

EMPOWERMENT UNDERPINNING ACTIVE INCLUSION

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*This document has been prepared as part of a series of papers on **Strategic Lessons from the Employability Strand of EQUAL**. The main purpose of these papers is to support, and provide a focus for, **transnational cooperation within the framework of the European Social Fund (ESF)**, by **highlighting EQUAL principles and EQUAL approaches that can be directly related to the new ESF priorities for action**.*

These Strategic Lessons seek to highlight, from a European perspective, what has already been achieved by EQUAL in relation to the new ESF thematic priorities and to demonstrate those EQUAL approaches that have the potential for wider transfer within the Union. Thus, they could be helpful to those who are running, or are planning to set up, transnational networks in one of the thematic priority fields of the ESF.

*This document summarises outcomes from EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs), Transnational Partnerships and European Mainstreaming Platforms that have been concerned with empowerment, which was one of the **key principles or building blocks of EQUAL**.*

It includes annotated references to the EU policy context and relevant background material from EQUAL experience that can be accessed on-line through hyperlinks.¹ For off-line use, a complete dossier, including the text and all relevant reference material, can be downloaded from:

http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/empl/equal_etg/library?l=etg1/04_examples/empowerment_underpinning&v m=detailed&sb=Title

Text Boxes are also included to illustrate how the experience of EQUAL might be relevant to the activities which Member States or Regions have outlined in their Operational Programmes (OPs) for the ESF 2007 – 2013 programming period. This information is based on an analysis of a sample of 33 OPs, 17 national and 16 regional OPs, from 17 Member States (see Annex 1). The full titles of the national OPs are given the first time they are mentioned in the text.

1. BACKGROUND

The European Commission believes that a sizable part of the Union's population remains socially excluded, since 16% of Europe's population is at risk of financial poverty, 20% live in sub-standard housing, 10% live in households where nobody works, long-term unemployment approaches 4% and the proportion of early school leavers is over 15%.

Despite being one of the richest regions in the world, the European Union and its Member States are still far from the objective, set by the European Council at the launch of the Lisbon strategy in March 2000, of making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty. Although the situations in the Member States vary considerably, the extent of multiple disadvantage and deprivation still found in the EU is widely perceived as socially, morally and economically unsustainable.

Reaching out to those at the margins of society and the labour market is an economic priority as much as it is a social priority. Far from there being any contradiction between an efficient dynamic economy and one that places social justice at its core, these elements are closely interdependent. On the one hand, economic development is necessary to sustain the provision of social support. On the other hand, bringing back to work the most excluded from the labour market, provided that they can work, and supporting their social integration is an integral part of the Lisbon strategy, which aims to mobilise the full potential of our human resources.

In order to help Member States mobilise those who can work and provide adequate support to those who cannot, the Commission has proposed an holistic strategy that can be termed **active inclusion**. On 8 February 2006, the Commission issued a Communication entitled 'Concerning a

¹ Text elements that include hyperlinks are underlined.

consultation on action at EU level to promote the active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market' - [COM\(2006\)44 final](#). This Communication indicated that *"evidence suggests that a comprehensive policy mix combining three elements is justified:*

- (i) *a link to the labour market through job opportunities or vocational training;*
- (ii) *income support at a level that is sufficient for people to have a dignified life; and*
- (iii) *better access to services that may help remove some of the hurdles encountered by some individuals and their families in entering mainstream society, thereby supporting their re-insertion into employment.*

*Such an approach may be termed **active inclusion.**"*

Following a process of public consultation, the Commission produced a second Communication entitled 'Modernising social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market,' [COM \(2007\)620 final](#) of 17.10.2007. This Communication outlines the need for an holistic approach as *"Social inclusion and labour market participation go hand-in-hand. For labour market integration to be sustainable, disadvantaged people need first to be supported with sufficient resources and personalised employment and social services to enhance their social participation and employability."* More importantly, in terms of the theme of this document, the Communication stresses that ***"Disadvantaged people themselves must be involved, consulted and empowered in order to improve the effectiveness of public policies."***

THE CONTRIBUTION OF EQUAL

An analysis of EQUAL Employability DPs, undertaken in 2006, suggested that some DPs were only involving the target groups in a peripheral way such as providing views on the contents of a training course or the outcomes of the DP's evaluation processes. Such consultation is the lightest form of involvement and was simply used in by some DPs to 'prove' that their target groups were participating 'actively' and that they were 'respecting' the principle of empowerment. Indeed, at the EU-level 'Lessons from the evaluation of EQUAL' conference held early in 2006, the discussion of empowerment was considered to be the 'weakest' of all of the workshops on the EQUAL principles to the extent that *"some participants saw the desirability of fostering empowerment as running counter to the demand for projects to be efficient and cost-effective in pursuing innovation."*

However, this was very different view to that held by many DPs and Member States, which had placed empowerment at the very centre of their objectives and were working hard to foster or promote the involvement and effectiveness of their target groups. In Northern Ireland an evaluation of EQUAL carried out on behalf of the Department for Education and Learning concluded that empowerment had been a strong aspect. This has included *"the ability of beneficiaries to present DP progress reports to the EQUAL Monitoring Committee through to training up beneficiaries as 'guest facilitators' with an expertise in promoting diversity."* This assessment, coupled with the fact that there was a proven track record in the Northern Ireland EQUAL programme of interest and expertise in the field of diversity, encouraged the Authorities in Northern Ireland to head up an EQUAL European Mainstreaming Platform on these two topics. The two main foci of this Platform were agreed with the European Commission in December 2006, namely:

- An [Exchange Event](#) for EQUAL DPs in Belfast, in June 2006, that agreed on EQUAL best empowerment and diversity practices to be presented at a subsequent Policy Forum;
- The [Policy Forum](#) in December 2006, also held in Belfast that was designed to present the good practices that were emerging from EQUAL to policy makers and employers and to engage their interest in taking some of these forward.

This Policy Forum had a striking effect on the audience, as the European Commission's External Evaluators indicated: *"Many (of the participants) also referred to the impact that the beneficiaries' presentations ([Case Study 1](#)) had had on them and on their understanding of empowerment, not only due to the experience told by these beneficiaries and what it said of the capacity of EQUAL to make a difference, but also simply because their presence and their voice were a testimony, in situ, to what the participation of beneficiaries can actually produce."*

Rather, what was new was that participants did not seem to find any difficulty with the notion (of empowerment) and suddenly seemed to become **convinced that it was possible** to implement it, since the champions were there to demonstrate that it was feasible, and very effective for their social and labour market reintegration.”

