, improving management, monitoring and evaluation systems. The following Guides seem to be particularly helpful in this respect:

- **The EQUAL Partnership Development Toolkit⁵** – a practical guide to participative planning, monitoring and evaluation for facilitators of EQUAL Development and Transnational Partnerships-provides tools both for identifying innovation issues, for presenting these and their inter-relationships, for linking innovative results with user needs, and for organising these processes in an interactive way with stakeholders
- **The EQUAL Mainstreaming Guide⁶** – Making Change Possible presents information, tools and practical examples covering the mainstreaming process to assist in the development and implementation of mainstreaming plans.
- **The source book on sound planning resulting** from the ESF Seminar in Vilnius 17-18 November 2005⁷

⁵ http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/data/document/pdtoolkit_en.pdf

⁶ http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/data/document/mainstreamguide_en.pdf

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm

ANNEX 3 – CASE STUDY FICHES ON INNOVATION AND MAINSTREAMING

VALUING CARERS INNOVATION AND MAINSTREAMING FICHE 1

NEW AND INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

There is a clear gap that exists between the social importance of (unpaid) carers and the way they are treated by the labour market. There are 6 million carers in the UK, with 2 million people moving in and out of a caring role each year, and they “save the UK economy a staggering 57 billion pounds a year in care costs – the equivalent of a second National Health Service”.

There are nearly as many men caring as women, but carers’ contributions and needs are not taken into account in the formal labour market. There is a lack of flexibility in employment conditions and a lack of recognition of carers’ skills. So when they take on unpaid caring responsibilities, many have to give up or change the way they work, their incomes fall, they become isolated, their self-esteem and skills deteriorate and they face major difficulties in finding their way back into employment – all of which contributes to long term disadvantage and often to pensioner poverty.

The innovation of the ACE national EQUAL partnership consists of filling this gap in two main ways:

- They designed and tested the *first ever qualification* designed to help carers build their confidence, recognise their skills and take the next steps towards new learning, volunteering and employment opportunities. The course, called “Learning for Living’ is available *online* and leads to the *recognised* (City and Guilds) “Certificate in Personal Development and Learning for Unpaid Carers” which is eligible for UK Government funding.
- They carried out an extremely focussed awareness building campaign targeting four main types of actors (see below). Among the innovations in this area is the design of a series of tools for the “gatekeepers” of the road that carers often take towards employment. These materials have now been ‘packaged’ as a Resource Pack to support the implementation of the carers (Equal Opportunities) Act and is being made widely available to local and health authorities, professionals working with carers and employers. These include a “carer’s awareness training programme” for the public employment service (Job Centre Plus), the vocational training service (Learning and Skills Councils) and the new careers services (Connexions). They also produced a training pack specifically for the careers service. All this material + policy orientated research on the situation of carers is available on line

WHO WAS INVOLVED AND HOW

The nature of the lead partner and the composition of the partnership have been cited as some of the main success factors of this EQUAL project. A number of points stand out:

The project was led by Carers UK which is a national NGO dedicated to improving the position of carers. It had already managed an Integra Project, the first work funded by the ESF to focus on carers and employment, and had a vast amount of experience, the research capacity to build the necessary evidence base and the contacts in the field. Their approach is essentially “top down” (in the non-pejorative sense) in that it involves a national organisation using EQUAL to design and pilot solutions to identified problems and gaps in policy.

Given its reputation and command of the subject, the lead partner was able to draw in a series of very useful and prestigious partners that covered the main phases of the mainstreaming cycle.

Firstly, they drew in four local partners – one local authority, two carer’s centres and one voluntary sector organisations - plus the leading national accrediting body for vocational qualifications to design and pilot their new course and qualification in six contrasting areas of England and Wales. These local partners “helped to make the ammunition” while the “influential national partners fired the gun”.

Secondly, they included some of the key government departments – the Department of Health, the Department for Work and Pensions, including Jobcentre Plus, and the Department for Trade and Industry - with influence over the conditions faced by carers (health, education, social care....) as well as the gatekeepers to employment.

