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**BPI GROUP**

# *Synthesis of the Evaluation Reports of the EQUAL Programme in the EUR-15 Member States submitted to the Commission in 2007 and up to June 2008*

## Final Report

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## *Glossary*

**Thematic priorities**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Employability** | Facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into an open labour market | 1A |
| | Combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market | 1B |
| **Entrepreneurship** | Opening up the entrepreneurial process to all by providing the tools required for setting up in business and for the identification and exploitation of new possibilities for creating employment in urban and rural areas | 2C |
| | Strengthening the social economy (the third sector), in particular the services of interest to the community, with a focus on improving the quality of jobs | 2D |
| **Adaptability** | Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering from discrimination and inequality within the labour market | 3E |
| | Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information technology and other new technologies | 3F |
| **Equal Opportunities for women and men** | Reconciling family and professional life, as well as the reintegration of men and women who have left the labour market, by developing more flexible and effective forms of work organisation and support services | 4G |
| | Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation | 4H |
| **Asylum Seekers** | Member States must plan at least a minimum level of action aimed at asylum seekers, in line with the dimensions of problems in the Member States. | 5I |

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|---|---|
| **Horizontal mainstreaming** | Transferring lessons learnt to similar organisations. The transfer can be specific (e.g. a particular tool) or broad (e.g. contributing to a change of practice). |
| **Vertical mainstreaming** | Transferring lessons learnt and integration of all or part of results into policy and practice at the institutional, political, regulatory or administrative level. |

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**Round 1 and Round 2**

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|---|---|
| **Round 1** | The implementation of EQUAL has taken place through geographical or sector based Development Partnerships. A first call for proposals was organised in 2001 and led to the funding of 1.350 Development Partnerships in 15 Member States, as well as the Czech Republic and Hungary (which were as candidate countries financed via the PHARE Programme) |
| **Round 2** | A second call was launched in 2004 and led to 1.807 Development Partnerships in 25 Member States. |

**Abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| **CIP** | Community Initiative Programme: Programming document which describes the principal commitments of a Member State regarding the Community Initiative EQUAL, e.g. strategy, main actions, measures and financial plan.<br><br>Before adoption by the Commission the document undergoes a negotiation process. There were 17 EQUAL CIPs for the period 2000-04, given that Belgium and the UK each presented two CIPs. The total number of CIPs in the second Round is 27, with the addition of the 10 new Member States. |
| **DP** | Development Partnership |
| **ECDB** | EQUAL Common Data Base |
| **MA** | Managing Authority |
| **NSS/RSS** | National Support Structure/Regional Support Structure |
| **NTN** | National Thematic Network |

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## *Executive summary*

## Introduction

The EQUAL Initiative is part of the EU strategy for more and better jobs and for ensuring access for all to the labour market. EQUAL is implemented within the framework of the Structural Funds and more specifically through the European Social Fund. Since 2001, EQUAL has been testing and promoting new ways of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities related to the labour market. To achieve this, EQUAL operates in (nine) thematic fields related to employability (2 fields), entrepreneurship (2), adaptability (2), equal opportunities (2) and asylum seekers (1).

EQUAL has been implemented in and between Member States up until 2008. Implementation has taken place through geographical or sector-based projects, i.e. Development Partnerships (DPs), guided by five key principles, i.e. partnership, empowerment, transnationality, innovation and mainstreaming. DPs are required to follow a horizontal approach for equal opportunities. Two calls for proposals for EQUAL projects in the Member States have been launched; the first in 2001, the second in 2004. As a result a total of about 3.200 projects were funded in 25 Member States.

While the period foreseen by the regulations[1] for the evaluation had passed, evaluation work still continued. Evaluation activities in the EU-15 were carried out until the end of EQUAL activities in 2008, with a continuation in some Member States until mid 2009. In the EU-10, evaluation activities were still formally being carried out in 2006, 2007 and 2008 on the basis of standard terms of reference. To enhance the comparability of national evaluation results, a common evaluation approach was prepared by a working group composed of representatives of some Member States and of the European Commission[2].

In 2007, Bernard Brunhes International was commissioned by the EC to carry out a synthesis of EQUAL national evaluation results in EU-15 Member States. The main aim of this synthesis exercise is twofold: to allow better exploitation of the results of EQUAL in the preparation, management, monitoring and evaluation of future programmes, and to facilitate the post-evaluation of the programme.

This report is the second to be delivered within the framework of this contract[3]. It presents a final synthesis and covers the implementation of EQUAL in EU-15 mainly in the time period 2005-2008 (round 2). Some of the evaluation reports delivered cover the whole period of EQUAL programming, while others – due to a delay of the implementation of EQUAL in their country – reported on round 1 in 2006-2007. The main objective of this 2009 report is, thus, to synthesise the available findings in a structured way so as to have an EU overview as useful as possible.

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[1] Articles 40-43 of the Regulation (EC) 1260/1999 set out the requirements for evaluating the Community Initiative Programmes. Within this framework national mid-term evaluations were launched in 2001 by the Managing Authorities of the EU-15. National mid-term evaluation reports were submitted to the EC at the end of 2003. The EU-10 member states submitted their national mid-term evaluation reports by the end of 2005.

[2] European Commission, (2006), *Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation 2007-2008*, Brussels

[3] The first one was produced early 2008.

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# Approach and methodology

The national evaluation reports produced by the Member States in 2007-2008 were originally considered to be the main source of information for the synthesis, though if necessary, complementary telephone interviews with evaluators and/or MA/NSS (Managing Authority/National Support Structure) were planned to give additional explanations on the basis of the analysis of the reports. At the start of the synthesis exercise it was clear that not all Member States would produce an evaluation report. Furthermore, during the process it became apparent that only a limited number of evaluation reports would be delivered before the deadlines set respectively for the 2008 and for the 2009 synthesis and in a language manageable for the expert team. During the 2008 synthesis it appeared that the summaries delivered by some Member States in English did not provide the expert team with sufficient information to be able to give adequate responses to the questions of the analytical framework.

Therefore, an adapted approach to the synthesis was necessary:
– While the EQUAL Partnership meetings (June 2008 and December 2008) were originally scheduled as occasions to organise interviews with MA/NSS, in these meetings only a limited number of representatives from EU-15 countries participated[4].
– The telephone interviews, of which the original aim was to be complementary and clarifying, were now to be used in some cases as the main source of input.
– For the synthesis produced in 2008, as well as for this 2009 synthesis report, deadlines for receiving national evaluation reports had to be postponed a couple of times.

A first analysis revealed that the content of the materials received varied in approach, content and scope, and that the questions proposed by the European Commission in the common evaluation approach document were only used in a limited way by evaluators in the Member States. Finally the syntheses were based on the following sources:
– While for the 2008 synthesis report, information was gathered on the basis of 10/17 CIPs, for only five CIPs the full evaluation report was the basis for the analysis and input into the 2008 synthesis report.
– For the 2009 synthesis report, information was gathered on the basis of 12/17 CIPs. For eight CIPs the full evaluation report was the basis for the analysis.

This signifies that this synthesis has its limitations. Even if evaluation reports were not provided by all EQUAL CIPs (the reader should therefore consider some limitations in the conclusions and recommendations presented in the report), the recurrence of the noted evidence in the available reports and information sources allow the conclusions and recommendations derived from the analysis to be considered as relevant and useful for future programming.

The different reports that were fully screened for the 2008 and 2009 syntheses have an alternative approach, structure, content and scope and do not fully follow the common evaluation approach that was proposed:
– The time frame of the reports is different varying between the whole programming period and focusing on round 2.

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[4] From this perspective, the meeting organised in December 2008 was more fruitful, compared to the Partnership meeting in June 2008. During the December meeting different interviews could be organised with evaluators and MA/NSS, while this was not possible during the June 2008 meeting, because of a lack of participation of EU-15 Member State representative.

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– The approach of the reports is different whereby some evaluators focus on one of the EQUAL principles and others cover the different principles and themes.
– The reports tackle, to a varying degree, the issues put forward in the common evaluation approach.
– The evaluation questions and instruments used are not always clearly described and vary in depth and scope. Whereas the focus of data collection instruments is still on DPs (Development Partnerships) and MA/NSS (Managing Authorities/National Support Structures), in round 2 a wider range of stakeholders was involved in data gathering (including end-beneficiaries).

## Analytical framework

The analytical framework for this synthesis is based on the EU-wide evaluation report[5], while taking into account the increasing emphasis on implementation in the programme and projects. Furthermore, the common evaluation approach for 2007-2008 focuses on the quality of innovation, mainstreaming and intermediate impacts, which should also be reflected in national evaluation reports. The framework used for data collection and analysis for this final 2009 synthesis is built on the framework that guided the 2008 synthesis. Having said this, based on the previous experience of the expert team, some flexibility was necessary in order to take into account issues not covered by the checklist but reported on by the evaluators.

## Findings

### Management: monitoring and self-assessment

Management of the programme and projects was not part of the issues put forward in the common evaluation framework proposed by the EC, nor a priority in our analytical framework. Some evaluators did however report on changes and progress made in programme and project management from round 1 to round 2. Monitoring systems were in general in round 1 classified as 'highly bureaucratic' and 'with too much focus on financial data', while in round 2 they were simplified and improved. A shift can be recognized from a quantitative and administrative focus towards a more qualitative approach whereby a more interactive and personalised type of follow-up of projects was appreciated. Difficulties were reported in relation to combining data from different programmes (EQUAL and ESF as a whole) into one single monitoring system since this did not allow enough room to take specificities into account. More information on self-assessment of and by DPs became available in 2008. There was no formal requirement for self-assessment at DP level in EQUAL and the implementation of self-assessment instruments happened to a varying degree. Some DPs have genuinely invested in (self)evaluation, while for others it was an 'add-on' activity. Despite efforts made by Member States to promote self-assessment and to assist DPs in this activity, it did not become an instrument of quality management at project and programme level.

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[5] BBI, (2006), *EU-wide evaluation of the Community Initiative Equal 2000-2006. final report – Volume I*, in cooperation with ICAS Institute and Economix Research & Consulting, Paris. Besides the evaluation at project and national level, there are also evaluation activities carried out at European level. This evaluation was done by independent evaluators and is extracting the essential facts from the national evaluations. Furthermore, the independent evaluators carried out their own research on the basis of specific terms of reference.

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**Innovation**

Innovation is one of the key principles of EQUAL, which has been designed as a testing ground to develop and disseminate new ways of delivering employment policies and practices, and one of the main issues put forward in the common evaluation approach. It was reported on by a large majority of evaluators in their interim and final reports.

Different definitions and typologies have been used to classify innovation whereby the typology introduced in the previous Community Initiatives (goals, process, context) was often taken as a source of inspiration. In most definitions used, innovation refers to 'it must be new and it must be an important improvement compared to what was there before'. It is noteworthy that while social innovation[6] is at the core of EQUAL, not many evaluators reflected on it in an explicit way. Reporting on social innovation, its outputs and (eventually) outcomes has consequences since these are often much more difficult to grasp and to measure.

Despite the prevalence of incremental innovation (bringing about improvements to former practices) in EQUAL until 2005, innovation has been more radical within certain themes. This occurred mainly in domains where EQUAL was used as a strategic instrument to (further) explore specific fields of intervention, such as social economy and support to asylum seekers. It can be concluded that the type of innovation is often linked to the theme.

For identifying whether the activities developed by the projects within EQUAL could be labelled as innovations, various evaluators developed different approaches, from self-scoring methods of DPs to methods whereby the evaluators did the scoring themselves. Process-oriented innovations seem to be more predominant compared with other types of innovation. This finding is likely to be influenced by typologies and definitions used (concepts are not always used in the same way), as well as by the way that innovations are 'measured' by different evaluators and/or by DP actors. Nevertheless, the examples described by the evaluators make a case for the pre-dominance of process innovation, with the focused attention of DPs on testing new models, methods, instruments, etc.

An interesting approach was the linking of the developmental stage of innovation (conception, experimentation and implementation) to the themes. In some themes (like enterprise creation) the innovation was mainly focused on the earlier stages in the innovation cycle (conception and experimentation) while within other themes (like life-long learning) practices that were developed were implemented on a larger scale.

The development of innovation is linked both to factors related to the nature of the EQUAL structure (as networking) and to external factors. Thus, networking through

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[6] The concept of social innovation is explained in the reflection note on innovation drafted by the EQUAL Managing Authorities of the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the UK in June 2006. The mandate of this working group was to share the lessons learnt under EQUAL so far. Social innovation is defined as "changes in organisational values, structures and procedures, and in linkages between institutions" (p3). Social innovations are considered to be important motors for two dynamic processes supported by the Lisbon Strategy: modernization of the economy and reform of employment and social inclusion policies and actions.
EQUAL Managing Authorities of the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK, (2006), *The principle of innovation in the new ESF programmes (2007-2013). Report by and ad hoc working group of Member States on Innovation and Mainstreaming.*

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partnerships and national thematic networking have been recognised as a key principle of EQUAL. It played a major role in relation to innovation development. Its effects are positive in creating synergy and complementarity, thereby permitting the acceleration of innovation development, realised through e.g. adopting common approaches. Factors external to the programme which affect the development and uptake of innovation are e.g. the existing policy framework stimulating or hindering a specific innovation.

EQUAL has been above all an environment that allowed for the improvement of existing practices; the experimental laboratory function has not been exploited to its full potential. Innovation has been much more manifest in relation to some themes, compared to others, as prior policy and practice were not (fully) developed (e.g. reconciliation of work and family life in some Member States).

**Mainstreaming**

Mainstreaming is defined as a process enabling activities to impact on policies and practices. As the second core component of the EQUAL programme, and also one of its key principles, mainstreaming was a shared responsibility between the programme management of EQUAL and the DPs aiming at ensuring that the innovation developed and tested in EQUAL can reach a wider public. This process is composed of four steps[7]: (1) identification of good practice, (2) validation of successful innovations, (3) dissemination and finally (4) transfer. Mainstreaming can either be transferring lessons learnt to similar organisations/settings (horizontal) or transferring lessons learnt and integrating results into policies and practices (vertical). Various models of mainstreaming have been developed and implemented, inspired by the four steps presented above. Some Member States have translated the models of mainstreaming they had tested into a guide on mainstreaming of innovations.

Thematic activities are in general considered to be excellent mechanisms for *identifying good practices*. Thus, in the context of NTN, criteria were developed for the identification of successful innovations. Several Member States launched databases with inventories of good practices thereby also defining criteria to select good practices. While the *validation models* were introduced in the 2008 synthesis, these models have been further developed and tested. The Portuguese validation model in particular inspired other Member States. At the same time, evaluators and MA/NSS report that the process of validation should be given more attention in the mainstreaming process. It allows DPs to move beyond their own output and to revisit their output in terms of a transferable product.

For *dissemination* purposes a mix of instruments was used, ranging from passive tools (like brochures and newsletters) to more interactive approaches (e.g. conferences and workshops).