Reference has already been made to [COM \(2007\)620 final](#) and this Communication states that “**EU financial instruments** already play a key role in encouraging the development of inclusion policies based on access to the labour market. The European Social Fund provides a long-term financial framework complementing national and other sources of finance. The Commission will encourage use of the provisions of the new ESF regulation to support active inclusion measures, namely: a) developing and testing integrated pathways to active social and economic inclusion; b) mainstreaming innovative integration approaches that have a clear advantage over current practices; and c) disseminating and transferring good practice in promoting social inclusion across all Member States.”

The EQUAL experiences that are detailed in this document have shown that when it has been used effectively, empowerment has proved to be one of the most powerful approaches in promoting the inclusion and integration of disadvantaged groups. These experiences can greatly assist the European Commission and the various ESF Operational Programmes (OPs) in undertaking the three activities outlined above.

As will be seen from subsequent examples in this text, a number of OPs mention directly the potential use of EQUAL outcomes but other references are made to the incorporation of the principles of EQUAL, including those of partnership and empowerment, into the implementation of national OPs.

Denmark - Regional competitiveness and employment OP: “The other principles that formed the basis of implementation of the EQUAL programme in the period 2000-2006, such as partnerships and empowerment, innovation and mainstreaming, are also continued in this programme.”

Bulgaria - Human Resources Development OP: “The Operational Programme implementation will contribute to the fulfilment of the main horizontal principles of the ESF support for the period 2007-2013, as well as to the application of the leading principles of the Integrated Community Guidelines on Cohesion and the Guidelines of Community Initiative EQUAL. These include inclusion and empowerment of all stakeholders in the processes of programming, implementation and evaluation of programmes and projects.”

Poland Human Capital OP: “With partnership also relates the empowerment principle – i.e. involvement in the process of working out innovative solutions of representatives of target groups. Taking into consideration opinions of the most interested persons gives better guarantee for effectiveness of achieved output. For this reason each project provider must anticipate an appropriate form of involvement of target group representatives.”

Romania HR Development OP: “The setting up of such partnerships will also result in the empowerment of vulnerable groups in what concerns promoting positive action for the people belonging to vulnerable groups at community level.”

2. DEVELOPING MOTIVATION AND CONFIDENCE

INDIVIDUALISING THE APPROACH

Some of respondents to the [Consultation launched by the Communication](#) on active inclusion “noted that for the most disadvantaged groups, active inclusion is often a two-stage process, whereby individuals should first receive support for personal development, social integration and inclusion, which may lead to employment.” This is exactly where **empowerment** first comes into play.

The starting point for most EQUAL projects, or Development Partnerships (DPs) as they are called, was the perspective of their beneficiaries and thus, the life situations of these project participants were put at the centre of the DPs’ activities in planning and implementing their routes towards successful social and vocational (re)-integration.

Many of the current ESF OPs recognise the importance of applying an individualised approach, although the words that are used may be different, the essence of the approach is the same. For example The **Spanish Fight against Discrimination OP** calls it a *“personalised insertion plan,”* the **French ESF OP** sees it as *“an individualised support pathway”* and the **Romanian HR Development OP** emphasises *“tailored services and individual action plans.”* The **Netherlands ESF OP** indicates that *“individual, customised work is required to reduce the distance to the labour market”* for a number of disadvantaged groups.

Whilst the **UK Lowlands and Uplands Scotland OP** states that *“Early engagement with a client-centred, locally-customised approach which meets the needs of the workless individual has been clearly demonstrated through some of the EQUAL Community Initiative partnerships as being effective in helping overcome multiple and complex barriers.”*

However, given their relative lack of success in education and employment, many people from disadvantaged backgrounds need to come to a realisation that it is possible to change their existing situations and EQUAL has succeeded in demonstrating to them that it is possible to improve the quality of their lives. Through social, cultural and sporting activities, EQUAL has strengthened the motivation of people to change and has proved to them that they have the capacity to change their lives and to participate actively in the employment process.

A number of OPs specifically acknowledge the need to increase the motivation of individuals from disadvantaged groups including:

Bulgaria: The OP contains an action on ‘Access to education and training for disadvantaged groups’ that *“seeks to develop measures facilitating the access and enhancing the motivation for participation in educational process of the vulnerable group;”*

Romania: *“The priority axis is focused on developing specific programmes for personal development in order to reinforce the motivation for vocational training and integration on the labour market of vulnerable groups, as well as on improving their access on the labour market;”*

The Lithuanian HR Development OP states: *“Support will also be provided to create and improve temporary social services, i.e. to introduce evaluation systems of working capacity and professional skills, to create innovative methods of social work, to create special programmes increasing motivation for work and learning.”*

The Finnish [PoMO DP](#) used outdoor pursuits to develop the self-confidence of young offenders and to build their trust in the mentors who supported them in their resettlement. Another DP called [MARKTHINK - Investors in Special People](#) which was based in Coimbra, in Portugal, used its experiences and those of [its transnational partners](#) to produce a manual entitled ‘[Outdoor Activities a Means for Skills Development in People with Disabilities](#)’. These experiences showed how outdoor pursuits could be used to increase the employability of people with disabilities. The manual provides new aspects on empowerment and the exercise of citizenship and explains how this work with young people can be applied to other disadvantaged target groups.

The Arts, or the Creative Industries as they are known in the UK, have also been used to empower unemployed people. The [Liverpool Institute of the Performing Arts](#) that was established by Paul McCartney in his former school, in Liverpool, designed an EQUAL DP called **Coaching And Mentoring for Empowerment and Opportunity** or CAMEO for short. The project attempted to capitalise on young people’s interest in music and film and to translate this into the possibility of a future career. The project also enabled the young people to work together in the writing and performing a number of films and shows including one entitled ‘Life Changes.’ In these initial sections of this document, we are featuring the situations and views of the beneficiaries or ‘trainees’ within EQUAL. To find out about how CAMEO changed one participant’s life click on this link ([Case Study 2](#)).

Slovenia is one Member State that has recognised the potential of the creative sector and its **HR Development OP** states: *“Access to employment and training of vulnerable groups may be achieved by promoting social and innovative forms of entrepreneurship and self-employment that create new jobs and the field of culture or creative sector can be of significant importance in this regard. Namely, culture or creative sector boasts yet unexploited potential for social integration and creation of new jobs due to its specific character and growth trends.”*

THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF GROUP OR PROJECT WORK

Others DPs reinforced their work on individual empowerment by establishing groups of beneficiaries, as individuals from the most marginalised backgrounds often need to develop or rediscover their social skills. This was certainly the case for the Latvian DP '[Integration of People with Mental Disturbances and Psychiatric Illnesses into the Labour Market](#)'² which reported major advances in participants' communication skills and abilities to work alongside others. [Basta](#), in Sweden, and [Le Mat](#), in Italy, have also had considerable success in using a group work or a social cooperative approach to integrate drug users, ex-offenders and people with psychiatric problems. For example, an [external evaluation](#)³ of Basta and another Swedish project called [Vägen ut!](#), or 'Exit' in English, calculated their social profits per year, which are the public costs that are eliminated or reduced when addicts recover plus the production values in these two cooperatives. The resulting figure of €13 million roughly equates to the budget for the addiction programmes in a Swedish city of 200,000 inhabitants.