Thirdly, they included a series of influential employers such as BT (British Telecom), PricewaterhouseCoopers and the government departments mentioned above. The fact that the Confederation of British Industry and three major trade unions were also involved allowed them to mark the pace for good employment practices in relation to carers. They created an “Employers for Carers” interest group with its own web site. The site provides examples and advice for how to recruit and keep people who have caring responsibilities

Finally, the awareness raising strategy was greatly helped by the membership of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

MAIN SUCCESS FACTORS AND BARRIERS

The partnership ascribes its success to three main factors which have mostly been mentioned above: the nature of the lead partner, the composition of the partnership and the way in which it carried out its awareness raising campaign. The DP used both existing and new campaigns to get across its message. It staged high profile events in the Houses of Parliament and the top storey of the BT Tower in London. It used Government Ministers with portfolios related to carers’ issues to chair events. It also invested in media campaigns at local, regional national and European levels. Finally, the projects own website was supported and promoted by five other sites.

Related to these points is the fact that both the lead partner and the partnership as a whole saw mainstreaming as a central part of the entire project (if not the main aim) from the very start. Mainstreaming activities were carried out consistently throughout the lifetime of the project

There were barriers to be overcome in delivering the project’s outcomes, namely a lack of awareness of carers as a disadvantaged group, a lack of awareness of the complexities of the issues facing carers, with no ‘joined up’ strategic policy thinking, and changes in Government priorities and structures.

RESULTS

- Support for a Private Members Bill of Parliament providing more recognition and equality of opportunities to carers. Carers UK, through ACE National, was able to provide legal advice on the initial drafting of the Bill and subsequent re-drafts, together with direct input to the Department of Health team leading on the Bill. It was also possible to create a database that enlisted the support of, amongst others, carers, local authorities and local MPs. In addition, ACE National organised the promotion of the Bill by the influential Employers for Carers group, a launch event in the House of Commons, media promotion for the Bill, all-party lobbying, and a celebration when all this hard-earned work paid off!
- The first ever qualification for carers. The Learning for Living on line resource for Carers. The recognised Certificate in Personal Development and Learning for Unpaid Carers.

- The extremely comprehensive ACE Carers Act [Resource Pack](#)⁸ (see the footnote and website)
- 2 major research reports used in the awareness raising. “Redressing the Balance” on barriers and bridges for carers and “Without us” assessing the value of carer support
- The Employers Carers Interest Group + Web Site
- The media and awareness raising campaign. that stimulated considerable interest and feedback.

BREAKING WITH TRADITION INNOVATION AND MAINSTREAMING FICHE 2

NEW AND INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

The backdrop to the work of the EXZEPT EQUAL Partnership is the five million unemployed people in Germany – a vast waste of human resources which not only puts a break on the German economy but on that of Europe as a whole. EXZEPT points out that an impressive 430,000 unemployed people started a business in 2003 but that this only scrapes the surface of the problem. There is also an important question mark over the sustainability of the firms created.

EXZEPT identifies two key barriers to making the transition from unemployment to self-employment: - firstly, business “support services and instruments are still not coordinated and need to be better geared to the requirements of EQUAL target groups”; secondly “over a fifth of these entrepreneurs have difficulties in raising quite small amounts of capital between 1,000€ and 25,000€”.

EXZEPT have made innovations in both areas. However, they have gone further in mainstreaming their findings for establishing a sustainable model of microfinance which is compatible with Germany’s strict banking laws. From their own experience in the State of Hessen they were able to show that *both* specially tailored advice and small, flexible amounts of finance are necessary to help unemployed people on the path to self employment. However, the transaction costs of these loans tend to be too high for traditional banks while many specialised local micro finance schemes are too small to be viable.

EXZEPT have been instrumental in creating, testing and spreading a model of micro-finance which partially overcomes these problems. Under their system, accredited local microfinance institutions use standard procedures for tapping into a central fund run by a bank. They have created a national association (the Deutsches Mikrofinanz Institut or DMI) involving 56 key players for rolling out this model. A new national fund has been created and is starting to operate in five German regions with the support of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, the Federal Ministry of Women, Social Affairs, Family and Youth and the European Social Fund.