For transferring lessons, mainstreaming at the DP level was mainly guided by the dedicated plans developed, even if these plans were not always sufficiently clear. Thus, at this DP level, the partnerships played an important role in horizontal mainstreaming. Vertical mainstreaming was in general less part of DP mainstreaming plans. Contacts and networking with policy makers are identified as crucial for successful vertical mainstreaming. NTN played not only an important role in the identification of good practices, but also in the rest of the mainstreaming

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[7]    European Commission, (2005), *Making change possible. A practical guide to mainstreaming*, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal opportunities, Brussels

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process at project and programme level. Furthermore, complementary actions to the NTN were developed by some Member States (like e.g. strategic groups in Germany, the Mainstreaming Policy Group in Ireland).

Stimulating and hindering factors in relation to mainstreaming are summarised on the basis of evidence identified at DP and CIP levels. Factors of success are related to the innovation itself ("a good product sells itself"), the partnership that developed the innovation (e.g. previous experiences and expertise acquired through other European programmes and projects, the involvement of relevant partners, good use of HR available in the partnership), communication tools (mainstreaming plans, mix of tools) but also a positive climate for the innovation (supplementing policy and legislative gaps). Deficiencies in these aspects were considered to be hindering factors for mainstreaming.

## Gender mainstreaming

Equal opportunities as a goal and gender mainstreaming as a strategy were both of importance in EQUAL. While the role of cross-cutting issues on gender mainstreaming became more important, the specific encouragement of women to participate in projects became less important in round 2. Operating the gender mainstreaming strategy at DP level was one of the main difficulties faced in this respect. The concepts used in relation to equality and gender mainstreaming were not always used in a precise and concrete way, since the necessary knowledge was not always available within the project team. The input of external expertise was considered to be useful.

## Partnership, empowerment and transnational cooperation

Partnership is considered by the evaluators to be a key factor for the development of innovation. Evaluators present the main successes and challenges of working in partnerships. While a shared vision and a good set of targets are considered to be the basis of a viable and fruitful partnership, this is at the same time one of the biggest challenges.

Lessons learnt during round 1 were used to limit and overcome problems in round 2. For example, external support in order to enhance the cooperation between stakeholders involved in partnerships was considered to be useful and important to take into account in future programming. Besides, evaluators report that a majority of DPs estimates that cooperation will continue after EQUAL (e.g. BFRG[8] and Finnish evaluators report that this concerns about 80% of the DPs). It is however likely that cooperation will continue to shape itself largely according to funding opportunities.

Regarding empowerment, the laboratory function of EQUAL in relation to this implementation principle could have been further used. EQUAL was an exquisite opportunity for DP actors to involve end-beneficiaries, just because of its experimentation function. Nevertheless, progress was made from round 1 to round 2 through a more active participation of the final target group in the projects, either directly or indirectly.

On transnationality, views on the outcomes, results and added value are mixed. The benefits identified are mainly related to the development of a common

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[8]    BFRG is referred to as the CIP of the French and German speaking communities of Belgium.

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European conscience, the possibility of critical reflection on one's own work by mirroring it with others, the constitution of a wider support system for dissemination and mainstreaming and comparative analysis of experimental practices. The barriers and downsides are about operational and cultural differences, addressing a common objective from different viewpoints, and the integration of the transnational aspect at national or regional level. At the same time, progress was identified by the evaluators. While in round 1, transnational cooperation was mainly used for dissemination purposes, in round 2, the transnational setting led to actual innovation development.

## Results and (potential) impact at thematic level

Reporting on the results of national thematic activities is one approach that Member States used to present results and impacts of EQUAL, besides the reporting on results and impacts as such.

In the evaluation reports used for the 2008 synthesis, the thematic results presented were fragmented, reported as examples and not complete. This is still the case in the final evaluation reports: analyses of results and impacts at thematic level are still limited.

Evaluators reported on themes as such, varying from descriptions of projects to preliminary results and (potential) impacts. According to some evaluators and representatives from MA/NSS it is too early to measure impacts. It is only now that some impacts of round 1 are becoming visible.

In relation to **employability** different results and (potential) impacts have been identified in round 1 and round 2.

Policy impact
Results have been achieved at the level of specific target groups, to increase and/or improve their competencies, e.g. an improved professional orientation of prisoners or preventing the exclusion of young people. There is evidence of these results e.g. in enhanced skills of target groups and lower rates of recidivism for those ex-prisoners who participated in the proposed schemes.
Furthermore new models have been created for the integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market, like e.g. work-based learning models.

Institutional impact
Evaluators report that successes have been achieved with specific target groups as a result of institutional innovations. There is evidence that successful cooperation between strategic partners active in a specific domain improve the conditions of certain target groups in relation to the labour market (e.g. ex-offenders, homeless, etc.). Successful cooperations of different types can be identified: between different public bodies (in the case of the project on enhancing the employability of ex-prisoners in UK-NI), between public authorities and employers (e.g. in the case of the Irish project on stimulating labour market participation of older workers), between public authorities and NGOs (e.g. in the case of the Finnish projects on combating discrimination and racism in the workplace). The creation of structures to increase the employability of specific target groups is an important result of activities developed within this theme. The originally temporary socio-economic networks that were created by EQUAL led in some cases to more sustainable partnerships, like in examples where a follow-up of a project in round 1 was selected for round 2. Some evaluators report that results are preliminary, identified at the level of structures, rather than at the level of individuals or target groups.

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Within this theme much <u>awareness raising activity</u> has taken place e.g. addressing employers. The need was identified in different DPs to engage and work with employers to address issues of ageism, discrimination and/or inequalities in the work place. However, it is not clear what the actual changes have been which may have taken place in companies as a result.

<u>Organisational impact</u>
The actual impact of activities developed by DPs on organisations in the sense of changes in HR policies, career advancement, etc. was not reported by the evaluators. The analyses presented touch in general on the tools and approaches used vis-à-vis organisations to initiate changes, but do not comment on the changes that have been instigated as such.

In relation to **entrepreneurship** different results and (potential) impacts have been identified in round 1 and round 2.

<u>Policy impacts:</u>
In terms of policy impacts, under EQUAL progress has been made in relation to <u>social economy</u>. This has been an area of important new developments in Member States where the social economy lacked structuring or where there were few policy initiatives. Tools have been developed for social entrepreneurship (like books on how to start a social enterprise, management methods to run a social business, etc.) and for promoting social responsibility (like training sessions).
The results of the DPs have led in some cases to the development of a 'national' model of social entrepreneurship.

<u>Institutional impact:</u>
Within this theme different <u>partnerships</u> and <u>structures</u> have been developed to support enterprise creation by vulnerable groups, like ethnic women. These partnerships involved different stakeholders ranging from vocational training agencies to local enterprise boards. Setting up a business by vulnerable groups involves various dimensions that are grasped in a partnership construction. Therefore, the building of links between various stakeholders is considered to be innovative as such. Furthermore, the amount of <u>tools</u> developed for supporting new entrepreneurs is significant. These tools accompany the set up of a business through coaching, training, etc.

Institutional impact is also likely to happen at <u>local level</u>, in cases where different local agencies worked together to bring about improvement in the development and sustainability of businesses (like in County Longford in Ireland).

<u>Organisational impact:</u>
As a result of the implementation of activities in this theme some evaluators report the creation of new enterprises (91 reported in Greece and 97 reported in Finland).

In relation to **adaptability**, different results and (potential) impacts are reported:
Life-long learning has been an important issue on the policy agenda in some Member States. One of the main result areas is the use of <u>ICT</u> in life-long learning as reported by various evaluators, for e-learning and distance learning purposes.

At the level of <u>institutional impacts</u> structures have been created to implement life long learning at regional level (like e.g. in County Clare – Ireland). Other types of structures developed are networked businesses to improve adaptability to a changing environment.

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<u>Organisational impact</u> has been identified in cases of new organisation and production systems (as reported in Greece, but without further explanation).

While within this theme, not many noteworthy results are presented, the mainstreaming potential is estimated to be significant since funding sources for training and (life-long) learning are usually well developed. Some of the projects indeed continue in the new ESF programming period.

In relation to the theme of **<u>equal opportunities,</u>** the following results and (potential) impacts are reported:

<u>Policy impact</u>:
Impact on policies has been accomplished e.g. the set up of flexible system of child care in Luxembourg. Child care policies in other Member States were also influenced by EQUAL results.

<u>Institutional impact</u>:
At institutional level, impacts are located at the level of the development of flexible forms of work, like e.g. in Greece, but also networking of partners to improve or generalise child care provisions (as was the case in Luxembourg, but also in BFRG).

<u>Organisational impact</u>:
New female-owned businesses were created as a result of project activities on increasing opportunities for female entrepreneurship (Finland). Significant changes were enabled through the introduction of work-life balance policies and schemes in organisations.

In relation to **<u>asylum seekers</u>**, only a few projects were developed. However some results and (potential) impacts are identified, i.e. at the level of <u>individuals</u>, through e.g. language courses and other courses aimed at increasing skills and qualifications. Furthermore, other tools have been developed and implemented like counselling and coaching <u>systems</u> in which continuing education is supplemented with psychosocial assistance and social counselling (Germany). Also in Germany regional structures have been developed to give specialised (psychotherapeutic, legal, translation) help to traumatised persons.

At the level of <u>policies</u>, impacts are identified such as cooperation with local authorities to place asylum seekers in various types of positions in non-statutory welfare organisations.

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# Conclusions and recommendations

1. EQUAL has been a European initiative covering a number of themes, implemented in different ways, in various geographical areas and settings by a multitude of actors. The evaluation of EQUAL had to take this diversity into account. The European Commission stimulated a consistent evaluation approach for carrying out the evaluation to enhance the comparability of results by providing a common framework. However, the different evaluators involved in EQUAL adopted various approaches for the assessment, not always consistent between them and the reporting of their findings, taking into account their own national context and priorities.

   ► *For future EU programmes, a common framework for national evaluations is necessary to enhance comparability of results. It could consist of a European-wide part with themes obligatory for all Member States and a part taking into account the specificities and priorities of the Member States, with a consistent methodology to set-up similar devices and tools and to obtain comparable information.*

2. Whereas the focus in data gathering was, in round 2, still on DPs and MA/NSS, triangulation of these data with a wider set of users of results happened more often, e.g. in cases where end-beneficiaries were involved in the evaluation.

   ► *For future EU programmes it is recommended that for evaluation purposes the triangulation of data collected from DPs and MA/NSS with input from users and a wider set of policy makers is promoted as good practice at the level of projects and of programmes to make as much of an in-depth impact analysis as possible.*

3. The monitoring systems in EQUAL evolved from being detailed and with focus on financial data towards more simplified systems allowing a combination of content and financial data.

   ► *Time investment is needed in the set up of an appropriate monitoring system from the outset of a programme allowing a combination of tracking content and financial data. The indicators used for tracking data have to allow for an improvement of management at project and programme level. Interactive and personalised approaches for the follow-up of projects should be promoted whereby a balance is necessary between timeliness, relevance, user-friendliness and feasibility.*

4. Self-assessment tools and approaches were not used to their full potential by DPs. Despite efforts taken by Member States to promote self-assessment and to provide guidance (through events and guidelines), it did not become an instrument of integral quality management at project and programme level.

   ► *It is recommended to require self-assessment as part of integral quality management at project and programme level. Self-assessment tools should be accompanied by practical guidance and coaching at project level provided by the Managing Authority or National Support Structure, based on clear guidelines.*

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5. Social innovation, as complementary to technical innovation, is not greatly reflected on in an explicit way, while the fact that EQUAL is mainly about social innovation has certainly consequences for the reporting of results: outputs are often difficult to grasp or to measure.

   ► *It is recommended to gather theoretical reflections on core concepts, (like social innovation in the case of EQUAL), from the start of a programme in a guide for project promoters to understand better the processes during the life span of the programme and subsequent results.*

6. For identifying whether the activities developed by the projects within EQUAL could be labelled as innovations, different approaches were developed. It is interesting to note the approach of some evaluators to link the developmental stage of innovation (conception, experimentation or implementation) to the development of a theme. E.g. Reconciliation of work and family life was in some cases subject of implementation at a larger scale, while actions addressing asylum seekers were implemented as a pilot scheme or experiment.

   ► *The guidelines for the implementation of future programmes should refer to the good practice examples identified in EQUAL in relation to the identification and classification of innovations.*

7. Networking has been a major contributing factor to innovation, as well as National Thematic Networks. Through networking synergy and complementarity have been created thereby permitting the acceleration of innovation development.

   ► *It is recommended for future programmes promoting the development and dissemination of innovation to use networks and partnerships as key mechanisms for innovation; networks are important factors for innovation performance.*

8. Horizontal and vertical mainstreaming are complementary in the sense that lessons learnt are not only transferred to similar organisations, but are also integrated into policy and practice. While in round 1 horizontal mainstreaming had been more effective, in round 2 efforts have been made to alter this imbalance. This mainly happened through events bringing together different types and levels of stakeholders, thereby linking with policy makers (like through NTN functioning better in round 2).

   ► *It is recommended that future programmes make use of the models of good mainstreaming developed under EQUAL. These models go beyond EQUAL and are useful for all innovative projects looking for ways to mainstream successful practices.*

9. Different approaches are applied for the identification of good practices, whereby thematic activities are considered to be adequate mechanisms. At the same time evaluators question the mechanisms and criteria identified (e.g. the weak integration of sustainability as a criterion). Putting in place mechanisms for the identification of successful innovation is the first crucial step in the mainstreaming process.

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▶ *For future programmes it is recommended that rather than only the identification of adequate criteria to identify good practices, mechanisms or procedures are put forward. These procedures consist of the identification of good practice on the basis of a set of criteria (like degree of solution to a problem, innovative degree, proven results, transferability, link with regional/national policies, sustainability and cost-effectiveness), peer reviewing the 'good practice' and assessing it.*

10. While validation models were introduced in round 1, these models have been further developed and tested in round 2. Evaluators, however, report that more attention should have been paid to validation and to the streamlining of validation procedures with other activities in the mainstreaming strategy.

▶ *In future programmes, validation should be considered as an essential part of the mainstreaming process at project level and it should be part of the budget at project and programme level.*

11. For dissemination purposes a mix of instruments was used by the DPs, ranging from passive tools (like brochures, newsletters) to more interactive approaches (conferences, workshops).

▶ *It is recommended to continue implementing various instruments in the frame of the dissemination strategy.*

12. Having a sound mainstreaming plan with realistic objectives, clear 'messages' to transfer and a good mix of instruments is crucial for DPs. At the DP level the partnerships played an important role in achieving horizontal mainstreaming. Vertical mainstreaming was in general less part of DP mainstreaming plans. Contacts and networking with policy makers are crucial for successful vertical mainstreaming.

▶ *It is recommended to pay more attention to mainstreaming strategies at the developmental stage of programmes and projects oriented towards innovation. Mainstreaming strategies should involve different levels (national, regional). Programme actors, like Managing Authorities and National/Regional Support Structures should be trained to support project actors in implementing their mainstreaming plans.*

13. The operationalisation of a gender mainstreaming strategy at DP level was one of the difficulties faced by DPs.

▶ *Awareness-raising in relation to gender equality and gender mainstreaming has to continue in further programming. Sufficient (external) input of expertise into projects in this area should be safeguarded.*

14. The implementation of the partnership principle is considered to be one of the main successes of EQUAL and it has been crucial in the development of innovations. The empowerment principle, closely linked to the partnership principle, was experimented in DPs to a differing degree, varying from the involvement of intermediary organisations, to the direct involvement of end-beneficiaries.