Another reason for working in groups is that people from excluded groups often need to change their views of themselves and of their place in their neighbourhood, community or culture. This gradual process requires more than the provision of new information and cognitive knowledge. It requires a supportive environment that offers new experiences and helps rebuild a positive self-image and a social identity, which, in turn, brings about a change in opinions and attitudes. Active participation in a group in which the members share the same experiences often strengthens their identity, as they can see their individual experiences as being part of a larger pattern and can also learn and draw strength from other people who are, or have been, in similar situations. EQUAL participants in these approaches provide an eloquent testimony to how their feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness were gradually transformed into a sense of hope, belonging and inclusion. For example, some of the views of participants ([Case Study 3](#)), which were sought as part of the final evaluation of EQUAL in Northern Ireland, explain how they benefited from group work.

A number of **the regional OPs in the UK** also mention community projects and voluntary service as being activities that reinforce self-confidence and communication skills and this is also true of some OPs submitted by German Länder. **Brandenburg** indicates that vocational preparation activities will include *"opportunities for personal development through active involvement in voluntary services and projects."* **Saxony** also intends to offer young people *"work experience in voluntary services/projects"* to strengthen their *"motivation and personality."*

PROVIDING A WIDER SUPPORT NETWORK

Often people who are in a vulnerable situation do not only experience difficulties on the labour market but also face a vast array of other problems that have to be addressed before they can operate effectively either as trainees or employees. Thus, support during a period of stabilisation may be an essential pre-condition for empowerment. For those whose lives have been particularly damaged by experiences of poverty, sometimes combined with health problems and direct or indirect involvement in criminal activity, a period of stabilisation is essential. Integrated projects, working with other agencies, can offer a context in which to regain health, social confidence and motivation, resolve serious problems and begin to re-establish relationships with family and friends.

In the case of young people with little experience of adult life, many DPs organised their preparation for independent living in a way that often covered the aspect of housing and accommodation, particularly for those leaving children's homes or other care institutions. This was one of the main activities of the [Headstart DP](#)⁴ in Malta. The rationale for this partnership was the need to provide an integrated, holistic support package for these young people. They are a high risk category facing disadvantage since they have few educational qualifications and have difficulty in finding a job and securing somewhere to live. Apart from providing vocational

² For more information click on [Presentation](#)

³ "From the public perspective" – a copy in English is available from eva.johannsson@nutek.se

⁴ For more information click on [Presentation](#)

guidance, training, work experience and certification in a number of skills/trades, the DP also offered a range of affordable housing options to its trainees.

The [Balancing the Future – A New Challenge](#) DP, in the Netherlands, had been carefully constructed so that each partner brought specific expertise to the various aspects of the resettlement processes of women prisoners. In terms of those agencies that worked mainly outside the prison walls, Zorgconcept (Care Concept) was responsible for employment-related support that included job mediation, vocational training and education. Questions related to accommodation, which was a big problem for 40% of the women, were covered by Exodus, an NGO with considerable experience in the field of housing. During the Round 1 DP, Exodus opened a new house in which female ex-offenders could stay with their children for up to nine months before they found permanent accommodation. A third partner, Humanitas, offered assistance with all aspects of family life and, particularly, childcare. This combined, intensive support represented a highly developed and specialised reintegration service that could not have been guaranteed by the prison service or the probation department working alone.

These are only two examples and fortunately, the partnership principle of EQUAL resulted in many new approaches to managing cooperation between partners as diverse as schools, training providers, guidance services, employers, placement agencies, social services, youth organisations, voluntary bodies and community interest groups, within the context of a multi-agency network.

Many OPs acknowledge the need for additional support and the fact that this can only be provided through improved collaboration and communication between many agencies.

UK East Wales: *“For many people, low skills, poor or no qualifications, lack of self-confidence or work experience, are some of the main barriers they face in getting a job. But, over and above this, specific action will be needed to address the full range of factors contributing to their disadvantage if their successful move into, and retention in employment is to be secured.”*

UK Northern Ireland: *“Delivery of initiatives to identify and reduce personal barriers to work can be effectively achieved through a coordinated service which builds on partnerships between statutory agencies, local voluntary and community organisations and employers, and is tailored to individual needs. For some accessing the labour market is particularly difficult as a result of a history of drug misuse, alcohol misuse, being an ex offender/prisoner or being homeless.”*

Lithuania: *“It is planned to promote cooperation between various institutions working in this area (including NGOs, local communities) with a view to creating and implementing the integrated models of social, educational and employment services. All the parties concerned will be encouraged to propose new, innovative ways of solving social exclusion problems, which can be based on the good practices of other countries and the experience of the projects financed by initiative EQUAL.”*

Hungary’s Social Renewal OP has a specific measure entitled ‘Improvement in access of increasingly disadvantaged groups to social services, in order to promote their integration into the labour market.’ The OP indicates that *“in the course of implementing the measure, the models tried and tested in the framework of the EQUAL Community Initiative should also be exploited, with special regard to the experiences of initiatives helping the labour market integration of the Roma, homeless people, people suffering from addictions and people with altered working capabilities.”*

3. MEASURING EMPOWERMENT

EQUAL addressed the question of how the full participation of people can be facilitated through strategies that enhanced the individual’s capacity to make an impact on the design and implementation of measures that were intended to increase his or her employability. This involved developing the competences, skills and knowledge required for navigating through the integration process to the highest possible level and building on each individual’s existing abilities and aptitudes.

The Spanish OP states that “the general objective of the guidance will be to facilitate the development of resources and competences by job seekers to help them identify options, choose from amongst them, take decisions for planning actions and assess the results independently.”