⁸ The ACE Resource Pack includes: A carers rights guide (*Carers and their rights - the law relating to carers*). Three training programmes on CD-ROM, including PowerPoint presentations, facilitators notes and handouts (*Supporting Working Carers - a Managers Guide, Supporting Working Carers - a Carers Guide, Supporting Working Carers - a Guide for Union Reps*). A DVD on carers and work (*Juggling Work and Care*). Various information booklets (*Juggling Work and Care – information for carers, Carers at Work – information for employers*). Information on access to learning for carers. (City&Guilds, Open University, National Extension College, Elizabeth Nuffield Foundation). Information on Carers UK’s Training Unit

WHO WAS INVOLVED AND HOW

In contrast to projects which have started with national organisations and national policy objectives, this is essentially the story of a local partnership which builds on its findings in a series of waves. One of the interesting features of this process is the way in which EXZEPT has pulled in all the main tools in EQUAL's armoury in order to assist them: the local partnership, the transnational partnership and the national thematic group.

For example, it would have been extremely difficult to develop new financial solutions without the presence of a recognised and experienced financial institution. One of the partners of EXZEPT is GLS, the largest ecological and ethical bank in Germany. Their work was instrumental for creating the microlending model now adopted at national level by DMI. The other local partners had a long experience in different stages and aspects of business support.

The transnational partnership (CEFT) also played a very useful role by analysing and benchmarking financial initiatives for unemployment people in other Member States. This provided ammunition for identifying the gaps in Germany and pointing out the margin for manoeuvre.

EXZEPT also coordinated Germany's National Thematic Group on entrepreneurship and led its working group on finance. This was fundamental for bringing in the experience of all the German DPs working on access to finance for start-ups and for agreeing on a common financial model that could be rolled out at national level and then adapted to local conditions.

Finally, EXZEPT was careful to involve influential policy makers in their pilot initiatives from the very start. The microfund run by the GLS Bank worked under the auspices of Christine Scheel, chairwoman of the financial committee of the German Bundestag.

MAIN SUCCESS FACTORS AND BARRIERS

As mentioned above, some of the main success factors can undoubtedly be found in the composition of the local partnership and the way that this has networked at local, national and transnational levels. It is clearly very important to have an anchor partner, like the GLS Bank with both experience and recognition in the target field of mainstreaming – particularly in a very technical field like finance. But the transnational partnership was very important for providing reputable international comparisons and the national thematic groups was the main vehicle for moving from the local to the national level.

EXZEPT also started with mainstreaming from the very beginning of EQUAL.

Another related factor was the way in which evidence was collected and used throughout the project. Even though EXZEPT's partners were very experienced in dealing with entrepreneurs from disadvantaged groups, they did automatically assume that they understood their problems and needs. The project started by surveying, listening and talking to disadvantaged entrepreneurs at local level and then draws in similar evidence from the transnational partners and the national thematic group.

The main barriers faced were the rigidity of the financial system with reference to microfinance and the general lack of "acceptance" of both the needs and the potential of entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds. Changing this requires time, solid evidence and, if possible, tangible examples of successful alternatives.

Another problem is that a high proportion of the projects set up to support self-employment rely on short-term project funding unlike organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce which can guarantee medium to long term funding. This makes it harder for them to reach cooperation agreements with banks for accompanying small entrepreneurs