▶ *Developmental support by Managing Authorities or National/Regional Support Structures to partnerships to increase their effectiveness is recommended for future programming.*

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15. Views on the added value and actual outcomes of transnationality are mixed. In round 1, transnational cooperation was mainly used for the exchange of ideas and for dissemination purposes, while in round 2 the transnational setting led to actual innovation development. Transnationality has an added value, but is not a universal applicable principle: it should be considered for what purposes and under which conditions transnationality has an added value

   ► *For future programmes it is recommended that transnational projects are planned as such from the outset, which means that sufficient resources (time and money) have to be allocated.*

16. Findings on results and impacts at thematic level are scattered and reported on in various deliverables produced over the life-cycle of EQUAL, like e.g. the NTN outputs and outputs of final conferences. Whereas it might be that the original objectives of DPs and the level of measures have not been achieved to their full extent, side effects have become visible and can be considered as important results. It is certain that many issues are now on the policy agenda thanks to EQUAL (like e.g. social economy, reconciliation issues).

   ► *It is recommended for the evaluation of future programmes that the timing should be taken into account (impacts can only be measured in the longer term) as well as the assessment approach (involving various stakeholders, especially end-beneficiaries).*

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# Introduction

The EQUAL Initiative is part of the EU strategy for more and better jobs and for ensuring access for all to the labour market. EQUAL is implemented in the framework of the Structural Funds and more specifically through the European Social Fund. Since 2001 EQUAL is testing and promoting new ways of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities related to the labour market. To achieve this, EQUAL operates in (nine) thematic fields related to employability (2 fields), entrepreneurship (2), adaptability (2), equal opportunities (2) and asylum seekers (1). EQUAL is being implemented in and between Member States up until 2008.

Implementation takes place through geographical or sector-based projects, i.e. Development Partnerships (DPs) and is guided by five key principles, i.e. partnership, empowerment, transnationality, innovation and mainstreaming. DPs are required to follow a horizontal approach for equal opportunities.

Two calls for proposals for EQUAL projects have taken place[9]:
– A first call for proposals was organised in 2001 and led to the funding of 1350 DPs in the EU-15 Member States. With the enlargement of the EU, EQUAL was opened to the 10 new Member States (total of 1371 projects in 25 Member States).
– A second call for proposals in 2004 led to the selection of 1439 DPs across 17 Community Initiative Programmes (CIPs) in EU-15 Member States (1807 projects in total in 25 Member States).
EQUAL continued until the end of 2008 in 27 different CIPs[10] in 25 Member States.

The evaluation of EQUAL is carried out in the framework of the European Social Fund regulation following  the guidelines given for all the Structural Funds[11] and takes place at three levels:

– At the Development Partnership level the results must be presented to the national Managing Authority (MA). The latter is in charge of the global analysis of the projects self-assessment.
– At the national level the evaluation is carried out by independent evaluators on the basis of a contract (established after a call for tender launched by the MA). The annual evaluation reports are transmitted to the EC and follow common specifications included in the national programmes.
– At the EU level the evaluation is also carried out by independent evaluators on the basis of a contract (established after a call for tender launched by the EC). This evaluation extracts the essential facts from the national evaluations and the evaluators carry out their own research on the basis of specific terms of reference.

After the period foreseen by the regulations for the evaluation was over, evaluation work went on in two ways:

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[9]   Figures based on the ECDB; consulted on 29.04.2009
[10]   Belgium has two CIPs, i.e. Wallonia and Flanders; the United Kingdom has also two CIPs, i.e. UK-Northern Ireland and UK-Great Britain.
[11]   Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds.

-   several evaluations were still formally being done in 2006, 2007 and 2008 on the basis of standard terms of reference, notably in the new Member States;
-   on the basis of a voluntary consensus, reflected in a guidance document (proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation 2007-2008) specifying the evaluation tasks that should ideally be partially or totally carried out by the EU 15 Member States until the end of the activities in 2008.

The EC planned to produce a synthesis of all national evaluation results at the end of the Community Initiative in 2008. The assumption was that this would add to the value of lessons learned and that it would allow for better exploitation of the results of EQUAL in the preparation, management, monitoring and evaluation of future programmes. Furthermore, the availability of evaluation results covering the whole period of EQUAL would facilitate the ex-post evaluation, to be carried out by the Commission in cooperation with Member States.

*Reading guide*
Chapter 1 presents the framework for the EQUAL evaluation, i.e. the context of the implementation of EQUAL in the Member States, the objective of this synthesis and the approach and methodology used. Furthermore in this section the limitations of the study are presented.

Chapter 2 presents the findings:

-   The paragraphs on management, focus on monitoring and self-assessment used in the Member States.
-   The paragraphs on innovation deal with typologies and approaches, the incidence and quality of innovation, hindering and stimulating factors and achievements.
-   Mainstreaming findings are presented in relation to mainstreaming at DP level, the role of National Thematic Networks (NTN) in mainstreaming and factors of success and hindering factors.
-   Some results are presented on gender mainstreaming as well as on partnership, empowerment and transnationality.
-   In the last paragraphs of this chapter results and (potential) impacts at thematic level are put forward.

The conclusions and recommendations are summarised in the concluding Chapter 3.

For each of these sections, the current findings are linked to the findings of the EU-wide final evaluation report in order to contextualise the current findings. It was only possible to assess progress to a limited degree, as the data on which this analysis is based is heterogeneous and not comprehensive.

# 1. Framework for the EQUAL evaluation

## *1.1. Context of the implementation of EQUAL in the Member States*

This synthesis exercise covers the implementation of EQUAL in the EU-15 Member States mainly in the time period 2005-2008 (round 2). Some of the evaluation reports delivered cover the whole period of EQUAL programming, while others – due to a delay of the implementation of EQUAL in their country – reported on round 1 in 2006-2007.

– For the first round of EQUAL, 1350 DPs were funded in the EU-15 Member States, whereby most DPs are located in Italy and France (see Annex 1). Over 1/3 of the DPs are related to employability and more specifically to (re)integration into the labour market.
– For the second round of EQUAL (starting in 2005) 1439 DPs were funded in the EU-15 Member States, whereby most DPs are located in Italy, France and Spain. Here again 1/3 of the DPs are related to employability and more specifically to (re)integration into the labour market (see Annex 2).

Table 1 presents an overview of DPs per theme (round 1 and round 2) in those Member States that delivered input for this report. The countries that did provide input represent about 64% of the budget of DPs in EU 15 Member States in round 1 and 2 together, representing 63% of the total budget (based on the situation of September 2007)[12].

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[12] http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/about/budget_en.cfm - consulted 30 March 2009

*Table 1: Overview of DPs per theme (round 1 and 2) for those Member States delivering input for this 2009 synthesis report*

| | 1A[13] | 1B | 2C | 2D | 3E | 3F | 4G | 4H | 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Member States that did produce an evaluation report before the postponed closing date in a language manageable for the expert team*** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Germany** | 93 | 14 | 17 | 17 | 25 | 29 | 13 | 14 | 17 | 239 |
| **Netherlands** | 72 | 5 | 27 | 13 | 41 | 10 | 17 | 19 | 9 | 213 |
| **BFRG** | 38 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 17 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 73 |
| **Belgium-Fl.[14]** | 19 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 52 |
| **Greece** | 26 | 9 | 15 | 15 | 11 | 13 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 104 |
| **Spain** | 120 | 20 | 62 | 0 | 0 | 62 | 53 | 69 | 2 | 388 |
| **UK-NI** | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 19 |
| **Finland** | 29 | 12 | 0 | 19 | 0 | 19 | 0 | 9 | 2 | 90 |
| ***Member States that did produce an evaluation report before the postponed closing date in a language not manageable for the expert team*** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Portugal** | 49 | 11 | 40 | 12 | 8 | 47 | 14 | 9 | 2 | 192 |
| *Member States that did <u>not</u> produce an evaluation report but that were willing to cooperate in the synthesis exercise* | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | 19 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 43 |
| **Italy** | 152 | 12 | 0 | 135 | 159 | 0 | 0 | 61 | 4 | 523 |
| **Luxembourg** | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| **Total** | **633** | **85** | **182** | **218** | **283** | **181** | **114** | **198** | **48** | **1942** |

As stated in the introduction, while the period foreseen by the regulations for evaluation had ended, evaluation work could still continue in the EU 15 Member States on a voluntary basis. The EC strongly encouraged the continuation of national evaluation in order to have evaluation results available for the whole implementation period. To add value to the lessons already learned and to better exploit the results of EQUAL in future programmes, it was decided to produce a synthesis of all national evaluation results at the end of EQUAL in 2008.

In order to enhance the comparability of national evaluation results and to increase meaningfulness of this synthesis, a proposal was developed for a common approach. The EQUAL Unit in cooperation with the Evaluation Unit of DG EMPL, together with a number of Managing Authorities, prepared this common evaluation approach proposal. The working group recommended that the evaluation 2007-2008 should be focused on:

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[13]   **1A** Employability - (Re-)integration to the labour market; **1B** Employability - Combating racism; **2C** Entrepreneurship - Business creation; **2D** Entrepreneurship - Social economy; **3E** Adaptability - Life long learning; **3F** Adaptability - Adaptation to change and NIT; **4G** Equal opportunities - Reconciling family and professional life; **4H** Equal opportunities - Reducing gender gaps and desegregation; **5** Asylum seekers

[14]   Belgium-Flanders is in the report referred to as Belgium-Fl.

– Innovation: whether or not there are new developments in relation to the state of the art in a specific area, sector or territory of policy interventions. The conditions of emergence of innovation should be considered as well as the quality of innovation.
– Mainstreaming: focusing on capturing the factors facilitating and hampering actual transfer and implementation of innovations.
– (intermediate) Impacts: given the nature of EQUAL as a laboratory for policy developments, it is difficult to assess final impacts; however intermediate impacts can be assessed. One of the recommendations in the EU-wide evaluation was to focus on policy impacts, institutional impacts and organisational impacts. This recommendation was integrated into this proposal.

Very specific questions were proposed in the common evaluation approach, as well as methodological routes[15].

## 1.2. Objective

The purpose of this study is to make a synthesis of EQUAL national evaluation reports produced in EU-15 Member States in de period 2007-2008 and this by delivering two reports:
– The first report was delivered in the beginning of 2008 (referred to as the 2008 synthesis report).
– This report is the second report produced and presents a final synthesis (referred to as the 2009 synthesis report).
The main objective of this report is to provide a final analytical synthesis based on the available national evaluation reports produced by the Member States in (end)2007-2008-2009, with the aim to identify key findings at EU level.

## 1.3. Approach and methodology

### 1.3.1. Original and adapted approach and methodology

*The main sources of information or 'input' for this synthesis report are the national evaluation reports produced by the Member States in 2007-2008-2009 in English, French, German, Dutch or Spanish  or a summary in one of these languages* of national evaluation reports if the report was only available in a language not mastered by the expert team.  The analysis of these reports could be facilitated if MA/NSS took up the questions asked by the EC in the common evaluation approach document.  Analysis of these reports by the expert team would be checked and triangulated with input coming from the Managing Authorities, National Support Structures and national evaluators. This would be done through face-to-face or telephone interviews.

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[15] European Commission, (2006), Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation 2007-2008, Brussels

Originally (e-mail based) questionnaires were planned to gather data from the Member States, complementary to the information available in the evaluation reports (like e.g. complementary information on implementation). However, in the process of producing the first synthesis report in 2008, it became clear that the responses on the questionnaires were very limited and additional (telephone or face-to-face) interviews had to be organised. For the 2009 synthesis, questionnaires were – as a consequence – not used anymore as a possible data gathering tool.

Furthermore, during the 2008 synthesis it appeared that the summaries delivered by some Member States in English did not provide the expert team with sufficient information to be able to give adequate responses to the questions of the analytical framework. Therefore, the analysis of this synthesis was complemented with telephone interviews. That was also the approach taken for the 2009 synthesis.

In parallel with the 2008 synthesis report, again for the 2009 synthesis report two combined methodological routes were followed:

a. For Member States (CIPs) for which the expert team received an evaluation report in a language manageable for the team or a synthesis in one of these languages.
b. For Member States (CIPs) for which the expert team did *not* receive an evaluation report or a summary or in a language not mastered by the expert team.

a. <u>Member States for which the expert team received an evaluation report or a summary in English, French, Dutch, Spanish or German</u>
  - If the expert team received a full report in English, French, Dutch, Spanish or German, this report provided the main source of information. Analysis was done on the basis of the analytical framework and if necessary, complementary face-to-face and telephone interviews, as well as e-mail contacts were organised with the Managing Authorities/National Support Structures and/or national evaluators on the basis of the analysis of the reports. The original plan was to use the EQUAL partnership meeting in June 2008 and the last EQUAL partnership meeting in December 2008 for this purpose.
  - If the expert team received a summary of the full evaluation report, additional interviews were held on the basis of the analysis of this synthesis.

  Different tools were developed for data gathering purposes:
  - *Structured checklists* for interviews with evaluators or MA/NSS of Member States that had delivered an evaluation report (respectively in 2007, 2008, 2009). These checklists were tailor-made for each of the interviews, since they were based on the analysis of evaluation reports. The purpose was to ask additional information if necessary.
  - *Structured checklists* for interviews with evaluators or MA/NSS of Member States that had delivered an evaluation report (respectively in 2007, 2008, 2009), however in a language not mastered by the expert team. The aim was to collect the necessary information that could not be retrieved from the summary. These checklists were tailor-made, based on the analysis of the summaries of the evaluation reports.

b. Member States for which the expert team did *not* receive an evaluation report nor a summary in English, French, Dutch, Spanish or German
  – Some Member States were not producing an evaluation report in 2007, 2008 and/or 2009 but were willing to cooperate in the synthesis project. These Member States were contacted for a telephone interview. A *structured checklist* was developed for interviews with MA/NSS of which the aim was to collect additional information on evaluation activities in their country that are useful for the synthesis report.
  – Other Member States were not producing an evaluation report in this period and were not interested in participation in this synthesis project. For these Member States no information on national evaluation results is used for the synthesis reports.

The original approach of having the national evaluation reports as the main sources of information to produce the synthesis reports had thus to be adapted during the process. The main problems that were encountered were:
- National evaluation reports were not delivered within the time boundaries set by the expert team and necessary to produce the synthesis reports within the time limits of the planning. For the synthesis produced in 2008 as well as for this 2009 synthesis report, deadlines for receiving national evaluation reports had to be postponed a couple of times.
- The summaries did not provide the information necessary to complete the template of the analytical framework. Therefore, additional interviews with evaluators and in some case with MA/NSS had to be scheduled.
- The content of the material received varied in approach, content and scope and the questions proposed by the European Commission in the common evaluation approach document were only used in a limited way by evaluators in the Member States.
- While the EQUAL Partnership meetings (June 2008 and December 2008) were originally scheduled as occasions to organise interviews with MA/NSS, in these meetings only a limited number of representatives from EU-15 countries participated[16].

