

Summary

This report presents the findings from the mid-term evaluation of the Cyprus-EQUAL Community Initiative 2004/06, undertaken by EEO Group SA. Evaluation was launched on December 2006 and on January 2007 when a draft the First Report on the Evaluation of Action 1 was submitted. The 1st evaluation report was completed in April 2007 and includes the conclusions of fieldwork research.

Introduction

EQUAL is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and aims to develop and test innovative approaches to challenge discrimination and address inequalities in the labour market. It is based around the following principles:

- Partnership – being based around a model of Development Partnerships (DPs) comprising organisations with shared interests working on a collaborative basis.
- Innovation – with new ideas being developed, trialled and mainstreamed.
- Empowerment – where disadvantaged and excluded groups play a role in the development and delivery of EQUAL activities.
- Transnational co-operation – with activities with partners in other Member States aiming to add value through the exchange and transference of ideas and experience.
- Mainstreaming – where the lessons from EQUAL influence policy and practice at the local, national and European levels.
- Equal opportunities – with the programme supporting equality and diversity as a cross-cutting principle.

The thematic basis for EQUAL is defined in the context of the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy (namely employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities), as well as activities to help the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers. Within these pillars are nine thematic fields, three of which are being followed in Cyprus .

Priorities and the thematic fields of the Cyprus-EQUAL Community Initiative 2004/06

PRIORITY 1: EMPLOYABILITY

The priority includes one Measure:

Measure 1.1: Facilitating access and return to the labour market

Aims and Objectives

The measure mainly aims in facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or reintegrated in the labour market, which must be open for all.

Description and Contents of Measure

Innovative approaches and activities that could be developed and tested within the framework of this measure indicatively include:

- Promotion of collaboration and networking of structures for the support of employment
- Programmes of long-term training in selected areas
- Awareness of enterprises and employers

PRIORITY 2: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN

This priority includes one Measure:

Measure 2.1.: Reconciliation of Family and Professional Life

Aims and Objectives

The main objective of this measure is the reconciliation of family and professional life, as well as the re-integration of men and women who left the labour market, by developing more flexible and effective forms of work organisation and support services.

Description and Contents of Measure

Innovative approaches and activities that could be developed and tested within the framework of this measure indicatively include:

- Promotion of new forms of organisation of work for the reconciliation of family and professional life
- Actions for the elimination of stereotypes regarding the role of the two sexes in the family

PRIORITY 3: ASYLUM SEEKERS

This priority includes one measure:

Measure 3.1.: Helping the Integration of Asylum Seekers

Aims and Objectives

The measure aims at promoting supporting interventions for asylum seekers who temporarily stay in the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers or in other forms of temporary accommodation until the final assessment of their application. In addition, the aim is to enhance their skills in order to be better qualified to access the labour market in Cyprus or to be better equipped for their integration in their home country if their application is rejected.

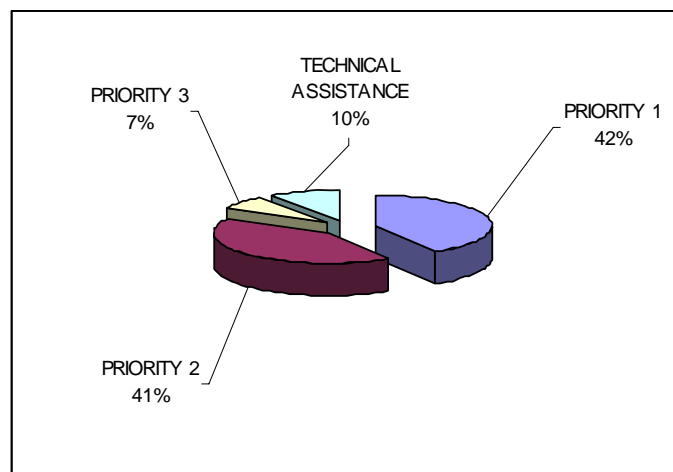
Description and Contents of Measure

Innovative approaches and activities that could be developed and tested within the framework of this measure could be the promotion of programmes for asylum seekers, which will include individualised services such as psychological support, legal counselling, provision of information for employment seeking. The programmes could also promote Greek language classes to enable rapid integration combined with training to develop their skills. Childcare facilities for those whose family responsibilities prevent them from working and educational programmes for children could also be promoted.

The total funding for EQUAL in Cyprus is **3.617.586 €**

Table 1.1. Financial breakdown per priority

PRIORITY AND MEASURES	TOTAL COST	ESF Contribution	National Contribution	Private Sector
Priority 1: Employability				
TOTAL 1	1,500000	0,750000	0,750000	0
Priority 2: Equal Opportunities For Women and Men				
TOTAL 2	1,500000	0,750000	0,750000	0
Priority 3: Asylum Seekers				
TOTAL 3	0,255000	0,127500	0,127500	0
Priority 4: Technical Assistance				
TOTAL 4	0,362586	0,181293	0,181293	0
GRAND TOTAL	3,617586	1,808793	1,808793	0



Programme Mapping

The Programming Document of CIP Equal in Cyprus was approved on **July 7th 2004** (CCI:2004 CY050 PC001) and the Programme Complement was initially submitted on **September the 16th 2004**. The official call for tenders was released on **October the 17th, 2004** and **23 proposals** were submitted before the deadline of November the 17th, 2004. Finally, **7 proposals were selected to go into the start of Action 1**. These 23 proposals closely matched the indicative thematic split as set out in the CIP. This is shown in the table below.