RESULTS

- The creation of a separate registered association called the Deutsches Mikrofinanz Institut (DMI) in 2004. This now consist of 56 organisations from all German regions including 5 EQUAL DPs⁹ At its initial general meeting, DMI was supported by the federal SME bank Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), the Federal Ministry for Economics and Labour and the Federal Employment Services.
- The DMI has developed a common methodology and system of benchmarking, training and accreditation of local micro-lending initiatives in Germany. They accredited seven initiatives in 2005 and expect to accredit five additional initiatives every year after this.
- They have also begun to build a series of regional microfinance associations with partners like local authorities, economic development organisations and development banks. So far the system has been tested in the regions of Berlin/Brandenburg, Bavaria/Saxony, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Hessen and Baden-Württemberg¹⁰
- The creation of a federal fund – the GLS Mikrofinanz Fonds - following the model developed by DMI. Local Initiatives – which are accredited and recommended by DMI - tap into this fund by adopting the common local funding model mentioned above, thereby increasing their economies of scale. They expect to make 500 microfinance disbursements in 2006.
- DMI is spreading the idea of micro-finance across Germany by publishing the bi-monthly “DMI-News” circulated to 1.600 “opinion leaders” in banks, business support services and public authorities. It also publishes “Gründung aktuell” a monthly Newsletter on Business support for small self employment starter’s, also with a circulation of 1,500 copies. Finally it holds a series of promotional events and participates in regional “entrepreneur day’s /and exhibitions”
- DMI has agreed strategic partnerships with the National Association of German Start-up Initiatives (VDG) and the German Women Business Starter Forum (DGF). It plays an important role in disseminating the message about microfinance across Europe through the European Micro-Finance Network (EMN)..

⁹. See the case study of Exzept for more details on the DMI. Partners are Exzept, Women Way of Entrepreneurship, Enterprise, MaGNet and Gründerbegleitnetzwerk Brandenburg), 36 self employment services / start-up initiatives and incubators with microlending experience, 2 financial institutions GLS Gemeinschaftsbank eG (ethical-ecological cooperative bank) and GLS Beteiligungsaktiengesellschaft (investment company), scientists, consultancies, certain public bodies and organisations representing women and ethnic minority entrepreneurs.

¹⁰ . An association is a specific form of DMI MFI: in Northrine-Westfalia f.e. the DMI Microfinance Institution is a cooperation between a business service unit for migrant selfemployment entrepreneurs and a venture capital company. In Baden-Württemberg the DMI MFI is a cooperation of an existing microfinance institution MONEX (Stuttgart) plus business services for selfemployment migrants (ProFi Mannheim) and EXZET (not EXZEPT!) sme / selfemployment business services in 3 other regions of BW (Stuttgart, Freiburg, Donaueschingen).

CONSTRUCTING PATHWAYS FOR PERSONAL PROGRESSION

INNOVATION AND MAINSTREAMING FICHE 3

NEW AND INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Personal Progression System Development Partnership (PPS) was set up “to provide pathways to employment for people in prison and to contribute to the effective settlement of people on release.” It was created by all the key *national* players in Northern Ireland that could influence the resettlement needs of prisoners in response to a clearly identified policy failure.

The policy need became apparent after the proportion of political prisoners in Northern Ireland's prisons fell dramatically after the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Until then the focus had mainly been on security rather than the resettlement of ordinary prisoners. But when this situation changed the government found that it was releasing a large number of prisoners who faced a considerable risk of re-offending if they could not be reintegrated into society. Research had already showed that “having a job and its associated benefits was the single most significant factor in reducing re-offending.” In this context, several official government reviews in 2000 and 2001 called for a “national strategy to be drawn up and implemented... to achieve the effective resettlement of offenders sentenced to imprisonment”

However, the main actors involved in resettlement had slightly different approaches about *how* this commitment should be put into practice. The PPS partnership brought all these actors together and allowed them to collectively design and test innovative solutions for this perceived gap in policy. The main innovations were as follows.

- The partnership developed a new tool known as individual “employability assessments”. Previously, services such as probation, education and health had each considered what needed to be done for a prisoner but there was no joint resettlement plan. The employment assessment allowed them to take a holistic view of a prisoner's needs and to develop an integrated itinerary which drew on a whole range of different services (education, training, social security, housing, etc)
- The Employability Assessment is followed by a detailed plan for the period immediately following release where a battery of interviews are organised with all the agencies that can assist in the ex prisoner's integration.
- One of the partners provided employers with immediate back-up and support by offering information and advice over a telephone hot-line as well as face to face training and advice.
- The partnership broke down the barriers between prisoners and the outside world by inviting employers and training agencies into the prisons to meet inmates and evaluate their potential. They also used periods of work experience with local employers after which inmates returned to prison at night.
- The DP introduced new forms of training for employers and other institutions
- Finally, they explored the use of prisoners home leave to contact local agencies and services prior to release so that eventually their reintegration could be as smooth as possible.