In tables 2 and 3 an overview is given of the sources used as input for the 2008 and 2009 synthesis reports.

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[16] From this perspective, the meeting organised in December 2008 was more fruitful, compared to the Partnership meeting in June 2008. During the December meeting different interviews could be organised with evaluators and MA/NSS, while this was not possible during the June 2008 meeting, because of a lack of participation of EU-15 Member State representative.

*Table 2: Overview of sources used for the 2008 evaluation synthesis[17]*

| | Screening of evaluation report | Screening of synthesis of evaluation report | Interview with MA/NSS | Interview with evaluator |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Member States that did produce an evaluation report before the postponed closing date in a language manageable for the expert team* | | | | |
| Germany | x[18] | | x | |
| Netherlands | x | | x | |
| Luxembourg | x[19] | | x | |
| Belgium-FL | x | | | x[20] |
| Greece | x | | | x[21] |
| *Member States that did produce an evaluation report before the postponed closing date in a language not manageable for the expert team* | | | | |
| Finland[22] | | x | | x |
| Italy | | | | x |
| Portugal[23] | | | x | |
| *Member States that were to produce a report later than the postponed closing date* | | | | |
| Spain | | | | x[24] |
| *Member States that did not produce an evaluation report in 2006-2007 and were willing to cooperate in this analysis* | | | | |
| Ireland | | | x | |
| UK-NI | | | x | |

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[17] A complete list of reports analysed for the 2008 and 2009 syntheses can be found under annex 4.

[18] For Germany two reports were analysed.

[19] For Luxembourg two reports were analysed.

[20] Originally for Belgium-Fl. the MA/NSS was contacted, but the expert team was referred to the evaluator for complementary information.

[21] Greece delivered an evaluation report in June 2007, including all information up to December 2006. The official language of the report was Greek. The report had to be translated in English and this translation was only available by the 9th of October. The MA referred to the evaluator for further details.

[22] The Finnish evaluation report provided to the expert team is covering data of the first round of Equal. For the second round, a report covering action 1 was produced only in Finnish.

[23] In the case of Portugal, the evaluator was no longer available for an interview, therefore the telephone interview was done with a representative from the MA.

[24] This was only a contact by e-mail.

*Table 3: Overview of sources used for the 2009 evaluation synthesis*

| | Screening of evaluation report | Screening of summary of evaluation report | Interview with MA/NSS | Interview with evaluator[25] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Member States that did produce an evaluation report before the postponed closing date in a language manageable for the expert team* | | | | |
| Germany | x | | | x |
| Netherlands[26] | x | | | |
| BFRG | x | | | x |
| Belgium-FL | x | | x | |
| Greece | x | | | x |
| Spain | x | | x | |
| UK-NI | x | | | |
| Finland | x | | | x |
| *Member States that did produce an evaluation report before the postponed closing date in a language not manageable for the expert team* | | | | |
| Portugal[27] | | | x | |
| *Member States that did **not** produce an evaluation report and who were willing to cooperate in this analysis* | | | | |
| Italy | | | x | |
| Luxembourg | | | x | |
| Ireland | | | x | |

For the 2008 synthesis report, information was gathered on the basis of 10/17 CIPs. For five CIPs, the full evaluation report was the basis for the analysis and input into the 2008 synthesis report, whereas only the summaries were used for the other CIPs. For the 2009 synthesis report, information was gathered on the basis of 12/17 CIPs, of which eight CIPs provided the full evaluation report, and four only a summary. The other Member States did not produce a CIP and were also not prepared to participate in this synthesis exercise trough an interview.

*This means that the information gathered on the basis of further desk-research and interviews with MA/NSS and/or evaluators should be considered as being complementary. In the findings it is clearly indicated which source is used.*

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[25] For Germany and Finland the contacts with the evaluators (questions for clarification) were organised via mail.

[26] For the Netherlands, two reports were analysed.

[27] In the case of Portugal, the expert team received the evaluation report in Portuguese before the 31st of March 2009; however there was no summary in available in one of the languages mastered by the expert team.

### *1.3.2. Analytical framework: framework of data collection and analysis*

The analytical framework for this synthesis is built on the EU-wide evaluation report[28] and is set out in the 'Inception note'[29]. However, while the 2005 exercise focused mainly on appropriateness of strategies, management, and implementation systems, the expert team expected a shift in emphasis in the 2006-2007 national evaluation reports towards more reflection on thematic and key issues. This assumption is related to the life cycle of the programme: increased implementation should allow us to focus on thematic areas and key principles. Furthermore, the common evaluation approach for 2007-2008 focuses on the quality of innovation, mainstreaming and intermediate impacts, which should also be reflected in national evaluation reports[30]. This common evaluation approach for 2007-2008 was agreed by the working group on EQUAL evaluation for the period 2007-2008.
The framework used for data collection and analysis for this final 2009 synthesis is built on the framework that guided the 2008 synthesis. Though, based on our previous experience, flexibility was necessary in order to take into account issues not covered by the checklist but reported on by the evaluators.

*Table 4: Summary of framework for data collection and analysis*

| |
|---|
| **1. Scope, structure and methodology of evaluation and evaluation report**<br>  – Index of content of the report.<br>  – Evaluation questions addressed in the report.<br>  – Evaluation approaches and methodologies.<br>  – Strengths/weaknesses of the approach. |
| **2. Management focusing on:**<br>  – Monitoring systems used in relation to capturing results in the thematic areas, innovation, mainstreaming and impact.<br>  – Self-evaluation of DPs (instruments, results, use of results, guidance, etc.). |
| **3. Innovation:**<br>  – Concept.<br>  – Types of innovation.<br>  – Incidence of innovation.<br>  – Implementation of innovation/quality of innovation.<br>  – Results so far. |

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[28] Bernard Brunhes International, (2006), *EU-wide evaluation of the Community Initiative Equal 2000-2006. final report – Volume I,* in cooperation with ICAS Institute and Economix Research & Consulting, Paris

[29] Bernard Brunhes International, (2007), *Inception note. Synthesis of the Evaluation Reports of the Equal Programmes in the EUR-15 Member States submitted to the Commission in 2007 and up to June 2008*, Brussels

[30] Tender Specifications and Monitoring. Tender No. VT/2006/063 of 27/11/2006 and Proposal for a common approach in EQUAL evaluation 2007-2008

**4. Mainstreaming:**
– Concept.
– Mainstreaming strategies.
– Mainstreaming at the DP level.
– Role of NTN.
– Results so far.

**5. Good practice**
– Definition of good practice/criteria.
– Results so far.

**6. Themes and impact:**
– Impacts at the policy level.
– Impacts at the institutional level.
– Impacts at the organisational level.

### *1.3.3. Limitations and caution*

Only a limited number of reports could be analysed: While the first aim was to use the evaluation reports produced by the Member States as primary sources, only seven reports from five Member States (and five CIPs) could be used for the 2008 report. For the 2009 report, nine reports from eight Member States (and eight CIPs) could be used.

To set the context of this analysis, it is important to give some explanation on the evaluation reports delivered by the Member States. The different reports that were fully screened for this synthesis have a different approach, structure, content and scope and do not fully follow the common evaluation approach that was proposed. This was the case for the seven reports screened for the 2008 synthesis as well as for the nine reports screened for the 2009 synthesis:

– The *time frame of the reports* is different, as can be concluded from the tables 5a and 5b, varying from the total EQUAL programming period (e.g. Germany), to a more specific period in time (e.g. Finland). In table 5b an overview is given of the period covered by the evaluation reports taken into account for this 2009 synthesis. The final reports produced in 2007-2008 covered in some cases the whole programming period, while other Member States focused on round 2.

*Table 5a: Period covered by the evaluation reports analyse for the 2008 synthesis*

| | EQUAL Round 1 | | | | EQUAL Round 2 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
| ***Member States for which a full evaluation report was analysed as input for the 2008 synthesis*** | | | | | | |
| Germany report 2006 | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | |
| Germany report 2007 | | | | | ▓ | ▓ |
| Netherlands 2006 | | | | ▓ | ▓ | |
| Luxembourg report 2006 | | | ▓ | ▓ | | |
| Luxembourg report 2007 | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | |
| Belgium-Fl. 2007 | | | | | | ▓ |
| Greece 2007 | | | | | ▓ | |
| ***Member States for which a summary was analysed as input for the 2008 synthesis*** | | | | | | |
| Finland 2006 | | | | | ▓ | |
| Portugal 2006 | | | | | ▓ | |
| Italy[31] 2006 | | | | ▓ | | |

*Table 5b: Period covered by the evaluation reports analysed for the 2009 synthesis*

| | EQUAL Round 1 | | | EQUAL Round 2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
| BFRG 2007 | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | |
| Netherlands 2007-2008 | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | |
| Greece 2008 | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | |
| Spain 2008 | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | |
| Belgium-Fl. 2009 | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ |
| Germany 2008 | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | |
| UK-NI | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | |
| Finland 2007 | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | |

- Despite the common evaluation guidelines, evaluators and Member States chose *various perspectives* to approach their evaluation reports, varying from a focused report on one of the principles (e.g. the 2006 report from the Netherlands is focusing on mainstreaming; the 2006 report from Germany is also focusing on mainstreaming), to an update of an interim report (e.g. Belgium-Fl. 2007) or a focus on a specific theme (e.g. local development and immigrants as two themes

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[31] The expert team received 3 reports from Italy. One report, published in 2006 was about Action 3 – Round 1. Data for this report was gathered during 2005 and 2006. The other reports, published later in 2006 are thematic reports for which the data collection took place in the first half of 2006.

tackled in the reports from Italy in 2006). This was also the case for the final evaluation reports, like e.g. de Dutch final report on mainstreaming.

During telephone interviews with MA/NSS it was clarified that in some Member States deliberate choices were made to focus on one specific angle in a specific evaluation report. In Germany for example, the EQUAL evaluation reports produced paid each particular attention to a specific issue (like e.g. innovation, mainstreaming), except the final report that gave a more synthetic overview. The opinion of the Dutch representative of the MA/NSS is that previous attempts to assess intermediate impacts failed and therefore the choice was made to focus on mainstreaming as an issue where progress has been made. The Portuguese representative of the MA declared that the report on mainstreaming published in 2006 was a logical follow-up of the previous evaluation report. The 2006 report was about Action 3 – Round 1, of which data could not be included in the final Round 1 report published in 2005 because of delays in implementation.

– Most of the reports tackled to a varying extent the *issues* put forward in the common evaluation approach as can be seen in tables 6a and 6b.

*Table 6a: Common evaluation approach issues tackled in evaluation reports analysed for the 2008 synthesis*

| | Time frame of report | Innovation | Mainstreaming | Impacts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Member States for which a full evaluation report was analysed as input for the 2008 synthesis* | | | | |
| **Germany** | 2002-2005 Published in 2006 | x[32] | x | X |
| | 2006 Published in 2007 | x | x | X |
| **Netherlands** | 2005-2006 Published in 2006 | x | x | - |
| **Luxembourg** | 2001-2006 Published in 2006 | x | x | X |
| | 2001-2006 Published in 2007 | x | x | X |
| **Belgium-Fl.** | April-May 2007 Published in 2007 | - | - | - |
| **Greece** | 2006-2007 Published in 2007 | x | x | (x)[33] |

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[32] The evaluators do report results, however in relation to the entire programming period of Equal and not specifically making a distinction between Round 1 and Round 2.

[33] Some indications are given about intermediate impact results, however, the evaluators themselves refer to the 2008 report for more extensive impact findings.

| Member States for which a summary was analysed as input for the 2008 synthesis | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Finland** | 2005-2006 Published in 2006 | x | - | X |
| **Portugal** | 2005-2006 Published in 2006 | x | x | X |
| **Italy** | 2005-2006 Published in 2006 | - | x | - |
| | 2006 Both published in 2006 | x | - | - |

*Table 6b: Common evaluation approach issues tackled in evaluation reports analysed for the 2009 synthesis*

| | Time frame of report | Innovation | Mainstreaming | Impacts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BFRG** | 2004-2006 Published in 2007 | x | x | X |
| **Netherlands** | 2005-2007 Published in 2007 | x | x | |
| | 2007 Published in 2008 | | x | |
| **Greece** | 2005-2007 Published in 2008 | x | x | X |
| **Spain** | 2005-2007 Published in 2008 | x | x | X |
| **Belgium-Fl.** | 2002-2008 Published in 2009 | x | x | X |
| **Germany** | 2002-2007 Published in 2008 | x | x | X |
| **UK-NI** | 2000-2006 Published in 2009 | x | x | X |
| **Finland** | 2006-2007 Published in 2007 | | x | X |

- The *evaluation questions* asked by each of the evaluation teams are not always clearly presented in the reports. The proposed evaluation questions in the common evaluation framework used as an inspiration by evaluators, however, were not fully used as such.

- The *evaluation instruments* used are not always described in detail in the reports. In the evaluation reports produced by the Member States in 2006-2007 and used as input for the 2008 synthesis, the evaluators present a rich variety of instruments used to gather data. In 6/10 Member States interviews were organised with DPs, in 5/10 Member States interviews were held with MA/NSS. Also NTN were involved in the evaluation in different ways (interviews, analysis of reports, participation in NTN meetings). One group almost absent as a stakeholder in the evaluation reports used as input for the evaluations synthesis 2008 were the beneficiaries. This changed to some extent in the reports used for this 2009 synthesis.

In the evaluation reports used for the 2009 synthesis, various evaluators report on ways beneficiaries have been involved in evaluation (e.g. Greece and Ireland). In table 7 an overview is given of the main data gathering tools used by the evaluators for the reports used as the basis for the 2009 evaluation synthesis. In this table 7 an overview is given of the number of Member States using specific data gathering tools in relation to a specific stakeholder group. Evaluators used always a variety of data gathering tools.

*Table 7: Number of Member States using specific data gathering tools for evaluation purposes in relation to a specific stakeholder group (N=8) [34].*

| | DPs | NTN | MA/NSS – policy actors | Beneficiaries |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Survey | 6 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Interviews (individual or group or project visits) | 4 | 2 | 6 | 1 |
| Analysis of reports produced by stakeholder. | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Secondary data analysis related to stakeholder (e.g. analysis of monitoring data) | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Participation in meetings | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Case-studies | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Complementary documentary analysis | 5 | | | |

*This table 7 is based on evaluation reports used as input for this 2009 synthesis.*

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[34] This does not exclude that not other instruments were used during the evaluation processes; however, the instruments in the table are mentioned in the evaluation reports.

# 2. Findings

## *2.1. Management: monitoring and self-assessment*

While the management of the programme and of projects was not one of the issues put forward in the common evaluation framework proposed by the EC, it was reported on by some of the evaluators in their final report. Some aspects that were reflected upon were:

– *Selection of projects*: Reporting on the selection of projects was done in two final reports (BFRG and Belgium-Fl.), whereby in one case an improvement from round 1 to round 2 was concluded. In BFRG in round 1 14/37 projects were the result of merging of two or more initial partnerships. This forced merging process was not always perceived in a positive way by all DPs. While some have benefitted from this 'merging', other initial DPs did not perceive the added value of it and estimated their objectives/methodologies far too different for productive merging. One of the strong recommendations for the second round (which was respected), was to avoid as much as possible these imposed fusions.
In the case of Belgium-FL. a description of the procedures followed and the resulting selection of projects.