During its first phase (2002 – 2004), a number of EQUAL projects led by a Dutch DP called [VrijBaan](#) pioneered a new diagnostic instrument for people with disabilities and this has led to the design of suitable training pathways, not only for these people but for others who are at a great distance from the labour market. The instrument is essentially a questionnaire that each individual completes with help and further explanation, if necessary. The questionnaire contains 62 statements and respondents are asked to express the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each statement. The six components covered are:

- **Competence:** *trusting in your own abilities;*
- **Self-Determination:** *being able to make choices and feeling in control of your own situation;*
- **Impact:** *the understanding that your decisions and choices have an effect on your life;*
- **Significance:** *experiencing a meaning in your activities that fits with your own values, beliefs and standards;*
- **Group-Oriented:** *realising that you are part of a community or group and that you all need to work together; and*
- **Positive Identity:** *accepting yourself as you are, including your disability (or disadvantage).*

Having analysed the replies, a psychologist then discusses the outcomes with the respondent and indicates those particular components that are not as well developed as they might be. As it is vitally important that the person commits to further action, an appropriate training pathway can only be established when he or she agrees with this assessment. The instrument attracted much interest amongst key actors and it was validated by a major pension fund in collaboration with the Dutch body for social security. The pension fund now believes that empowerment is a crucial factor in ensuring a successful return to work and is using the diagnostic instrument to measure the empowerment levels of its clients and to determine if it is possible to provide training to help them return to work. During the second phase of EQUAL, the instrument was used with the same success for other target groups including the long-term unemployed.

In Northern Ireland, EQUAL also recognised the value of capturing **soft outcomes**. Very often the targets set for EU programmes are such things as numbers of unemployed entering employment, numbers of accredited qualifications at various levels etc. These are **hard outcomes** which are easily measurable. However, ESF programmes and EQUAL, in particular, also perform other important functions. In Northern Ireland, after the ‘Troubles’ ended in the 1990s, many women wished to return to work. However, these women had spent years in isolation, looking after children and had lost touch with the working environment and had also lost the confidence to re-enter this environment. A number of projects in Belfast and elsewhere worked to re-build the confidence of these women who lived in very difficult areas. This was a very long process and it had to be acknowledged that these interventions would not necessarily produce hard outcomes such as qualifications. In such instances, soft outcomes proved useful in measuring, for example, a readiness to return to work, if not actually getting work.

Such soft outcomes are difficult to measure but there are a number of recognised methodologies. They involve interviewing beneficiaries/participants at the start of the process and then at various stages of their development to see just how far they have come. These soft outcomes are actually extremely important because if they are not evaluated a lot of the benefits of the EU programmes can go unrecorded. In Northern Ireland, EQUAL opted to work with the [Rickter Company](#),⁵ which provides a tool for measuring such outcomes. All DPs were trained in the use of this tool and used it with their beneficiaries. This proved to be a very useful complement to the other performance indicators for the programme and has allowed the personal progression of EQUAL beneficiaries to be measured and valued.

⁵ For more information see the Rickter Scale section of this web site www.proteus-ni.org

Given this EQUAL experience, it is not surprising that the **Northern Irish** OP states that *“For some participants, particularly those experiencing multiple disadvantages, the outcome may be progress towards labour market entry rather than a job. Projects will be encouraged to record softer outcomes such as number of action plans, referrals to programmes, (number of) participants on job tasters, improved time-keeping or self confidence.”*

The EQUAL tools for measurement used in the Netherlands and Northern Ireland might prove useful to other ESF Managing Authorities such as those below that made the following remarks in their OPs:

UK England: *“The ex-ante evaluation explains that research in the 2000-2006 programme indicated that it is difficult to devise programme level ‘soft outcome’ indicators;”*

Denmark: *“It is very difficult to register a positive employment effect for measures directed at the individual with regard to the unemployed, whereas action for employees has contributed positively to retaining employees in the labour market.”*

4. EMPOWERMENT TRAINING

REDRESSING WEAKNESSES

In a second round project called [REQUEST](#), the VrijBaan methodology was developed and some 160 training modules were identified that could be applied to redress any individual deficiencies or short comings that were identified by the measurement of empowerment. An empowerment-reinforcing training programme was generally offered to groups of 10 individuals. The programme included between 30 and 50 hours of training, spread over several weeks or months. A professional trainer or coach took into account the learning demands and the physical and cognitive capacities of the trainees and stimulated and supported them during their process of developing internal leadership. Trainees were coached in the self-discovery of possibilities and capacities (*competence, self-efficacy, self-image*), in making their own choices (*self-determination*), in the boundaries and consequences of their decisions and choices (*impact, group orientation*) and, last but not least, in checking whether choices matched their ideas and values (*meaning*). Some 62% of the trainees who enrolled in such an empowerment training programme indicated that the training had a great impact on their lives, as they felt stronger mentally and had more self-confidence and self-awareness.

Other DPs have also developed empowerment training, which is often related to the [development of individualised pathways](#), a topic on which a separate EQUAL Strategic Lessons paper has been produced. The Spanish ÁGORA NORD DP ([Case Study 4](#)) based much of its empowerment approach on the ideas and concepts of [Robert Castel](#), a French sociologist. This approach also involved a diagnosis, including a self-diagnosis of the individual's strengths and weaknesses, then an evaluation was made of the probability of finding a job which took account of all factors including gender, ethnic origin and age and an attempt was made to open the eyes of the individual to their own situation and to put their expectations into a more realistic light. Then, the training programme was planned and an agreement on this programme was signed by both the DP and the participant, which could be modified on the basis of the progress achieved.

ENHANCING BASIC SKILLS

At a general level, participants in EQUAL projects readily identified communication, language and computer skills as being essential if they were to overcome obstacles to qualifications, jobs and social interaction. Language and communication skills were particularly requested by migrants or refugees and digital literacy is increasingly understood as being a necessary competence. For example, the European Commission estimates that 44% of EU citizens do not have any degree of Internet or computer skills and these skills are increasingly important not only in terms of employment but also for enhancing people's ability to manage their everyday lives. EQUAL projects have developed training modules that were not available in standard educational provision and provided basic skills in a way that was directly relevant to the participants' situations. For example the [Pangea DP](#), did not attempt to compete with other training providers, in the Spanish Region of Castilla - La Mancha. Rather, it guided people towards suitable courses where these already existed. What it did develop and provide directly was specialist training for

immigrants in job search and interview techniques, social skills and new information technologies.

The **UK East Wales OP** reflects the experience of EQUAL DPs: *“Research indicates that the skills most lacking are problem solving, customer handling and other technical and practical skills such as ICT.”* These same issues are mentioned by **France**, which will provide *“pre-vocational training including language teaching,”* and many other OPs underline the importance of general writing and reading skills and the recognition of acquired skills and competences, especially for immigrants, ethnic minorities and Roma.

EQUAL DPs were aware that learning is a process that differs for each individual. Some learning environments are more conducive to the development of personal motivation and give a greater sense of control at each stage of development. For example, many people are resistant to classroom environments but respond to more interactive learning based on experience. ‘Learning by doing’ gives them the opportunity to test themselves in new and more supportive situations, through which they are able to acquire knowledge and skills more rapidly and to understand their capabilities because this form of learning proves what they are able to accomplish. The ISTMO DP ([Case Study 5](#)), in Portugal, was a very good example of this hands-on approach to learning.