WHO WAS INVOLVED AND HOW

The DP was actually constructed from all three main actors who have a significant role to play in mainstreaming the innovations in resettlement strategy: the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO), the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

They piloted the PPS system with groups of 40-60 prisoners in each of the three prisons in Northern Ireland (Maghaberry, Magilligan and Hydebank Young Offenders Centre). A dedicated staff member of one of the partners (NIACRO) worked in each prison to carry out the employability assessment and develop links with all the main outside agencies. This allowed all three partners to assimilate the innovations described above into their practice.

Over this period, the Northern Ireland Prison Service had the responsibility for preparing the official Resettlement Strategy for Northern Ireland. Their partnership of EQUAL meant that they incorporated the main findings of EQUAL into the Strategy.

MAIN SUCCESS FACTORS AND BARRIERS

As mentioned, above the partnership was already composed of the most experienced and important mainstream policy users in different phases of the resettlement process. They argue that this and the fact that they were a small partnership of only three members contributed to their success. The partnership was also responding to a policy need that was already recognised by government – the challenge was to find the best strategy for implementation. So, in contrast to other examples, there was less pressure to go and convince outside decision makers. The partnership was also in a position to design and test their solutions on small groups in all the prisons in Northern Ireland.

The main barriers relate firstly, to the underlying prejudice and poor expectations that exist among all parties, but particularly employers, in relation to the employment potential of ex-prisoners. The partners argue that these expectations are reflected in prisoners own low opinion of themselves and are often self-fulfilling. Secondly, the NGO's and public and private organisations have been used to concentrating on just one part of the problem rather than working together. So the well intentioned activities of one organisation can have inadvertent consequences for the others. Finally, some well meaning legislation creates additional barriers for prisoners by, for example, excluding them from important parts of the public sector which is the largest employer. EQUAL allowed the partners to address each of these barriers.

RESULTS

- In the course of the project 429 participants have benefited from its services and support
- Half the participants were found to “maintain contact with the project for the full three months after release and, of these 25% have found permanent full-time or part-time employment and 40% have gone on to further education and training” . Recent evidence suggests that this is considerably better than before.
- The PPS now forms a significant element of the official Resettlement Strategy for Northern Ireland launched by the Prison Service in June 2004. During the next round of EQUAL, an extended partnership will be taking this process much further by expanding the work further down the resettlement chain with employers and with mentors who were themselves ex-prisoners. This approach has generated considerable interest among other European Governments.

TACKLING REDUNDANCIES – COACHING THE PLAYERS

INNOVATION AND MAINSTREAMING FICHE 4

NEW AND INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

This example shows how a government can use EQUAL to develop solutions for policies which they think are not working as well as they should. Over the last 30 years a series of basic industries – like steel, coal, textile and printing – have undergone massive restructuring in the Walloon Region. Many large companies closed leaving thousands of employees without work. Towards the end of the 90's the regional government created a new tool – the “Plans d'Accompagnement des Reversions (PAR) which included special “reconversion units” managed by the social partners. These were intended to provide a package of measures to support and “accompany” the employees affected by redundancy back into employment. However, in practice, they were not very successful and were criticised as being no more than a “spoonful of sugar” to make massive redundancies more “socially acceptable”

In response, FOREM, the Walloon public employment service set up the EQUAL partnership DECRIRE “to act as an integrated resource centre for reconversions” and specifically to improve the working of the PAR and the reconversion units.