– *The monitoring system*: Monitoring systems used by Member States evolved throughout the life-cycle of EQUAL. While in round 1 they were classified as 'highly bureaucratic' and ' with too much focus on financial data', in round 2, monitoring systems were simplified and improved. For example in Greece where the management load was reduced by e.g. avoiding gradual input of projects for Actions II and III, requiring successive amendments to the system. Improvements are explained during telephone interviews with MA/NSS as further development of the monitoring of content data and linking this to financial data (like happened in Germany and Luxembourg for round 2). In the final reports, evaluators present findings on changes in the monitoring systems and instruments used (e.g. BFRG, Belgium-Fl., Greece and Finland):

  • The monitoring project visits procedure was operational in Belgium-Fl. since 2004 and further improved as a result of the interim evaluation in 2006, also in view of the new programming period 2007-2013.
  • The interactive and personalised type of follow-up of projects in BFRG was considered to be very satisfactory for the projects and was recommended to be pursued for the new programming period.
  • With the introduction of the monitoring system EQUAL II Online, it became possible in Germany to build up a digital system which improved the transparency and consistency of monitoring.
  • In Greece projects were monitored via the Integrated Information System (IIS), however, according to the evaluators this system was not taking into account the specificities of EQUAL projects (sub-projects, successive actions, etc.). This IIS was more oriented towards monitoring infrastructure projects. Eventually this led to difficulties in relation to monitoring the implementation of progress of projects as well as monitoring payments and expenditures. This caused delays in cash flows and fund absorption.

Difficulties in combining data from different programmes in one single monitoring system were already reported on in the 2008 synthesis (like e.g. in Finland were the ESRA database combining ESF and EQUAL projects and provided by the Ministry of Labour did not take into account the specific EQUAL project related characteristics).

– *Self-assessment.* One of the components of the EQUAL evaluation system is self-assessment at the level of the DPs. There were no formal requirements for self-assessment at DP level in EQUAL. While in the 2008 synthesis one of the conclusions was that self-assessment was not well reported on by the evaluators, more information and data became available in the course of 2008. Evaluation at project level varied a lot; while some DPs have genuinely invested means in this, for others evaluation at DP level was an 'add-on' activity. Self-assessment guides were produced by different Member States (e.g. Portugal, Italy, Belgium-Fl.), and in some cases workshops were organised to explain the guides to the DPs (e.g. Germany and Portugal).

> Example Belgium-Fl.
> In Belgium-Fl. A model of self-assessment was developed on the basis of which project promoters and partnerships could determine the extent of excellent project management and implementation. The model was tested with and for EQUAL DPs. The final result of this self-assessment is a scorecard with an action plan. The model was delivered to all EQUAL promoters in round 2.

In general in the 2008 synthesis rather poor results were identified in terms of use of the guides in round 1 of EQUAL.

On the basis of interviews done in the framework of the 2009 synthesis with evaluators and MA/NSS and the analysis of the final evaluation reports, it can be said that not so much has changed. The Flemish evaluators report that 84% of the DPs is of the opinion that they use a self-assessment system allowing them to evaluate their project in a effective way. Though, during the interviews that the evaluators had with the DPs, they argued that for them the use of the self-assessment tool was not always clear (evaluation of each of the partners separately or evaluation of the whole partnership, etc.). Only in one final report, findings are reported based on the analysis of the self-evaluation reports of DPs (UK-NI). This findings are presented on a project basis. The evaluators themselves write that cross-comparisons are difficult as individual evaluations used different approaches in spite of guidance given to all DPs during induction sessions.

> From round 1 to round 2, several Member States improved their management instruments and monitoring systems and adopted a more qualitative approach. Thereby a shift is identified to some extent from the quantitative and administrative focus which had been found to prevail in round 1, to a more integrated approach of both quantitative and qualitative aspects. This finding is confirmed on the basis of the data analysis in the framework of this synthesis exercise. Interactive and personalised type of follow-up of projects (like e.g. Belgium-Fl. And BFRG) was considered to be very satisfactory for the projects.
> Self-assessment tools and approaches developed by the Member States were not used to their full potential. Despite efforts taken by the Member States to promote self-assessment through workshops and the development of self-assessment guides and models, it did not become an instrument of integral quality management at project and programme level.

## *2.2. Innovation*

Innovation is at the heart of EQUAL, which has been designed as a testing ground to develop and disseminate new ways of delivering employment policies and practices. Innovation is one of the key principles and one of the issues put forward in the common evaluation approach to be tackled by the Member States in their evaluation reporting in 2006-2007-2008.

Innovation was dealt with in six out of the seven reports used as the basis for the 2008 synthesis and in seven out of the nine reports used as the basis for this 2009 synthesis.

### *2.2.1. Typologies and approaches*

In the first round of the programme the typology proposed by the evaluators of the previous Community Initiatives was often taken up in the CIPs:

– Goal riented innovation: e.g. new target groups, new qualifications.
– Process innovation: e.g. new methods, new tools.
– Context related innovation: e.g. changing political and institutional structures.

Many evaluators tried to classify the innovation produced according to this typology. However, over time it became clear that rather than 'types' of innovation, goals, processes and context, 'areas' of innovation should be identified. This shift can be explained in two ways:

– It is sometimes quite difficult to define the area of innovation according to this typology, since innovations might have a more integrated character and/or
– The distinction between the three areas of innovation is rather arbitrary[35]. It is sometimes difficult to define the area of innovation according to this typology. For example new quality standards can be considered as a new management method (innovation in processes, but if they become institutionalised and taken up in a whole sector, they modify the context of action (context related innovation).

The evaluation reports used for the 2008 synthesis presented complementary typologies and classifications of innovation, all to a certain extent inspired by the typology originally proposed in round 1 of EQUAL.

> One of the <u>examples</u> is the Greek typology following the phases in the project life-cycle:
> – Content-idea innovation: relates to the initial planning stage
> – Target-setting innovation: relates to refining the strategic targets into operational targets and target groups.

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[35] BBI, (2006), *EU-wide evaluation of the Community Initiative Equal 2000-2006. final report – Volume I,* p87, in cooperation with ICAS Institute and Economix Research & Consulting, Paris

> – Action innovation supported by structure (e.g. networks) and process innovation (e.g. new approaches): relates to refining the targets into actions required to achieve objectives.
> – Product innovation: relates to the products following completion of the process referred to in this classification.

Some evaluators (e.g. Belgium-Fl., BFRG, Netherlands and UK-NI) continued to use the original typology in their evaluation. At the same time, the concepts are not used in the same way. While e.g. in BFRG process innovation refers to the development of new techniques, new models, new instruments, in Belgium-Fl. process innovation refers to the improvement or renewal of existing processes.

In the *definitions* used on innovation in the evaluation reports screened for the 2008 and 2009 synthesis, different components emerge:

– Innovation as renewal

> Innovation in the Dutch context:
> Through EQUAL innovations or 'renewals' in the labour market policy have to be accomplished. The required renewal can be process oriented (development of new instruments, methods and approaches), goal oriented (new objectives, target groups) or context oriented (structures and systems). These renewals might be complete new approaches or transferred elements that contribute to the effectiveness of policy processes[36].
>
> Innovation in UK-NI context:
> Equal was intended to test and promote new ways of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities faced by those groups most disadvantaged in the labour market[37].

– Innovation about improvement compared to the existing situation. This improvement is in the German reports e.g. operationalised as having a 'higher problem solving capacity, a higher degree of reaching objectives and a higher utility for target groups, compared to existing standards and routines'.

> Innovation in Greek context:
> Innovation could be viewed as converting an idea into an exploitable product or service, functional production or dissemination method, new or improved method for providing a social service (process innovation). Innovation could also be viewed as a new or improved product, tool or methodology, structures and infrastructure, a service which is successively disseminated to the market and so on (product innovation)[38].

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[36] De Klaver, P.M., and D.H., Grijpstra, (2006), *Monitoronderzoek Mainstreaming EQUAL 2. Tussenmeting 2006.* Research voor Beleid, Zoetermeer voor het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid

[37] *Synthesis of evaluation findings: The European EQUAL Community Initiative Programme for Northern-Ireland 2000-2006*

[38] TEC Consulting S.A. & Planning Group Ltd, (2007), *2nd Evaluation Report – Round 2 of the EQUAL Community Initiative – Evaluation of Action 2*, Athens

> Innovation in Luxembourg context:
> Innovation has to lead to an improvement of an existing practice by presenting a new facet of the project in relation to the national or European context, the target group, procedures or methods/tools[39].

While *social innovation* is at the core of EQUAL, only the German reports refer explicitly to this concept. A 'tour de table' through Europe shows that the concept is not defined in a uniform way, though the realization of alternative approaches or practices to achieve social and political goals is important[40]. The German evaluators state that social innovation is more difficult to understand, compared to technological innovation. Social innovation is often considered as a theoretical construct, since the outputs are often difficult to grasp (e.g. concepts, ideas, etc.) or to 'measure', this in contrary to outputs of technical innovations. The absence of an objective point of reference is an important feature of social innovation compared to technical innovation where these reference points or indicators exist (e.g. increased speed, or increased capacity, etc.). As was already stated in the reflection note on innovation,[41] 'the full potential of technological innovation cannot be exploited if these are not accompanied by social innovations'.

In the different reports, results on innovation are presented, and during the telephone interviews, the informants give examples of current outcomes. Findings are categorised as follows[42]:

– The incidence and scope of innovation: has there been innovation (incidence) and does it concern goals, processes, context or other areas (scope)?
– The intensity of innovation: how is the innovation developed?
– The quality of innovation: what does the innovation look like? What is its relevance, added value, etc.?
– The factors influencing innovation.

Not all evaluators report on each of these aspects and as a consequence, the findings reported are not equally distributed over the different paragraphs.

### 2.2.2. Incidence and scope of innovation

In different final evaluation deliverables, evaluators report on research done to identify whether innovation had occurred, and if so, what kind of innovation (scope). Various approaches were used by the evaluators, ranging from scoring DPs by the evaluators to the analysis of self-scoring tools filled in by DP actors.

- The Greek evaluators adopted a scoring method whereby the incidence of innovation (number of innovative elements) and the intensity of innovation (innovation by creation or by adaptation) were quantified by theme. This assessment was done for different elements: contents, goals, structures,

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[39] Accord International s.a., (2006), Evaluation de la mise en œuvre des interventions du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg portant sur le PIC EQUAL 2001-2006 du Fonds social européen. Rapport d'étape 2006, Luxembourg

[40] Equal Managing Authorities of Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and GB, (2006), *The principle of Innovation in the new ESF programmes (2007-2013). A framework for programming*, Brussels

[41] "Proposal for a framework for programming innovation in the next generation of Equal programmes". Screened in the framework of the EU-wide evaluation final report.

[42] Based on the assessment of innovation made in the framework of the EU-wide evaluation of EQUAL. BBI, (2006), *EU-wide evaluation of the Community Initiative Equal 2000-2006. final report – Volume I*, in cooperation with ICAS Institute and Economix Research & Consulting, Paris.

processes, actions and products of the DPs, mainly on the basis of the review of DP work plans and an assessment of the DP evaluators. If the practice assessed fits the criterion, a score '1' is given; if not '0' is scored. All the rates are added per measure and divided by the number of projects per measure. The mapping of innovation in this way reveals that at the Programme level there is less innovation overall in Round 2[43]. The evaluator concludes that in a majority of cases innovation arises from transfer and is not 'new' as such. This is believed to occur since innovation appears to be trapped in practices, structures, actions and processes from round 1. Many partners and coordinators in round 2 also participated in round 1. Innovative elements which appeared in round 1 have been carried forward to round 2 and have developed or have been completed. In the final evaluation report it is concluded that the measure on asylum seekers presents the highest innovation rate (0,54), followed by the measure on combating racism and xenophobia in relation to the labour market) (0,35) and the measure on encouraging desegregation (0,33). The other measures present similar low innovation levels. (between 0,17 and 0,27). DPs usually present elements of their projects as innovative, while the evaluator states that these elements have a rather 'modernistic character'[44] than being substantially innovative. In terms of the typology developed by the evaluators to catalogue innovation, product innovation is most occurring (46%), followed by structure innovation (35%).

- For the analysis of the incidence of innovation the BFRG evaluators have used the DPs final reports as well as interviews with a selection of DPs. The conclude that in the framework of EQUAL innovation practices are mainly concentrated on processes (new techniques, new instruments, new models), than on the context (new systems, networks/partnerships, new regulation) and than on objectives (new domains, new target groups). This was already one of their findings of the mid-term evaluation.

- In Belgium-Fl. DP promoters were asked in round 2 to typify the kind of innovation they developed. 21/25 respondents classified their innovation as a process innovation (focusing on improvement of existing processes); 15/25 identified it as goal-oriented innovation (focusing on new objectives to be achieved) and 15/25 as context related innovation (changing the political and institutional context).

- In the final evaluation report of Spain the results are presented of a survey sent to DPs. 131/143 DPs (92%) declared that they had developed innovations in the framework of their project. The evaluators developed a typology along which the DP had to classify the innovation in their project:
  - 85/131 DPs (65%) were of the opinion that their innovation could be typified as 'awareness of the changing environment'. This means that the organisation is aware of the changes in the environment that make the practice necessary: the organisation formalised the problem to which the innovation constitutes an adaptive answer. There is a recorded (document-wise) formulation of this and of the innovative contributions of this practice.
  - 70/131 DPs (53%) identified 'newness of the practice' as element of innovation. The practice is a new form of non-profit services in the domains

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[43] While this method is merits further exploration, its weakness is that it is based on a count of individual innovations and that the integrated character of innovation is lost.

[44] Modernistic referring to projects that 'update' existing tools, practices, etc. to the current situation, thereby referring to incremental innovation.

of insertion in the labour market, promotion of entrepreneurship, adaptability and gender-equality in the labour market, taking into account the operational context of the organisation that is managing the action.

- 42/131 DPs (32%) classified the innovation in their project under 'results': the practice led to a reorganisation of forms to satisfy the needs among populations that are affected by problems of insertion into the labour market, adaptability and gender-equality in the labour market.
- Only 8/131 DPs linked the innovation in their project to 'reflexivity of the process'. The practice is the product of an internal process and the formal evaluation of its efficacy so to respond to the changes in the environment that made the practice necessary.

It is clearly stated that the projects in which the innovative element is to be found in the "results" are mainly to be situated under axis 1 ("employability"), more specifically under thematic area 1.2 ("fighting racism and xenophobia"). The projects under axis 2 ("promote the entrepreneurial spirit") are in most cases linked to the elements of innovation "newness of the practice" and "awareness of changes in the environment".

– The UK-NI evaluator reports that DPs of round 2 have mainly focused on process innovation (testing new models/methods) and goal-oriented innovation (implementing new programmes for particular target groups), rather than context oriented innovation (seeking to change wider contextual conditions).