It is interesting to see that some OPs intend to upgrade the competences of teachers and trainers so that they can better meet the needs of disadvantaged groups. **Bulgaria** accords importance to *“continuous updating of knowledge, acquisition of new skills and absorption of new teaching and training methods, skills to work in an inter-cultural environment, training in ICT, on-line work, foreign language training, training of adults, etc.”* Also the **Hungarian OP** states that *“In the interest of modernising professional competences, it will be necessary to provide support for educating groups with different education requirements and the integration of students with particular tuition needs.”*

EMPOWERING THROUGH SELF-EMPLOYMENT

A small but significant number of EQUAL projects have experimented successfully in training members of vulnerable groups to set up their own enterprises or to become self-employed. While there was an attempt to be realistic about the potential of participants, EQUAL training programmes also took account of the fact that one way of gaining a degree of autonomy in the labour market was to create an enterprise and become one’s own boss. In assisting excluded people along this ambitious path, empowerment entailed nurturing the desire to take risks with commercial ideas, while at the same time providing a wide range of support and information to optimise progress. This autonomous route is also one way of avoiding the prejudice or stereotyping of employers or work colleagues in the individual’s search for an acceptable and economically viable form of work. Such opportunities have been made available to EQUAL’s three main target groups of [immigrants and ethnic minorities](#), people with disabilities ([Case Study 6](#)), and [\(ex\)-offenders](#).

In the current programming period, the ESF will also support entrepreneurial activities.

Lithuania: *“Initiatives of unemployed people to start their own business will be supported by providing them with the necessary knowledge of business environment, introduction and development.”*

Bulgaria: *“Support will be available for innovations, creation of new business models in the entrepreneurship field and to help unemployed in starting up their own business aiming at creation of jobs in the supported newly established enterprises. This activity shall be realised by implementation of a grant scheme targeted at development of entrepreneurial skills among the unemployed.”*

Denmark will have a specific Priority Axis on the ‘Establishment and development of new enterprises’ that will offer consultancy, enhance entrepreneurial competences, create an entrepreneurial culture and provide venture capital funds.

5. ROLES THAT REINFORCE EMPOWERMENT

A number of new roles or new job profiles have been tested under EQUAL and these have helped to reinforce the empowerment activities of the DPs. They are based on the principle that the 'client' is the principal actor and that services and support are designed and provided at that person's request.

PERSONAL COORDINATOR

One approach ensures that people are offered a **personal coordinator** who is available to advise and support them in all their contacts with various services and agencies throughout the entire integration process. The coordinator must spend time with the client in order to get a proper picture of the situation, as seen from the client's perspective. As the Swedish SUCCESS DP ([Case Study 7](#)), indicates *"this requires a type of interaction similar to listening to a friend rather than conducting a therapeutic interview."* The picture obtained is not limited to the person's problems, but also includes the resources the person has, or has access to, as well as the person's interests, goals and/or expectations. The next stage concentrates on motivating the individual to take charge of the situation and to follow through his or her own interests, goals and ambitions.

JOB COACH

Positive experiences have also been gained through EQUAL from the further development of Supported Employment Schemes for people with physical and intellectual disabilities such as that operated by the Northern Irish [SEA DP](#). The approach tested is similar to that described above but the main support is provided by a **job coach**, as in the Majakka-Beacon DP ([Case Study 8](#)), in Finland and the RYTMUS DP ([Case Study 9](#)), from Prague. The role of the job coach is to provide assistance but not to take any action without the individual's agreement. EQUAL has demonstrated a number of ways in which job coaches encourage empowerment and has also shown that job coaches are effective in empowering people in their search for employment. The job coach is a relatively new role, and while no European training course has been established, EQUAL has provided a platform for the sharing of experiences and certain common elements in the preparatory training have emerged.

PEER SUPPORTER OR ROLE-MODEL

Another job profile that has been developed in EQUAL is that of the **peer supporter or peer role-model**. In some DPs, young individuals have been trained to become youth workers or peer-coaches for other young people. In the Dutch [Catch the Coach-to-Be](#) project, this training has led to a professional youth work qualification. In other situations, individuals from other EQUAL target groups have also been trained and then employed as project workers or even social workers, as in a Lithuanian DP with the very long name of [the Development of Support Mechanisms for the Integration of Roma into the Labour Market](#). The main idea is that these people better understand the needs of the projects' 'potential clients' and can make better contact with, and be accepted by, the clients, as they come from the same background, experience, language or culture. This is also the case for the peer-befrienders employed in the [English Thresholds DP](#). Such approaches have two main benefits in that these individuals are empowered through their training and subsequent employment and, at the same time, they help to motivate and empower other clients of their DPs on the basis of *"Well if they can do something like this, then maybe we can too."* This was certainly the case for the peer researchers from ex-offender backgrounds who were employed in the [Women into Work DP](#), which is also based in England.

LIFE EXPERIENCE EXPERTS

The concept of the Life Experience Expert originated in Belgium. It was a response to the missing link between policy makers and service providers, on the one hand, and those living in poverty, on the other. In EQUAL, [DiverCidade](#), a Portuguese DP, interpreted this concept and trained two Life Experience Experts. These young people had coped with living as a descendant of immigrants or in a gypsy community and they were helped to acquire the attitudes, skills and methods to work alongside the members of staff in the project. They played an important role in

that they made an input to all the other activities of the project, as they could feed in their experience and this helped the project to adopt realistic and appropriate methods. Gradually, the DP extended this concept to other local organisations and plans have been developed to create a Training Centre and to seek recognition for this profile. The concept has been incorporated into a government initiative called 'Critical Neighbourhoods.' It was also positively assessed, not only by 'Critical Neighbourhoods,' but also by other public bodies and some of the existing life experience experts continued in their posts after the end of EQUAL.

The **Bulgarian** OP contains a specific mention of the “*provision of mediation (job-brokering) services for securing employment.*” The **Spanish** OP will train “*actors, professionals and volunteers with regard to social and labour integration and the fight against the discrimination of groups with difficulties.*” The same type of action is reflected in the **French** OP which talks about “*training and professionalising supporting adults*” within the context of its actions in favour of inhabitants of sensitive urban zones.

UK England is among many OPs that highlight the important role that can be played by NGOs and community groups. It provides “*small grants for voluntary and community organisations to support their capacity to mobilise unemployed and inactive people who are disadvantaged or excluded and to facilitate their integration into the labour market ('ESF community grants').*”

The EQUAL roles that combine activation measures with a deliberate strategy of empowering people to steer their own integration processes provide templates for new profiles that could be introduced into, or developed by, the types of OP activities outlined above.