Pillar	No. of bidders	No of DPs	Budget requested (€)	%	Budget granted (€)	%
Employability	12 (52%)	3 (43%)	1.940.882	47%	1.500.000	46%
Equal Opportunities	10 (43%)	3 (43%)	1.933.459	47%	1.500.000	46%
Asylum Seekers	1 (17%)	1 (14%)	255.000	6%	255.000	8%
Total	23	7	4.129.341	100%	3.255.000	100%

Programme Structure

Actions of Cyprus-EQUAL Community Initiative 2004/06

- **Action 1:** Setting up of Development Partnerships, developing a joint strategy and action plan, agreeing on a work plan for trans-national co-operation
- **Action 2:** Implementing the work programmes of the Development Partnerships
- **Action 3:** Thematic networking, dissemination of good practice and making an impact on national policy

Role of Action 1

Action 1 is a six month long period in which the successful bidders could further refine and develop their initial plans and build their partnerships. This process culminates in the production of a detailed work plan, which is part of the Development Partnership Agreement (DPA).

Transnational working is a key requirement of the programme. Action 1 is also the period in which the Cyprus DPs formed partnerships with one or more DPs from other Member States, agreeing a series of joint or parallel activities. This is formalised in the Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA).

Key activities undertaken during Action 1 were:

- Partnership development and establishing systems for operation.
- Development of an equal opportunities policy and strategy.
- Formation of transnational partnership and production of the TCA.
- Production of the DPA.

During the Action 1 period, the process of DPA preparation itself tended to raise previously unforeseen issues for the DPs (e.g. difficulties producing match funding certificates, complications when trying to translate initial ideas into a more systematic work plan). The development phase therefore acted as an important buffer to take these issues on board and refocus the work plan as necessary. In addition DPA is structured as follows:

- Finalization of the partnership scheme
- Project description and objectives
- Role description per partner, description of project the management scheme
- Description of activities and implementation details
- Methodology of continuous evaluation
- Detailed time plan of Action 2
- Detailed budget per activity and partner in Action 2
- Detailed information and dissemination plan
- TCA
- DP commitment to cooperate towards embodying best practices as regard to national and European policies
- Strategy to incorporate gender mainstreaming

Based on the abovementioned data and on the submitted reports Action 1 has been fully implemented.

Programme Indicators

Programmic document included (in the ex ante evaluation chapter) 26 evaluation indicators (23 output indicators, 6 result indicators and 6 impact indicators) but no one of them was quantified. The Programme Complement included 19 evaluation indicators (12 output indicators and 7 result indicators). A bottom up analysis (based on the Technical Fiches) of all the projects and sub-projects revealed that they all include quantified output and results indicators. Cumulative objectives are the following:

- 180 people will be trained in 17 training programs (in average 11 trainees per training programme) and 23 enterprises will be involved in training activities
- 70 people will be hired in almost 70 enterprises while 33 of them will apply new working methods

- 500 asylum seekers will be given individualized approach and 200 of them will attend training programmes.
- 10 training programmes will be designed and 4 information campaigns to diffuse project results
- 8 support structures will be developed in order to assist 115 parents
- 4 networks will be established with the participation of 30 people.

In particular TCA includes:

- Activity schedule and budget
- Roles and competences of the partners
- Common agreed decision making processes
- Organization issues for implementing the action plan
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures
- Value added of the activities

Financial progress

By the end of 2006, the Programme has absorbed **12%** of the planned public expenditure as listed in the following table

Thematic priority	Measure	Nr of DPs	Budget (£)	Expenses (£)	Absorption (%)
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6=5/4</i>
1	1.1	3	860.247,50	138.437,85	16%
2	2.1	3	860.230,50	78.581,41	9%
3	3.1	1	146.242,00	0	0%
4	4.1	-	86.006,00	14.811,63	17%
	4.2	-	129.308,00	10.302,31	8%
Total		7	2.082.034,00	242.133,20	12%

Action 1 had absorbed by the end of 2006 65% of its allocated public expenditure.

Conclusions of fieldwork research

The evaluator has formed a **questionnaire** which has been circulated to the DPs in order to:

- to establish progress to date, to verify key issues and establish their views of the application, assessment and selection processes
- to establish early experiences and progress to date, as well as expectations for the future.

The questionnaire was sent out to the DPs on January 31st 2007 and the deadline for receiving feedback was the 15th of February 2007. All DPs corresponded to the evaluation questionnaire. Subsequently, the evaluator codified all questionnaire fields and carried on with their statistical processing.

The results of this fieldwork research are included in the updated version (version 4.0) of the First Evaluation Report which is released in April 2007. This report also includes data, which been gathered by the external evaluators of each DP. External evaluators submitted their initial report by mid March 2007.