Process oriented innovations seem to be more predominant compared with other types of innovation. Though, this finding is likely to be influenced by typologies and definitions used, as well as by the way that innovations are 'measured'. It is probable that DPs measure the innovation developed within their own project in a different way and against a different reference framework than when evaluators not directly involved in the project do the same exercise. Furthermore, as explained earlier, the definitions used by the different evaluators of the concepts do not always correspond.

Nevertheless these observations, the examples described by the evaluators make a case for the pre-dominance of process innovation, with the focused attention of DPs on testing new models, methods, instruments (e.g. Germany, UK-NI, BFRG, Belgium-Fl).

### 2.2.3. Intensity of innovation: incremental or radical innovation

The expert team already reported in the final version of the EU-wide evaluation that despite the prevalence of incremental innovation (bringing about improvements of former practices) in EQUAL until 2005, in some Member States innovation has been more radical within certain themes. This occurred mainly in domains where EQUAL was used as a strategic instrument to (further) explore specific fields of intervention, such as social economy and support to asylum seekers. This finding is amongst others confirmed in the German and Greek analyses. The German evaluators report in 2006 that the quality of innovation realised in the domain of social economy is high; almost half of the innovations has a high problem solving capacity[45]. At the time of reporting, the German evaluators also express the view that social economy receives little political attention. They point to the potential link between the high

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[45] On average, 20% of the innovations in Germany was identified as having a high problem solving capacity.

need for successful approaches in this domain (because the lack of existing ones) and the high quality of innovation developed in this thematic field in EQUAL.

The Greek evaluators report that social economy is a new domain of action for Greece. It has been a domain with a significant innovation degree as a result of EQUAL. With regard to the social enterprise funding tools established, it is estimated that these may have a wider direct application in cooperative and commercial banks, as this type of credit model is lacking in the current banking market in Greece.

The BFRG evaluators argue in their final report that the degree of innovation delivered by the DPs depends on the phase of development pre-existing to new practices supported by the intervention: conception, experimentation or implementation. They conclude that EQUAL has been above all an environment to improve existing practices and not so much an experimental laboratory milieu. A large part of the projects consist in prolonging an existing experimentation and possibly taking this a step further, or in developing tools to capitalise on existing practices. Along with the Greek evaluator, the BFRG evaluators state that round 2 projects that participated also in round 1, were mainly an extension of the round 1 project, herewith deepening the practice/tools developed and/or diffusing them on a larger scale. Projects for the first time introduced in round 2 developed much more innovative practices compared to projects continuing from round 1 to round 2. 53% of the BFRG projects participating in round 2, implemented and diffused innovative practices (projects that were a continuation of round 1). For 26% projects, round 2 contributed to conception, while only for 9% of the projects of round 2, experimentation was the core of their activities.
Furthermore, the phases of development of new practices are different according to the themes. 'Improving access to the labour market' is subject of implementation at a larger scale of innovative practices previously conceived. 'Enterprise creation' is focused on the conception and experimentation of new practices. 'Life-long learning' has developed practices at a larger scale and has experimented with new practices. 'Reconciliation of work and family life' was subject of implementation at a larger scale and actions addressing 'asylum seekers' implemented a pilot scheme.

This project life-cycle approach to innovation was also used by the Greek evaluators in their report (see paragraph 2.2.1).

### 2.2.4. Quality of innovation

In the final evaluation reports a minority of Member States report on this. Germany is one of them and reports on the quality of the innovation output. As stated earlier, the problem solving capacity is central to the notion of innovation in the German evaluation reports. DPs were asked to typify their innovation in terms of problem solving capacity: will this innovation be a better solution to the problem compared to existing practices? The problem solving capacity had to be rated by DPs on a scale from 1 (very little capacity) to 10 (very high capacity). DPs were asked to complement this quantitative dimension with a more qualitative explanation of the problem solving ability of the innovation under development. The evaluators conclude that on average 56% of the innovations developed have a high problem solving capacity and only 7% a low problem solving capacity. Innovations developed in relation to social economy and adaptability received the highest problem solving capacity score (respectively 65% and 64%). The lowest score was found in relation to entrepreneurship (41% of the innovation had a high problem solving capacity). In

further explaining this, the evaluators report that 82% of the innovations developed are more sustainable compared to the problem solving capacity that existed in that area and 55% is more user-friendly. 33% of the innovations developed solved a problem for the first time.

The Greek evaluators present the added value of innovation at programme level, whereby more specifically innovation based on networking is considered to be of high value. Public and private sector bodies, social partners and NGOs participate as equivalent members in DPs. These DPs as networks are on the one hand characterised by diversity (representing different needs of different partners) but at the same time, they develop joint innovative practices. Innovation based on networking is according to the Greek evaluators approached in a more complete way.

### 2.2.5. Hindering and stimulating factors

One of the assumptions and starting points of EQUAL is that the development of innovation can better succeed in a network setting, compared to other organisational forms. Different evaluators (e.g. Germany, Belgium-Fl., BFRG) report that networking through partnerships has been a major contributing factor to innovation, mainly in combining 'single' innovations and in disseminating and in transferring innovations to other contexts. Different kinds of organisations have been able to cooperate in developing outputs whereby a high level of synergy and complementarity was created. This has permitted to accelerate the development of innovative approaches.

Another characteristic element of the programme that influenced the development of innovation are the National Thematic Networks (NTN): they have played a crucial and positive role. The German evaluators report that 36% of the DPs in round 1 assessed the NTN as having a very positive influence on the development of innovation[46]. (see paragraph 5.4. on mainstreaming)
The Finnish evaluators report that thematic group activity has generally proven to be an operational model that brings added value. The benefits often mentioned by DPs in a survey (conducted in autumn 2007) were the distribution and comparison of information, experiences and best practices. Discussions and comparisons with other projects made it easier to identify that are worth further development.

Also in the Netherlands, NTN had an important role in the development of innovation, e.g. through the facilitation of exchange between the projects, project visits, etc.However, at the same time operating in networks and partnerships has also hindered the development of innovative practices, like difficulties in adopting a common methodology (see paragraph 5.6. on partnership).

Also factors external to the programme have influenced the development of innovation. Features mentioned in evaluation reports were e.g. the willingness of partners not involved in the partnership to cooperate (e.g. German reports), the interest in the issue by policy makers (e.g. German and Greek reports), the existing policy framework at local, regional or national level having a stimulating or just a hindering effect on innovation development (different evaluators during telephone interviews).

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[46]   There were no figures gathered in relation to this aspect for DPs participating in round 2.

### *2.2.6. Achievements*

Some evaluators report on achievements of innovation in relation to themes, while others present innovation results in terms of different kinds of outputs.

Innovation in relation to themes
In their final evaluation report, the UK-NI evaluators present some good examples of innovation emanating from EQUAL, like the WINS project focusing on redressing the gender balance in the employment of women in non-traditional sectors, such as plant and machine operatives.
The BFRG evaluators give in their 2007 report a detailed presentation of the analysis of innovative practices in relation to EQUAL themes:
–   Improvement of the access to the labour market of disadvantaged groups. Most of the DPs developed innovation in relation to this theme (17/34). The bulk of the innovation practices developed in relation to this theme by DPs focused on insertion into the labour market (55%); a minority of 6% was about the development of new partnerships to approach this theme.
–   Creation of enterprises by delivering the necessary tools and to identify new employment possibilities in rural and urban areas. 3/7 DPs related to this theme developed innovative practices in relation to the creation of enterprises; 3/7 in relation to the accompaniment of projects and 1 DP was involved in the creation of new employment opportunities.
–   Life-long learning: a large range of innovative practices have been developed under this theme in which 7 DPs were involved, varying from reconversion measures to distance training.
–   Reconciliation of work and family life: the only DP involved in this theme, developed a network of partners with the aim to improve and to generalise the children care facilities.
–   Awareness raising, accompaniment and training of asylum seekers: the DP involved in this theme focused on the social integration of asylum seekers through language courses. The innovative element in this was the development of a network between different associations in two provinces in Belgium.


Innovation in relation to outputs
The German evaluators present in their final report a typology of characteristics of innovative outputs:
–   the form of the product (how has the innovation been materialized). Most of the innovations (39%) are related to new profiles, like new combinations of theory and practice; new curricula, etc.. 21% of the innovations are related to instruments and tools, like new competence tracking tools and management tools. 15% of the innovations are related to changes to institutions, like the development of networks and new cooperation models. Only a minority of innovations has to do with the development of educational software (2%).
–   the subject area or the intervention domain, typified by the thematic domains in EQUAL, but further operationalised in specific interventions, like e.g. strengthening consulting capacity in specific domains like entrepreneurship, or measures in relation to career orientation and guidance.
–   the problem solving approach (basic consideration underlying the innovation). These approaches are characterized by having a reference point (to position a content, process or structure or method of tackling problems), showing a distance to status quo (a new development, a further development or the

transfer of existing solution to another context) and they intend to reach a finding (effect and functioning).

– the targeting of the innovative solution. The evaluators show that 59% of the innovations are targeting low-qualified people; 58% target migrants and 58% target youngsters. 8% of the innovation are targeting detainees.

In terms of the quantitative dimension of innovation, the German evaluators conclude that the targets have been achieved. Almost all planned innovations were realised:

– In round 1.850 innovations were realised; 730 were planned; 65 were abandoned and 185 were newly introduced during this period.

– In round 2.662 were realised, 570 were planned; 26 were abandoned and 118 were newly introduced during the specific period.

The Greek evaluators proclaim that the results of the development and implementation of innovations can only be evaluated upon completion of the programme; at the time of reporting (2008) this was not possible yet.

Innovation is at the heart of EQUAL and reported on by a large majority of evaluators in their interim and final reports. While for some evaluators innovation has been the core element of their work, for others it has been tackled as one of the key principles.

Different definitions and typologies have been used, whereby the typology proposed in the previous Community Initiatives (goal oriented, process and context innovation) was a source of inspiration. In most definitions used innovation refers to 'it must be new and it must be an improvement compared to what was there before'. At the same time innovation is time and context bound and changes over de life-time of a project.

Process type of innovations (like new techniques, new methods, new instruments) innovation have been predominant. Though, this finding is likely to be influenced by typologies and definitions used, as well as by the way that innovations are 'measured'. It is probable that DPs measure the innovation developed within their own project in a different way and against a different reference framework than when outside evaluators do the same exercise. However, on the basis of the analyses presented by the evaluators, there is sufficient evidence that process types of innovations have been predominant under EQUAL.

Despite the prevalence of incremental innovation (bringing about improvements of former practices) in EQUAL until 2005, in some Member States innovation has been more radical within certain themes. This occurred mainly in domains where EQUAL was used as a strategic instrument to (further) explore specific fields of intervention, such as social economy and support to asylum seekers. EQUAL has been successful in filling in existing policy gaps in this domain.

Interesting is the approach of some evaluators to link the developmental stage of innovation (conception, experimentation, implementation) to the theme. In some themes (like measures in relation to enterprise creation) the innovation was mainly focused on the earlier stages in the innovation cycle (conception and experimentation) while within other themes (like life-long learning) developed practices that were implemented on a larger scale.

Different factors have intervened with the development of innovation, some of these factors being linked to the nature of the programme (like networking); others

external to EQUAL (like the existing policy framework at local, regional, national level having a stimulating or a hindering effect on innovation development). Networking through partnerships and national thematic activities have been recognised as a key principle that played a major role in relation to innovation development. NTN played a positive role in creating synergy and complementarity and thereby permitting the acceleration of innovation development. One of the major downsides was adopting common approaches.

The evaluators do not present in general a systematic analysis of the achievements in relation to innovation; mainly the innovation processes as such are commented on. What can be concluded though is that EQUAL has been above all an environment that allowed for the improvement of existing practices and that the experimental laboratory function has not been exploited to its full optimum.

## 2.3. Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is the second core component of the EQUAL programme and also one of the key principles. It ensures that the innovation developed and tested in EQUAL can reach a wider public in order to maximise the learning. In the framework of the programme, a 'Practical guide to mainstreaming' was published in 2005[47]. In this guide mainstreaming is defined as "*a process which enables activities to impact on policy and practice. This process includes identifying lessons, clarifying the innovative element and approach that produced the results, their dissemination, validation and transfer. More specifically, mainstreaming also defines the phase of transfer and the way in which other actors take account of the results, approaches and key elements elaborated by one or more Development Partnerships (DPs)*".

### 2.3.1. Mainstreaming as a process

The mainstreaming process can be structured around the following four steps[48]:
– Innovation (DPs develop and test new ways to tackle inequality, discrimination and exclusion at work, and in access to work'. Mainstreaming cannot be de-coupled from the innovation.
– Validation (DPs and their networks, peers, stakeholders validate the innovative results).
– Dissemination (DPs and their networks, as well as key stakeholders, distil the lessons learned and communicate them to the relevant target audience through briefings, publications events).
– Transfer (DPs identify the lessons that can be transferred to a different or wider context and make them available to third parties influencing policies and practices).

Mainstreaming goes beyond dissemination; the core of mainstreaming is the transfer and eventual adoption of lessons learned. Dissemination is about sharing information and raising awareness of the work of DPs and results achieved. Mainstreaming refers to the transfer and implementation of these results in every

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[47] European Commission, (2005), *Making change possible. A practical guide to mainstreaming.* DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Brussels
[48] Ibidem

day policy and standard practice. EQUAL views mainstreaming as a necessary step towards successful innovation development.

Mainstreaming in EQUAL can be:
– Horizontal: transferring lessons learnt to similar organisations. The transfer can be specific (e.g. a particular tool) or broad (e.g. contributing to a change of practice).
– Vertical: transfer of lessons learnt and integration of all or part of results into policy and practice at the institutional, political, regulatory or administrative level.

Vertical and horizontal mainstreaming are considered to be complementary. The Dutch evaluators add transnational mainstreaming: transfer of successful innovation to another national context.

Mainstreaming in the Member States was under EQUAL a shared responsibility between the programme management and the DPs. Mainstreaming is part of Action 3 in EQUAL, i.e. thematic networking, dissemination and mainstreaming activities which are organised at the national level and linked to similar activities at the European level. It is one of the issues proposed by the common evaluation approach to be reported on by the Member States.

In the EU-wide evaluation of EQUAL three models of mainstreaming at national were identified that are still valid:
– In *Model 1*, horizontal mainstreaming and vertical mainstreaming are both under the responsibility of NTNs. National Thematic Networks are at the core of the mainstreaming strategy (like the Netherlands, Greece).
– In *Model 2*, horizontal mainstreaming is under the responsibility of NTNs and vertical mainstreaming is the responsibility of an ad-hoc Committee called 'Mainstreaming Committee' (BFRG), or 'Mainstreaming Policy Group' (Ireland)
– *Model 3* can be seen as a combination of the last two, and has only been adopted in the UK-NI.

Mainstreaming was reported on in six out of seven reports used for the 2008 synthesis and in all final evaluation reports that are used as input for this 2009 synthesis. The Dutch final report is exclusively dedicated to this key principle. In fact, mainstreaming has been an important aspect of (evaluation) research within EQUAL in the Netherlands. A guide for mainstreaming has been developed and published in 2008 based on monitoring research done in relation to mainstreaming in round 2 of EQUAL. The usage of this guide goes beyond EQUAL and addresses all innovative projects looking for ways to mainstream successful and transferable innovative practices.