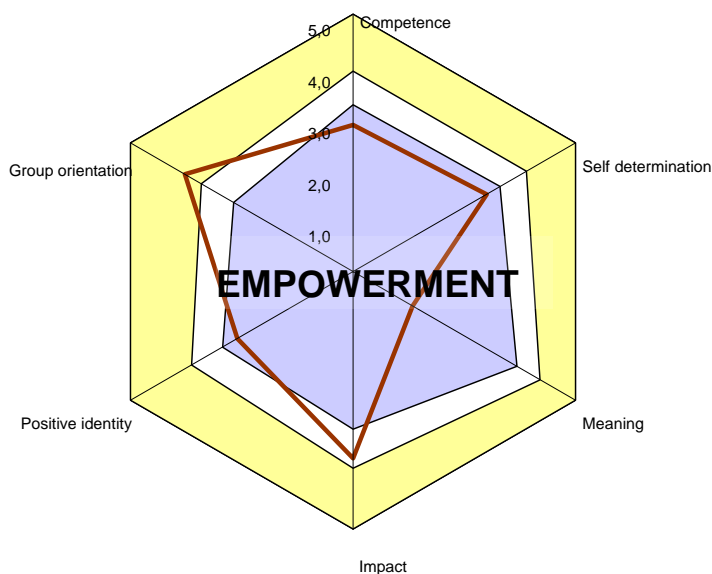
6. CHANGING POLICIES AND PRACTICES

ESTABLISHING AN EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENT

One concept or slogan that has emerged from EQUAL's empowerment activities is “*nothing about us without us.*” EQUAL has tackled a major problem in this respect: the fact that, although many professionals and integration service providers agree with this principle, they very rarely apply it to their own work. One successful approach to changing practice was developed by the [REQUEST DP](#) (the successor to VrijBaan) that concentrated on building an empowering environment in key agencies in the integration chain. REQUEST started from the premise that these organisations have to at least respect, if not stimulate and strengthen, the individual's empowerment to make sure that he or she can really take charge of the integration process.

The same six components of empowerment used in VrijBaan, were translated into organisational terms as follows:

- **Competence:** *active career planning and personal development plans and a transparent system for performance evaluation;*
- **Self-Determination:** *feedback and coaching in developing decision making powers;*
- **Impact:** *participatory management, initiative rewarded and innovative culture;*
- **Positive Identity:** *inspiring and energising leadership and emotional tasks of management;*
- **Meaning:** *developing entrepreneurial staff and employee self-leadership;*



- **Group-Orientation:** *cooperative and team-oriented atmosphere, supporting feedback and team formation based on expertise and a common mindset and building client relationships.*

This led to the establishment of the REQUEST Quick Scan that provides professionals and organisations with feedback on the extent to which they have created an empowering environment. Employees answer a questionnaire, expressing their opinion about the performance of the organisation and their own professional performance in relation to the six components. The outcome is a profile of the organisation's empowerment performance (please see red line in figure). Having considered its profile, the organisation can improve its empowering qualities by re-organising its business processes or by training employees in:

- Empowering behaviour;
- Empowering mission and philosophy;
- Empowerment and HRM;
- Empowering business strategies.

In the Netherlands, the REQUEST approach has been applied by the Centre for Work and Income, the National Executive Authority for Social Insurance, rehabilitation institutes, schools, municipalities and some enterprises.

The **Andalusian** OP states that *“To enable more people to find quality in employment, and in order to promote transparency and efficiency in the employment market, it is essential that any actions taken by the different bodies and organisations (especially the Andalusian Employment Service) are adapted to the demands and needs of citizens.*

In their OPs, **France** and **Spain** indicate that they will modernise their public employment services. Also, a number of the newer Member States including **Hungary**, **Lithuania**, **Romania** and **Slovenia** will use their OPs to introduce major reforms in their employment services, particularly in relation to offering tailor-made assistance and providing services that are flexible and accessible.

EQUAL's experiences in creating empowering environments and establishing new roles in the integration process could assist employment services to improve the uptake and use of their provision by disadvantaged and diverse groupings.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE

Others DPs applied the slogan *“nothing about us without us”* and reinforced their work on individual empowerment by establishing fora or other beneficiary groups so that their clients played a role in the development of the project and in the planning and monitoring of its various actions. Such groups also had beneficial effects other than simply improving the responsiveness of the DPs' activities. By working together the potential for change was increased and groupings of beneficiaries have played a lead role in many projects in establishing everything from new or renovated housing to work preparation courses for lone parents. They have also improved the relevance of training to opportunities in the labour market and have helped to diversify the types of jobs that were available in their areas.

Through their training and research a group of lone parents from the **Possibilities DP**⁶ produced new ideas that Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) has introduced into the government's New Deal programme designed to assist jobs seekers in Northern Ireland. The ideas that have been mainstreamed are:

- The introduction of an information leaflet for lone parents;
- The introduction of a personal information form that lone parents complete prior to their Work Focus Interviews with a Personal Adviser;
- The introduction of work experience placements for lone parents;

⁶ For more information click on [Presentation](#)

- Pilot qualification programme introduced to allow participants the opportunity to follow an NVQ level 3 from a core list of occupational areas.

Elements of the Possibilities DP have also been incorporated into DEL's new 'Work Preparation Programme for Lone Parents' and Gingerbread, the group that represents lone parents has been awarded one of the contracts for this programme and now some of the participants in the Possibilities DP are now delivering this training. One of the most important elements in this mainstreaming success was that two members of staff of the DP were seconded into DEL.

The most important aspect of the [BRIDGE DP](#) was the community development approach that it adopted in the small region around Encs which is one of the most underdeveloped areas of Hungary and home to 20-25% of the country's Roma population. BRIDGE believed that the Roma community and its organisations must be so involved in the process of creating employment opportunities through the construction of workshops that they would come to own it. For example, it is the local community council made up of Roma people that now governs the Carpenters' Workshop and it is hoped that in the future a company owned by the Roma workers will manage the Blacksmiths' Workshop as a real social enterprise. There were three local Roma organisations within the overall DP and they were helped to become more professional in their documentation and reporting activities. An experienced accountant was also hired to help these organisations become more reliable and more self-confident and self-assured in dealing and negotiating with outside agencies and public bodies. The concrete outcomes, in a very real sense of that term, are the two Workshops that are now employing 25 people and provide a sound basis for future developmental activity.