The innovation introduced by DECRIRE has several parts. Firstly it has developed *a guide* which provides concrete advice on how to speed up the creation of reconversion units and a *model* for their management by the social partners according to a strategic work programme. This includes a series of management tools such as a “cahier de charges” for the reconversion units, a helpful check-list for unit co-ordinators, a methodology for monitoring the progress of the workers and individual worker monitoring sheets. Secondly, it has developed a toolkit for making regional and local politicians aware of the successes achieved through using the guide. This includes presentations of the guide, and its results, brochures summarising the content and ideas behind the guide and a DVD in which employees provide testimonials about how the reconversion units have changed their lives. The DVD also includes a visit to a reconversion unit. On the basis of this activity, the partnership wrote a project for a new Decree on the Reconversion Support Plan which has had a major impact on subsequent legislation.

WHO WAS INVOLVED AND HOW

The first reconversion units were accused of not engaging partners sufficiently and of not including certain essential partners such as the statutory employment and training services. The composition of the EQUAL partnership and the way it carried out its work is a direct response to these problems.

Firstly, the lead partner was firmly established as FOREM – the public agency responsible for vocational training and employment in Wallonia. Secondly, two major national trade unions (FGTB and CSC) were centrally involved in the development of the guide. They were backed up by several smaller sectoral organisations defending the rights and interests of employees¹¹. The participation of the trade unions was seen as being particularly important to “ensure the human and social dimension when advising on how to create a reconversion unit.

ETRAVE-CAREMPOLOI was responsible for some of the tools for setting up reconversion units. For example, they produced a check list which helped each unit to identify main players and steps to take. CEFRET helped to organise the internet site, to prepare the transnational events, to develop a training session for the manager of the units, to work on the professional development of the workers in each unit.

¹¹ The other formal partners are ETRAVE-CAREMPOLOI, which is a public trade union and an association in the Mons area between the FGTB Mons and CSC0 and CEFRET which is a training centre dedicated to the textile sector (whose partners are the trade unions CGT, FGTB, CGSLB, the employers organisation Febeltex, the Forem and COBOT)

Finally, the Research Centre of the Free University of Brussels provided “methodological and analytical support for building the guide and the monitoring of its application.” The university also set the project within a European context, concluding that the Belgian units are quite unique in their involvement of trade unions and employers organisations. All the tools and products were validated in meetings both the coordinators and the social partners

The partnership as a whole made an important effort to ensure the distribution of the toolkit and presented it to employers, social partners and many others. They provided individual coaching sessions for the reconversion unit managers. The DP also circulated articles among Belgian trade unions and organised training sessions for them. The University provided general information on European plant restructuring and CEFRET published a series of articles in the specialised textile press

MAIN SUCCESS FACTORS AND BARRIERS

The Lead partner was ideally suited to carry out this task. This is the case of the main public agency responsible for vocational training and employment using EQUAL to respond to a policy within its remit that it had identified was not working.

Rather than “going it alone” however, it used EQUAL to develop and arrive at a consensus on the solution with the main social partners – who were essential for the success of the initiative. It managed to create a new culture of teamwork between partners who had previously been quite distant.

The partners also argue that EQUAL gave the reconversion units a professional direction with regards to issues like negotiations with the social partners and the training of reconversion unit managers.

Once the partnership was convinced that the tool worked, there were direct lines of communication with government for incorporating the findings into legislation. What remained was to spread the actual application of the guide through the promotion of the toolkit.

RESULTS

- The guide developed by DECRIRE was used to set up 18 reconversion units in 2003. Within these units 4,314 workers benefited from assistance and training and “60-90% found a job”¹².
- The Walloon Region has now approved a Decree on the Reconversion Support Plan which establishes that the procedures for developing and running reconversion units should be based upon the tools and guidance developed by DECRIRE
- The guide and toolkit have not only proved a success in Belgium but have also raised the interest of DPs from Italy and France who are studying the possibility of adapting these to their own contexts. Exchanges have been organised between the the social partners, ministries and reconversion unit coordinators of Wallonia and Italy.

¹² Article on the reconversion cell Le Vif/l'Express 19/3/2004