In the earlier published evaluation reports, different models of mainstreaming were presented (e.g. by the German and Dutch evaluators) whereby the different stages are similar from the identification of an innovation with transfer potential to the dissemination of the innovation and finally to the actual uptake of the innovation in mainstream policies and practices. The model that was developed by the Dutch evaluators was further improved through testing and led to a guide on mainstreaming[49] .

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[49] Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, (2007), *"Verk(n)open" van innovaties. Handleiding voor mainstreaming van projectresultaten,* opgesteld op basis van een onderzoek gedaan door Research voor Beleid: Monitoringonderzoek mainstreaming EQUAL 2, Zoetermeer

### a. Identification of innovation and good practices

The logic behind EQUAL is the development of experimental activities, identification of good practices and the mainstreaming of these practices. In this sense good practices are mainly limited to project results, while good practice could also be identified in relation to programme strategies, structure and management (see recommendations in the framework of the EU-wide evaluation report[50]).

The identification of innovation that is successful is the first step in the mainstreaming process. Some evaluators (e.g. Finland) report that the competence related to processing good practices was somewhat deficient at the start of the projects. Not all evaluators comment on how good practices were identified and collected in their country. Different approaches are presented in relation to the identification of good practice, like thematic activities. These are in generally considered to be good mechanisms for identifying good practices.

> In the Dutch NTN on integration and labour market, for the selection of good practices a testing frame and related questionnaire were developed. The criteria are very similar to the criteria used in the NTN on reintegration (solution for an identified problem, innovative solution, results are proven/demonstrated, transferability, benefits are higher than costs, link with political/policy agenda and results/products are used by others). Main criteria were effectiveness (does the project or the approach contributes to the solution of the identified problem) and innovation (innovation related to knowledge, methods, competencies, organisations, processes and ICT). The other criteria were complementary to these two. In the NTN on integration and labour market, a 'buddy system' was developed coupling each NTN member to 1 or 2 projects in this domain. The NTN members visited 'their' project(s) on average 2 times during the course of the project. This 'buddy system' was an important instrument to get a good picture of the projects on the basis of which the selection of good practices was made.

The Finnish evaluator explained that good practices were collected by thematic groups. Since all projects were expected to be involved in the work of the thematic groups, this was the general procedure for the entire EQUAL programme in Finland. Some of the thematic groups turned the good practices collected from the projects into, e.g. a guide and descriptions of good practices can also be found in the final report on thematic activities, published by the Ministry of Labour. However, project coordinators expressed criticism about the process through which good practices were identified. The way that good practices were rated was taken at a too conceptual level for some project actors. At the same time, the same process allowed project actors to document their outputs, which should be considered as an added value.

In the Spanish report a list is presented with good practices though it is not clear how these were identified. Several Member States took the initiative to launch a data bank with good practices (e.g. Portugal, Greece, Italy).

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[50] BBI, (2006), *EU-wide evaluation of the Community Initiative Equal 2000-2006. Final report. Volume 3: Conclusions & Recommendations*, Paris

> In Italy, a database has been developed gathering good practice identified within ESF and EQUAL[51]. The development of the database is explained against the background of the implementation of the open method of coordination, and more specific 'mutual learning'. Mutual learning emphasises the important role played by the exchange of best practices and experiences. In this context, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in Italy developed a specific information tool on good practices implemented during the 2000-2006 programming period. The methodology adopted to create the catalogue is based on the following main features:
>
> – Involvement and active participation of the main stakeholders at central and local level and of the people responsible for the projects submitted for inclusion into the catalogue. The involvement of different actors in the identification and evaluation process, will influence the evaluation culture among authorities at central and local level.
> – A practice is considered 'good' not only in absolute terms but mainly on the basis of a comparison with the specific context of origin.
> – The submission form is divided into three parts: project identification data, project features (like background, activities, etc.) and attributes to qualify the project as a best practice. The eligibility attributes refer to efficacy, innovation character, adequacy of the implementation framework, potential for replication and transfer, sustainability in terms of time, vertical and horizontal mainstreaming capacity.
> – Each single practice is evaluated not only on the basis of the presence of the standard eligibility criteria to consider a project good, useful and with high replication potential, but also for the quality level distinguishing all the collected best practices. Each indicator in the third part of the form has a specific and different calculation value contributing to qualify the project as a best practice also on the basis of the project consistency with the strategic priorities established in 2007-2013 programming documentation.
> – 12,4% of the practices included in the catalogue are projects funded under EQUAL.

In Ireland the Ideas Bank has been developed, to host the wide range of practical tools, guidelines, research reports and studies developed by the 43 projects funded under the EQUAL Community Initiative in Ireland. Also in the Netherlands a product database has been developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

Some evaluators question the mechanisms that they have experienced for the identification of good practice. Of the procedures installed are not sound enough, other practices take over the process. These evaluators argue that often very active projects, good in liaising with the media are put forward as good practice. The Greek evaluator comments that criteria like sustainability and cost-effectiveness are vaguely taken into account when identifying good practices. Sound criteria and mechanisms to apply these criteria are necessary to identify good practices that have also a value after the end of a programme.

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[51] Marincioni, V., (et al), (Ed. Coordination), (2008), *ESF in Italy 2000-2006. A selection of best practices. Best practices to share*, Ministero del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale

### *b. Validation*

Validation refers to[52]:
– what works under what conditions, what does not, and why?
– what is the relevance, advantage and transfer potential of the innovative solution?
As such, it is an important part of the mainstreaming process.

In the 2008 synthesis not much could be reported on the process of validation, since the models and methods used were still in an early phase. These models and methods have been further developed and the results are presented in some final evaluation reports and/or are reported on during telephone interviews in 2008-2009:

– In Portugal a product validation model was developed within round 1 to assure and reinforce innovation and change in organisations and in systems[53]. This model has the form of a grid whereby dimensions of products, such as usefulness have to be given a score and evidence of that score has to be explained in a separate box. The scores are considered as a way to stimulate discussions amongst various actors as the representative from the MA explains. Peers, beneficiaries, experts and policy actors were brought together to discuss products of DPs. Suggestions are incorporated into the original product. This validation model is widely tested and evaluated. On the basis of this testing an improved version was made available for round 2.
The different dimensions for validation that are distinguished are:
   • Innovation: extent of the presence of new and distinctive features in the product.
   • Empowerment: extent to which the end beneficiaries of the product and users play a role in its design and extent to which its use will contribute to increasing the autonomy, integration and involvement of the target groups in the organisational and social contexts.
   • Suitability: respect of the product in relation to the culture, social and professional experience of the end beneficiaries and organisations and response to their integration and qualification difficulties and needs.
   • Usefulness: benefits and value as perceived by the end beneficiaries, which are demonstrable in terms of skills recognition, social value and/or personal autonomy.
   • Accessibility: proximity and familiarity of the users and end beneficiaries with the product's contents, supports and usage.
   • Equality: the product reinforces gender equality, respects multiculturalism, values the involvement and social responsibility of people and organisations and promotes inclusive situations and realities.
   • Transferability: ease and speed of product transfer and incorporation into other organisations and professionals.
For each of these dimensions a score had to be given and elements of proof have to be identified that justify the score awarded.

– During the telephone interview with the Flemish MA/NSS the importance of the validation of products was stressed. The model that was taken as an example was the Portuguese model that was adapted. The starting points are peer

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[52] European Commission, (2005), *Making change possible: a practical guide to mainstreaming*, Brussels
[53] Equal Managing Authority – Portugal, *Validation of Innovative Products - EQUAL , Lisbon*

reviews and expert input. No beneficiaries were involved also because of reasons of cost-effectiveness. The final evaluation report does not present recent findings on the use of the validation model.

– Also in BFRG the Portuguese model of validation was taken as a starting point. In round 1, round tables were organised with DPs for validation as well as a seminar gathering DPs, MAs of Member States and the EC. For round 2, validation sessions were organised with DPs whereby products were presented to a jury. Half of the DPs has identified a product to be validated. The evaluators report that the validation process has permitted DPs to go beyond the definition of their outputs; they revisited their output in terms of a transferable product ready for diffusion and transfer. However, the evaluators report also on the drawbacks of the validation process. The fact that only 16/34 DPs (47%) showed an interest in the validation process, was amongst others according to the evaluators linked to the lack of visibility of the impact of the exercise and to the fact that this was an extra task not calculated in the original budget of the project. Also the coordination with other activities situated in the mainstreaming strategy of DPs could be improved, according to the evaluators.

The EQUAL product validation model as developed in Portugal is recognised as best-practice. This model is an important step in establishing quality standards regarding new solutions which are intended to bring added value to practice and policy in the social domain and which are funded under EQUAL.

### c. Dissemination

In some of the evaluation reports, the dissemination mechanism and tools used by the DPs are presented. For the Flemish evaluators, dissemination is crucial within EQUAL, and especially within the thematic activities developed (disseminating expertise and knowledge amongst project promoters). They conclude on the basis of the interim evaluation in 2006, that dissemination is amongst others happening via the networks that arise from the thematic activities that were organised. More recent research (2008) shows that many DPs have disseminated their products through websites, via events like conferences and colloquia, publications in journals, newspapers and newsletters. These mechanism and tools used, overlap to a great extent with the instruments and actions used by DPs for dissemination purposes, presented by the Greek evaluators.
Factors contributing to a successful dissemination are according to the Flemish evaluators threefold:
– A diversified partnership bringing together partners that compose a new network for dissemination of products.
– Focus on the dissemination of the outputs, and not the pure marketing of organisations delivering these outputs.
– The development of a sound dissemination plan in the early stages of the project.

This sound dissemination plan, or rather the lack of it is also identified by the Finnish evaluators as one of the problems in relation to dissemination. Moreover, the Finnish evaluation revealed that DPs considered that they did not have enough resources to disseminate the results, whereby the evaluators state that it is often rather a question of allocating the budget in an adequate way, than having a lack of resources for one of more project activities. Furthermore, marketing seem to be one

of the main deficiencies in the area of dissemination. The evaluators refer in this context to the media's negative attitude towards EU project activity.

The MA/NSS of the Netherlands had put into place a model for a dissemination and mainstreaming plan, composed of five building blocks: strategy, target groups, messages, European message and activities and means. On the basis of interviews with DPs, the evaluators conclude that a majority of these plans are not the result of consultation with different partners within the project; the plan was in most cases developed and presented by the DP-leader or the partner responsible for dissemination and mainstreaming. Only in a minority of cases external (marketing) input has been used to complete the dissemination and mainstreaming plan.

### d. Transfer and integration into policies, structures and practices

Transfer is the last step in the mainstreaming process whereby lessons learnt are transmitted to a different or wider context. There are no specific results reported on transfer as such.

In the 2008 synthesis reference was made to the different concepts used to describe mainstreaming, whereby a majority of definitions contained the 'transfer' aspect:
– Rooting/anchoring of successful innovation in regular activities or in mainstream policy in the same or in another context (Netherlands 2006 and 2007).
– Transfer or multiplication of innovation whereby the result is a qualitative change which has become a routine. (Germany 2006 and 2007).
– A process that has to allow for innovation and good practices to have a better impact on policies and practices (Luxembourg 2006 and 2007).

While the final Spanish report is focusing on this last phase in the mainstreaming process, many of the results presented refer to dissemination, rather than to transfer. The evaluators conclude for example that the "transfer" results that most occur among the DPs are:
– Diffusion of activities and results among social and policy actors (79% of the DPs).
– Generalization of the implementation of good practices (73%).
– Creation of an atmosphere of open dialogue for cooperation (71%).
– Creation of thematic networks (23%).
These kind of activities are also used in a dissemination context as mentioned previously.

### 2.3.2. Mainstreaming at DP level

In most Member States DPs were expected to design and implement their own dissemination, networking and mainstreaming strategy in addition to their participation in NTNs. The Finnish evaluators report that not all the DPs had sufficiently clear plans for disseminating and mainstreaming results. This finding is also reported by the Flemish evaluators. However, they complement this statement by saying that this did not hamper DPs in their dissemination and mainstreaming activities.

In the Netherlands the mainstreaming strategies of the DPs are part of the dissemination and mainstreaming plan; one of the elements that is obligatory for EQUAL round 2 projects to be selected. The detail of these plans, as well as the way that these plans were designed, differs from DP to DP. In some cases the project applicant developed the plan on his/her own; in other cases the experiences of the applicant and other partners in the project is used in relation to other EQUAL or similar projects. In 2007 more external expertise is brought in by the DPs for mainstreaming. In each of the plans a critical time path is integrated which again the detail differs from DP to DP.

> <u>Case of the Netherlands (based on 2008 report)</u>: 93% of the Dutch DPs find mainstreaming (very) important. Not only because it is one of the conditions to be funded, but also because innovation without mainstreaming is useless. A majority of DPs target local government as the audience of their mainstreaming strategy (71%), as well as educational institutions (65%).
>
> DPs use a large range of instruments for mainstreaming. A majority used personal contacts (89%), websites (90%) and events (80%). Most of the DPs have reserved 5-10% of the total budget for mainstreaming. A few DPs exceed this (20-30% of the total budget). Many DPs eventually spend more money to mainstreaming than originally planned. Most of the work is related to cooperation and the creation of trust. This is often not calculated as a cost in budgets. In some cases, (ex) participants play a role in mainstreaming as ambassadors.
>
> While the mainstreaming activities in 2006 were mainly about dissemination, in 2007 the emphasis was more on lobbying activities.

The partnerships played an important role in horizontal mainstreaming. Without this part of the EQUAL structure, the dissemination and mainstreaming of innovative outputs would not have been possible to the same extent (see e.g. Flemish and German evaluators). The outputs and results of cooperation in networks is stronger perceived by policy actors compared to outputs of single organisations. The regional anchoring of networks played an important role in some Member States (e.g. Italy and Germany). Through one specific partner access to other organisations and institutions is opened up, which has a potential to strengthen innovation capacity at regional level.

Other forms of personal exchange were important in horizontal mainstreaming, like e.g. conferences, workshops, etc. Furthermore, these exchanges were supported by marketing campaigns, publications, etc. (see e.g. BFRG). *There is apparently a big overlap between the channels and tools used for dissemination and for horizontal mainstreaming.*

Many DPs organised at the end of their project a conference to present the final results to a wider audience. A few DPs took a different approach, like e.g. the Dutch Start Smart project. This DP planned a conference in the middle of the project life-cycle with the purpose to establish further contacts with policy and decision makers. In their view this would be more fruitful than doing this at the end of the

project. This conference turned out to be very successful and a final conference at the end of the project was also planned.

In Ireland following a tendering procedure, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) were contracted to provide developmental support to DPs. WEA facilitated amongst others mainstreaming workshops with some DPs. These workshops led to a clearer understanding of what mainstreaming is among partners. Partners also understood that mainstreaming is a shared responsibility for all partners and the workshop of the partnership was deepened through their commitment to mainstreaming.

Vertical mainstreaming was less part of the dissemination and mainstreaming plans of DPs as reported by the Flemish evaluators. Furthermore, DPs did not always know the right channels or could not access them necessary for vertical mainstreaming. Contacts with policy makers is identified as being crucial: awareness raising of public authorities, but also formal dialogue as well as informal contacts with policy actors are listed as being crucial (e.g. BFRG, Greece).