In another project a very committed group of Roma women has been working within the [P'lo sonho é que vamos DP](#). *"All of us knew that we had to give up all thoughts of marriage and marriage is a very important institution in our culture", says Sónia Matos, "otherwise it would have been impossible to follow our beliefs and to make better lives for ourselves and for other Gipsy women."* Sónia is the Treasurer of Associação para o Desenvolvimento das **Mulheres Ciganas** Portuguesas (the Association for the Development of Portuguese Gipsy Women) or AMUCIP for short. AMUCIP provides social-educational support outside school hours and also helps in transporting Roma children to and from school and in mediating between schools and families. In addition, it provides an open forum in which women can discuss problems or issues that affect their lives. An old, but beautiful, house has been provided by the Municipality and thanks to this EQUAL project and the financial support of a bank, Fundação Montepio Geral, it has been renovated to provide a space for the development of the AMUCIP's activities and for the encounters and dialogue between the Gipsy and non-Gipsy communities.

These and similar EQUAL projects have helped to ensure that people became part of the solution rather than being regarded as part of the problem. This capacity building approach is more evident in Scandinavian countries, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK. It is also demonstrated in the work of a Northern Irish DP called [Diversity Matters](#) and in the groups established by the Spanish project [Pangea](#). The approach is very much in keeping with one of the aims of [COM \(2007\)620 final](#), the latest European Commission Communication on Active Inclusion, which is to ensure that disadvantaged people *"can live in dignity and contribute as much as possible to society."*

ESF OPs have also seen this self-help approach as being important.

Berlin speaks about *"Strengthening the self-help capacity of unemployed through local micro-projects and local networks involving providers of different types of services."*

A **Slovenian** OP priority axis is directed towards *"stimulating and supporting inactive and unemployed people to actively undertake solving of their unemployment, to gain and retain employment. This refers to the activities that promote development and implementation of new forms of integration of vulnerable groups in the labour market."*

Whereas **Lithuania** states that *"it is very important to promote the initiative 'from the bottom' in solving the problems of social exclusion. Therefore, it is planned to support the initiatives of self assistance for various groups of persons threatened with social exclusion. Funding will be provided to the projects that will make the largest contributions in reducing social risk and social exclusion of people and will promote them or their family members to come back to the labour market."*

EXERTING AN INFLUENCE ON POLICY

[COM \(2007\)620 final](#) also states that *“Disadvantaged people themselves must be involved, consulted and empowered in order to improve the effectiveness of public policies.”* However, feedback from EQUAL suggests that gaining an understanding of the process of policy development can be a challenging but not overwhelming prospect. Many DPs have committed their time and energy to help target group organisations to focus their interests and impact on policy. The more successful projects combined ad hoc learning with some more structured experiences and the activities of two Portuguese DPs serve to illustrate what can be achieved in preparing individuals and groups to exert an influence on policy.

The first activity was the Forum Theatre ([Case Study 10](#)), which was animated by a team of professionals. Individuals were invited to play an improvised role within a scenario that was based on trying to resolve imaginary situations of tension or conflict, for example, an argument between a politician and a member of the general public who was unhappy about the quality of service or advice offered by the local authority. The rest of the audience was given the opportunity to comment on the performance and the solutions that had been tried and anyone who felt that he or she had a better solution was invited to act it out on stage. The scene could be re-enacted several times, and the process provoked great interest and became a real participative form of learning.

The second activity was called Participatory Budgeting ([Case Study 11](#)). This gave citizens the opportunity to express their needs and expectations and improved their social skills and they also gained a more realistic understanding of the resources and means available within the area. At the same time, the Town Council and its technical staff improved their understanding of the realities of the Borough and established direct links with the general public, which helped to validate their policy proposals and decisions.

The ÀGORA NORD DP ([Case Study 12](#)) took on a wider challenge of trying to develop the policies of 22 towns in the area of l’Horta Nord, which lies to the north of the city of Valencia. The ÀGORA NORD project drove a process of empowerment for people who faced problems in getting a foothold on the labour market ladder (see section 4). At the same time, it provided a series of actions designed to foster local empowerment by equipping people, institutions and communities with the resources they needed to play an active role in the development of their area. Some of the impressive outcomes include an agreement signed by all 22 mayors to work towards the creation of a socially responsible area or territory and procedures for building social clauses into public contracts and tendering procedures.

OPs have indicated the importance of local empowerment particularly by reinforcing the roles of NGOs and civil society, in general.

UK East Wales will *“extend outreach activity into local communities, e.g. - working through a range of local community and voluntary groups, to engage with more disadvantaged groups; extend the scale, depth and length of interventions for participants.”*

In **France** *“the ESF supports good territorial governance. It encourages global approaches that favour the coordination of local actors in the fields of employment and inclusion (local public employment service, local collectives, enterprises and associations) to take better account of the economic or social problems of the territories.”*

Romania will promote *“activities based on the principle of solidarity and shall also rely on the voluntary participation of citizens and of not for profit organisations. They will be developed as closely as possible to the users, in partnership with local authorities and other important economic players at regional and local level.”*

Hungary will *“strengthen the civil society and communities by: training of professionals and volunteers: support for local civil initiatives, strengthening partnership and cooperation; development of networks of civil organisations; and dissemination of voluntary work.”*

However, perhaps the most ambitious examples of all have been those EQUAL DPs that have attempted **to change national policies**.

The [Com.Media DP](#) developed two community radio stations/centres in Athens and Thessaloniki. However, whilst it had existed for some time in other Member States, community media was

something completely new in Greece. Thus, from the beginning, the project set out to promote a convincing case for the establishment of community media. In many ways this DP was a beneficiary of empowerment, through the knowledge and advice of its more experienced EQUAL transnational partners and they also enabled the DP to make a comparative study of the major features, and the legislation that applies to Community Media in other countries. In Greece, the DP has created a [large number of outputs](#) to influence policy and a complete kit for starting a Community Media Centre to stimulate bottom-up demand. The intention is that when more frequencies become available, as a result of the impact of digital broadcasting, Com.Media will be able to make an excellent case for the granting of licenses to other Community Media ventures. As the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation is involved in the licensing process and is also one of the partners in the DP, the prospects are looking very good.

This section concludes with a major success story that would not have had such a happy outcome without EQUAL and the attention and resources that it devoted to effective partnership and mainstreaming activities. Some six million people in the UK are carers who look after partners, relatives or friends who are ill, frail or have a disability. But juggling care responsibilities with paid employment can be difficult, and many people are forced to change the way they work or to give up work altogether. The [Action for Carers and Employment \(ACE\) DP](#) set out to empower these people who are in such a vulnerable situation primarily by establishing an on-line learning programme through which they could work towards a nationally recognised qualification and by enlisting the help of major employers to create more flexible working conditions that took account of care responsibilities. However, ACE National wanted to ensure that the good practices developed and lessons learned became integrated into mainstream policy and programmes. Its efforts have certainly paid off, as it helped to steer a Private Members Bill through the UK Parliament. The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act received Royal Assent in July 2004. It places new duties on local authorities to ensure that carers have access to employment, education and leisure opportunities – the first time that these key issues for carers have been addressed in the context of equal opportunities and diversity.