The main findings of the fieldwork research are the following:

- All DPs claimed that the projects' drafting and specialisation was based on the existing policy needs and gaps.
- The problems faced by each target group in Cyprus are the following:

TARGET GROUP	PROBLEMS FACED
Women (employed, unemployed, with disability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Difficulties in labour market access/insertion/reinsertion ➤ Difficulties in reconciling work and family life ➤ Serious threat of social exclusion
Enterprises/Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Insufficient information on reconciliation of work and family life ➤ Employment available only in "traditional" (and not flexible) working hours ➤ Insufficient information on the needs and skills of the youth
Youth unemployed (male and female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Insufficient information on job offers ➤ Insufficient support ➤ Inadequate opportunities for targeted professional training/ Inadequate education
Long –term unemployed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inadequate training opportunities
Seasonally employed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inadequate training opportunities
Employers with family responsibilities/duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of family support structures ➤ Lack of flexible employment schemes
Asylum Seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Difficulties in labour market access ➤ Difficulties in social integration

- Moreover, DP managers reported means of achieving the mainstreaming of their projects' outcomes into applied practices and policies. The main ways reported were:
 - Information, sensitisation and diffusion of best practices campaigns, as well as project publicity actions
 - Participation of government bodies, employers and employees organisations in the DPs
 - Networking with political actors
 - Participation of target-group representatives in the projects' drafting
 - Implementation of pilot actions (alternative methods of work organisation, pilot implementation of a comprehensive system for support, training, qualifications certification, placements and integration to the labour market).
- Moreover, it is also worth mentioning that 86% of the DPs think that their projects' targets will be fully implemented.
- Regarding financial viability, 42% of the DPs claim that the funds available can modestly contribute to the implementation of their project's targets, while the remaining 58% thinks that the funds available are sufficient for the implementation of their project's targets.
- The main difficulties reported by DP managers, regarding effective coordination of DP activities were the following:
 - Financial constraints due to delays on the funding of the projects.
 - Lack of the necessary financial and human resources as well as material and technical infrastructure by some partners
 - Some partners focused only on the implementation of the actions that they were involved in, instead of the overall goal of the project.
 - Some partners had no experience in implementing EU-funded programs.
 - Unclear and delayed guidelines from the Managing Authority, as well as a lot of bureaucracy during the implementation of the project.
- The DP managers were also questioned on their partners' relevance to the needs of the target-groups. Based on the feedback received, the evaluator drew the following conclusions:
 - Communication, information and sensitisation of the target-groups is achieved through participation in the DPs of NGOs with relevant thematic activities.
 - The training of target groups in every project is accomplished through specialised training bodies.
 - Employers and employees organisations, participating in some DPs, help in better approaching companies concerning the implementation of training and placement schemes and promote information and awareness raising of employers on the problems faced by the target group.

- Employees’ representatives ensure more information diffusion together with information and awareness rising of employers on issues affecting every-day lives of employees.
 - Government or semi-government bodies contribute to the better mainstreaming of the projects’ results into innovative policy actions.
- It is also worth highlighting that 86% of the DPs assess the cooperation among their partners as *very good*.
- Regarding coordination and communication among the partners, the DPs reported the following methodological tools developed:
- Project Management Guide
 - Management Board Meetings
 - Operation of sub-committees
 - Tools for monitoring the partners’ timetable and budget arrangements.
- Furthermore, 57% of the DP’s managers stated that there are no further actions needed in order to maximise the added value of the DP. The remaining 42% reported the following corrective actions to maximise the DP’s added value:
- Actions to strengthen the team spirit of the partners
 - Implementation of publicity actions in common with the partners
 - Implementation of actions to ensure the viability of support structures developed after the end of the project.
 - Establishment of a memorandum of partnership and exchange of good practices among the DPs after the end of the projects.
- 58% of DPs characterises the operations of the EQUAL managing and monitoring system as *very well* defined and specialised. 42% thinks that operations of the EQUAL managing and monitoring system are *well* defined and specialised.
- The main suggestions for a more efficient and simplified monitoring and management system were the following:
- Development of a more flexible and less time-consuming management procedure, focusing on the achievement of the project’s goals.
 - Development of a management procedure better-fit to the characteristics of CI EQUAL in Cyprus, instead of copying of the Greek system.
 - More simplified guidelines from the Managing Authority to the DPs, in order to minimise administrative costs.

- All DPs reported that Action I helped partners to develop a network of communication and exchange of experiences and ideas.
- Finally, 57% of DPs did not face any obstacles during the implementation of Action I, while 43% reported the following problems:
 - Difficulties in finding transnational partners
 - Difficulties in filling up technical reports
 - Difficulties in specialization of their projects

List of Acronyms

CIP – Community Initiative Programme
DP – Development Partnership
DPA – Development Partnership Agreement
ECDB – European Common Database
ESF – European Social Fund
IB – Intermediate Body for the European Social Fund
MA – Managing Authority
NAP – National Action Plan
NSU – National Support Unit
TCA – Transnational Co-operation Agreement
TNG – Thematic Networking Group