7. THE MAIN MESSAGES RELATED TO EMPOWERMENT

The following set of messages has been derived from EQUAL's activities to promote employment and social inclusion.

Empowerment is a process, aimed at a change in power relationships that can apply to individuals, groups, organisations or communities.

Empowerment is a two-way change: on the part of those who previously had little or no power and on the part of those who hold authority and power in employment, social, cultural and political systems.

Empowerment requires a change in professional practice. Those who previously had little or no power must be listened to, as they have acquired expertise through what they have experienced. Thus, their knowledge, their aspirations as well as their needs and their opinions and insights must be taken seriously and acted upon in the process of coming together to solve the problems that they are facing.

Empowerment should take place in the context of a comprehensive approach that tackles a range of psychological, social, cultural and economic issues.

Empowerment implies different approaches to lifelong learning, including aspects of social learning and is based on more interactive methodologies that give a central place to learning by doing.

Empowerment needs non-traditional approaches to conflict management and resolution. By questioning the implicit consensus between those in power, it throws a new light on the assumptions on which policies, programmes and professional approaches are based.

Empowerment recognises the fact that power takes many forms and remains partial and relative: the exercise of power requires the management of tensions between cooperation and competition, between a value-based commitment and the possibility of coercion, between reliance on fair exchange and autocratic behaviour.

8. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

As may be seen from the table above, empowerment approaches constitute a radical departure from approaches based on philanthropy, charity or traditional forms of social protection, which often tend to perpetuate or even increase dependency. However, they must be underpinned by an understanding that people from disadvantaged or diverse groupings have a role to play in their own integration, and this necessitates a shift in traditional practice to take account of the individual's interests, concerns and potential.

The new roles and empowerment approaches developed within EQUAL reflect the European Employment Strategy's calls for activation as part of a broader inclusion policy, the targeting of those furthest from the labour market, the introduction of tailor-made programmes and the provision of personalised advice and guidance. They also reflect the emphasis in the [Communication from the Commission on the Social Agenda](#), COM (2005) 33 final, on strengthening citizens' confidence that *"is essential for managing the process of change and plays a key role in encouraging economic growth."* Moreover, the Commission's Communication on active inclusion seems to embody the message of many EQUAL beneficiaries *"nothing for us without us"* in that it emphasises the need for disadvantaged people to be **involved, consulted and empowered** in order to improve the effectiveness of public policies.

The EQUAL experiences suggest that the traditional caring or helping approaches found in education and training, basic employment services and employment and job coaching initiatives tend to perpetuate dependency, whereas clients who are allowed to make their own decisions on employment paths are more likely to sustain their involvement and progress towards employment. Thus, new skills and competences are required by the staff of some integration agencies. Professional workers could benefit from training programmes specifically focused on empowerment practice, so that they can themselves feel empowered to negotiate openly with excluded people and groups.

In the current programming period of 2007 to 2013, the ESF is targeting the objectives of the cohesion policy and the employment strategy reinforcing its links with social inclusion priorities. Reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people with a view to their sustainable integration is a specific ESF priority and so, managers of ESF Operational Programmes (OPs) are encouraged to make use of the experiences of EQUAL to promote empowerment approaches within these OPs. Empowerment and non-discrimination could also be a horizontal issue in all ESF programmes ensuring that special attention is given to their mainstreaming in the design and implementation of action under all priorities. Measures supported by ESF OPs should:

- Explore and acknowledge the full potential of disadvantaged people's experience, motivation and positive aspirations, including those not directly related to employment;
- Treat participants as equal partners, negotiate with them at all stages and respect their opinions and choices, including their right to learn from failure at intermediate stages;
- Increase consultation with, and the involvement of, participants and/or their representatives at all stages of the OP's implementation and also in respect of the policies the ESF supports;
- Develop ways of assessing and evaluating such user involvement;
- Offer participants a chance to take responsibility, both incrementally and as appropriate, to facilitate learning from experience;
- Give priority to a process of personal development that strengthens self-worth and self-confidence as a pre-requisite to more formal learning;
- Diversify informal and formal learning opportunities, mobilising employers and other agencies in the process;
- Support experimentation with a wide range of employment options that offer a greater degree of autonomy such as enterprise creation, better reconciliation between work and personal life or a greater sense of job satisfaction including involvement in socially useful activities;
- Assist the development of mutual help and support in organised groups of participants;

- Encourage the creation and development of formal organisations made up of members of the target group, capable of managing tailored services and of engaging directly in the process of change;
- Support the development of alliances of grass roots organisations that can share experience and expertise to pinpoint specific issues and propose innovative solutions.

Finally, transnational cooperation in the ESF would be assisted by the establishment of a European Learning Network on the theme of empowerment, as this would provide a considerable impetus to the development and adaptation of the tools and instruments developed under EQUAL and their use in the implementation of OPs and the measurement of OPs' outcomes. It would also promote staff training around empowerment issues and influence attitudes and cultures in organisations within the integration chain.

ANNEX: THE ANALYSIS OF ESF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES 2007 - 2013

	No of OPs		
	National	Regional	
Total 33	17	16	<p>The analysis is based on a sample of 33 OPs (17 national and 16 regional OPs) from 17 Member States. Its aim is to collect a critical mass of information in order to gain an initial overview of whether and to what extent Strategic Lessons that have emerged from the EQUAL Employability Strand can be related to the priority fields of action indicated in the 2007-2013 ESF OPs.</p> <p>Strategic Lessons address the following thematic issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Modernisation and strengthening of Employment (and other relevant) Services; b) Empowerment underpinning active inclusion; c) Combating Discrimination in the labour market; d) Improving access to education and employment for minority groups; e) Pathways to employment. <p>The sample includes only OPs that provide details on planned activities relating to one or several of these thematic issues (OPs that provide only general or no specific information are not included). The analysis is based on information available in EN, FR, DE and IT; OPs on which information was not accessible in any of these languages are not included.</p> <p><i>However, the results of the analysis illustrate that there is a critical mass of planned action in current OPs that can draw on EQUAL Strategic Lessons.</i></p>
Member States			
B	1		
BU	1		
CY	1		
D	1	6	
DK	1		
EE	1		
ES	1	5	
F	1		
IT	2	1	
HU	1		
LT	1		
LV	1		
NL	1		
PL	1		
RO	1		
SL	1		
UK	4	4	
No of MS	17		