### 2.3.3. Support mechanisms for mainstreaming at project and programme level

The Finnish evaluators report that DPs would like to see the support structure create the prerequisites that would allow achieved results to become part of permanent structures, i.e. cooperation within and between ministries.
At the level of the programme, EQUAL incorporated support mechanisms for mainstreaming purposes, like the EQUAL database, facilitating the search for projects within the same domain of action and the National Thematic Networks. In the different member states[54] NTN were put in place. NTN constitute the main networking vehicle at national level for organising exchanges between DPs in a systematic way:

–   In the Netherlands, five NTN have been established on activation, equal opportunities, integration and labour market, learning and working and entrepreneurship. The number of DPs participating in each NTN varies between 16 (equal opportunities and learning and working) and 26 (activation). Each of the NTNs are composed of an independent chairmen, a policy 'ambassador' (a bridge function between the network and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment), an external advisor and other external experts. The instruments used by the NTN are regular network meetings, exchange meetings (to get to know each other, to exchange information, knowledge and experience and mainstreaming of results), expert meetings, project visits, a 'buddy' system (all projects within all NTN except entrepreneurship, have one or two NTN members as buddy(ies) mainly to stimulate policy involvement in DPs), meetings at the end of the NTNs and generic publicity. The main objectives of the NTN are to support the projects in the development and mainstreaming of innovations and to stimulate the vertical mainstreaming of results. Furthermore, they play also an important role in the identification of good practice and in the formulation of recommendation on how to integrate good practice in mainstream policies.

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54  Considering the size and scope of the EQUAL programme in Luxembourg (three projects in round 2 and three projects in round 1), the installation of NTNs was superfluous.

- In Germany in round 2, eight NTN were operational on the following themes: young people finishing school or a job, age management, social economy, life long learning in SMEs, reconciliation of family and working life, asylum seekers, disabled people and business creation. The NTNs in Germany primarily consist of the DPs. In order to define the mainstreaming potential of EQUAL they also include external experts and other stakeholders. The main purposes of the NTN are to exchange experience and learning from each other by improving the DPs strategies, to define, benchmark and mainstream good practice and to develop policy briefs that are the basis of the vertical mainstreaming process.
- In Greece in round 2 also eight NTN were approved and operational. They covered the following themes: diversity management, age management, innovation procedures for promotion in employment, reconciliation of family and working life, professional segregation elimination, social economy, entrepreneurship and life-long learning. In round 2 the NTN have implemented a series of actions in the context of their establishment to achieve defined targets, like e.g. the organisation of a large number of thematic workshops making DP practices known to a wider public, consultation meetings held with decision-making agencies, preparation of information material and good practice guides. Also in Greece the main purpose of the NTN are to network, to exchange information, to determine good practice and to stimulate and achieve horizontal as well as vertical mainstreaming.
- In Belgium-Fl. six NTN were established on employability, equal opportunities, adaptability, entrepreneurship, social economy and work and learning. Each of the NTN is composed of DPs, experts and policy actors.
- In BFRG four thematic networks were installed: enterprise creation, diversity management, interculturality and validations of competences. No more information was given by the evaluators on these networks.
- In Finland, seven NTN were organised according to the EQUAL pillars. The NTNs organised regularly meetings, seminars, workshops, training sessions and visibility events for the DPs and for larger audiences i.e. policy makers, experts, social partners and other stakeholders.
- In Spain, 4 NTN were set up composed of DPs, decision makers and other relevant policy actors. Their main activities are to identify potential for mainstreaming and to support mainstreaming activities, to select best practices, and to facilitate exchange of knowledge and practices.
- In UK-NI one NTN has been established composed of representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sector and each DP. The key tasks of the network are the identify, select and analyse good practices, to develop and support the implementation of a mainstreaming strategy and enabling dialogue between projects and policy.

NTN are at the centre of most mainstreaming strategies at the Member State/CIP level. These NTN have two main roles as can be deducted from the above description of roles of NTN in different Member States:

- To create links between DPs working on similar themes and under interested practitioners, and identifying, validating and building on good practices (horizontal mainstreaming).
- To identify policy needs and making the links with policy makers and potential users of EQUAL innovations (vertical mainstreaming).

In general NTN were highly valued for their role in mainstreaming, apart from exceptions, like the BFRG evaluators expressing that the functioning of the NTN was rather marginal for them as DPs conceived these as yet another layer to take care of.

A Greek survey amongst DPs revealed that 61% of them believe that NTNs helped fulfil their target in relation to horizontal mainstreaming; 55% of the DPs believe that NTNs helped them to achieve their objectives in relation to vertical mainstreaming, especially because of the accumulated know-how and the involvement of different actors, including decision making actors.

According to the Dutch DPs, the added value of the NTNs is mainly situated in the networking function: the facilitation of the contacts with other DPs. In 2007 the bilateral contacts between NTNs and DPs have increased compared to 2006, however still relatively limited in number. Contacts that DPs have with each other are mainly limited to the meetings organised by the NTNs. A number of factors is hindering more intensive contacts, like e.g. focus on own project, lack of time, differences in timing, etc.

A survey conducted in Finland in spring 2007 showed that the project promoters had until that point taken a mainly positive attitude towards thematic activity. An evaluation in autumn 2007 showed differences between the thematic groups in terms of commitment of those involved. Furthermore criticism was expressed about the structure of the thematic activity emphasising the need for a more focused approach to the activity in relation to target setting. A majority of theme leaders felt that thematic activity started far too late in round 2. The beginning of Action 2 or even the beginning of the projects was proposed by the theme leaders to be a better timing to start thematic activity. DPs criticised the organisation of the thematic activity: in some cases DPs started independently planning and forming groups before the actual thematic activity was launched. Furthermore, there is a lot of divergence between the thematic groups regarding how they have succeeded in mainstreaming. Representatives of thematic groups on social enterprises and on youngsters in transition form education to working life felt that they were more successful compared to representatives of thematic groups on reducing age and gender related prejudices and on gender mainstreaming. These were the most dissatisfied with the mainstreaming results. The thematic groups that were most heterogeneous in terms of content and whose objectives were less clear than others, were also less satisfied with thematic activities.

### 2.3.4. Complementary actions

Some Member States developed complementary mainstreaming actions or adapted the focus of the approach: like in Portugal, where the NTN have been transferred in Action 3 to Thematic Clusters, focusing on solutions rather than on themes. Also efforts have been made to cluster projects on a regional basis for the purposes of mainstreaming. This regional approach to mainstreaming, is also by the Italian evaluator conceived as very important.

In Greece a Special Management Service was installed that evaluated the proposed mainstreaming plans and proposed improvements. It provided guidelines for the implementation of the Action III; proposed to the Equal Monitoring Committee the organisation of DPs thematic networking.

The NTN in Germany have had an important meaning in the context of mainstreaming. Different NTN were organised as well as cooperation networks (strategic groups) around specific themes. In the framework of these NTN various mainstreaming activities took place. The organisation of each of the networks was very different. Some NTN focused on measures to be taken in common by the different DPs involved to strengthen policy influencing, while others were focused on the spreading of innovation. The evaluators report an improvement of strategy and methods used in the second round, compared to the first round of projects.

As reported in the 2008 synthesis, in Ireland a Mainstreaming Policy Group (MPG) was established (in 2003) with as key objectives information sharing, influencing and building of interaction between the 'mainstream' and the projects through effective communication. The MPG is composed of representatives from relevant governmental departments and state agencies as well as representatives from social partners and other organisations. It is a forum for discussion; however, according to the interviewee it did not fulfil the high expectations. Besides the MPG, there are two NTN which feed into the MPG, but also operate independently in terms of activities and events.

### 2.3.5. *Factors of success and failure*

In different final evaluation reports (Netherlands, German, Greek, Finland, UK-NI, BFRG) a presentation is given of factors crucial for the success of mainstreaming.

In the Netherlands a model of good mainstreaming has been developed, which was already presented in the framework of the 2007 synthesis report. On the basis of the mainstreaming research in 2007 a number of (potential) success and failure factors for mainstreaming have been identified which have served as the basis of the model. This model is tested and presented in a guide on mainstreaming.

In the 2008 synthesis report the following table was presented with stimulating and hindering factors for mainstreaming. This table is for this 2009 synthesis updated with input from final evaluation reports.

*Table 8: Factors of success and hindering factors for mainstreaming*

| Factors of success/stimulating factors | Factors of failure/hindering factors |
|---|---|
| Previous experiences and expertise acquired through other European programmes and projects. (DE) | Procedural 'corsage' of the EQUAL programme with extended administrative procedures and detailed monitoring and control. (NL) |
| Having a concrete and sound mainstreaming plan. (DE) (NL) | External factors that cannot be influenced by the project (actors), such as juridical rules, etc. (NL) (GR). Difficulties in changing the institutional/regulatory framework. (GR) |
| The involvement of relevant partners (DE), active participation of members of the target group (GR) and the participation of decision making entities in the DP (GR); direct cooperation with social partners, target groups and local entities in the framework of the project (GR). | Limiting conditions imposed by co-funders. (NL) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Having a positive climate for what the DP is mainstreaming (DE) (NL). The fact that the DP is supplementing policy and legislative gaps (GR). | Insufficient basis within the DP. (NL) Lack of interest/ignorance of critical actors (GR). |
| The intrinsic value of the project: the approach and the results of the project. The reasoning is that a good product sells itself (NL). Comprehensiveness, effectiveness, currency and viability of the various practices developed in the framework of the project and the demand that products should meet real needs (GR). | The innovation development process was not really successful; the innovation was not really innovative (DE). |
| Good relationships between the organisations in the DP (NL). | Too large DP making it difficult to manage.(NL) |
| Good use of human resources in the DP (NL). | Coupling monitoring visits and project visits (NL). This was also mentioned in the interview with the Flemish evaluator. |
| A balance between planning and flexibility (NL). | Lacking documentation on the project results leads to invisible results and decreasing changes for further dissemination and transfer. |
| Sufficient means from the outset (NL, Finland). | Insufficient means.(NL) |
| A good mix of instruments/communication channels. (NL) | Difficulties in decision making when more than one entity/sector is involved (GR). |
| Involvement of NTNs early in the DP development cycle. | Fragmentation of the funding resources for the implementation (GR). |
| Effective and focused promotional campaigns: broad publicity of the projects' products using ICT (GR). | |

| |
|---|
| DPs being linked to policy making process (NL). |
| Composition of the partnership: the diversity of the partners and the ability/capacity of the partners to play an active role in mainstreaming (DE) (NL), e.g. involving targeted groups for mainstreaming in the project, involving motivated partners. (NL) |

The <u>Dutch evaluators developed an analytical framework of their monitoring research on mainstreaming</u> composed of 6 dimensions, essential for the success of mainstreaming.

- *Objective*: the identification of concrete, realistic and clear objectives for mainstreaming, coupled with the intended innovation as well the identification of the intended target groups for mainstreaming.
- *Input*: it is important to identify which messages have to be transferred (identification of good and possibly also bad practices). For the mainstreaming of good (and bad) practices, a set of tools is necessary. The choice of these instruments is coupled with the use of financial, human and material means.
- *Implementation*: while the first 2 dimensions are about the 'strategy of mainstreaming, this 3rd dimension is about the 'tactics and operationalisation': who to approach, with what message, with which instruments, when?
- *Output*: the extent to which the intended target groups of mainstreaming are reached by the message. The satisfaction of these target groups about the chosen tool-box is also a relevant factor.
- *Effect*: the intended effect of mainstreaming is that the developed innovation is integrated into the regular activities or in regular policies. Before this takes place, the following steps are necessary:
  - Increasing the knowledge of the intended target group about the innovation.
  - Influencing the attitude of the intended target groups in relation to the innovation.
  - Influencing the behavior of the intended target groups in relation to the innovation.

  Besides the intended effect, also side-effects might be related to mainstreaming (positive and negative).
- *Impact*: the impact of mainstreaming is the take-up of innovation in the regular activities and/or regular policy and that this contributes to the central goals of the EQUAL programme, i.e. combating discrimination and inequality on the labour market).

### 2.3.6. Results on mainstreaming

One of the most important results of the mainstreaming research in the Netherlands is that despite the necessary attention paid to mainstreaming within EQUAL, the output in terms of actual anchoring of innovation is often disappointing. The research results show that at this moment, especially at organisational and project level there is some form of actual anchoring of innovation. At horizontal and vertical level, more investments are needed. Especially the first years projects are mainly occupied with their own problems and have little ears for the dissemination and lateron mainstreaming of their innovation. Potential receivers are often critical in relation to the innovation. Many interesting innovations are for these reasons often not integrated into regular policies or practices and remain at project level. 49% of the DPs estimate that the real anchoring of innovation will eventually contribute to a large extent to the aim of EQUAL within their thematic domain. The evaluators conclude that the NTN in the Netherlands have been mainly oriented towards the dissemination of results of DPs. Through the NTN individual project results are de-coupled from the specific context

and are translated into more generic policy recommendations. These recommendations are presented to decision makers via the closing conferences of NTN and the final reports. NTN representative expressed the view that mainstreaming is primarily the responsibility of the DPs themselves; NTNs have a supporting and facilitating role.

The Flemish evaluators conclude that horizontal mainstreaming has been strong. DP promoters organised different workshops to present their products to others and they themselves participated in different activities also to disseminate products. About half of the DPs in Belgium-Fl. reached the vertical policy level which can be deducted on the basis of an analysis per project as presented in the evaluation report. This was done by presenting the project results at political level, but also by e.g. certification of a training developed.

At the time of reporting (October 2007) it was according to the BFRG evaluators too soon to measure the impact of the mainstreaming activities of the programme.

The Greek evaluators report that despite the significant contribution of NTN, integration of policy proposals as a result of projects' activities are not immediately visible. One of the main reasons explained by the evaluators is the political situation that is not mature enough. However, the results of the projects set the beginning of a substantial dialogue.

In the Finnish evaluation report the results and outputs of each of the thematic networks is described. However, a large part of the description is an inventory of outputs produced, like books, seminars, models, etc.. Methods are described how mainstreaming was implemented in order to produce results, like visits to Parliament to make a case (example of the thematic group on youngsters in transition from education to employment). For the thematic group on Roma, the evaluators write that vertical mainstreaming has been quite strong, but they do not give further explanations on this. The theme of social enterprising has been taken a large step forward as a result of the second round of EQUAL. Results coming out of this thematic group activities were announced at local municipal fairs.

While one of the conclusions in the EU-wide final evaluation report was that horizontal mainstreaming had been more effective compared to vertical mainstreaming, in round 2 efforts have been made to change this imbalance. This has happened mainly through events bringing together different types and levels of stakeholders. An example are the Exchange Events organised by the Northern-Ireland MA/NSS.

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Mainstreaming is one of the key principles of EQUAL and one of the issues put forward in the common evaluation approach. Mainstreaming is defined as a process enabling activities to impact on policies and practices. It is first of all about (1) the identification of good practice, (2) the validation of successful innovations, (3) the dissemination of good practices and finally about (4) transfer. Mainstreaming can either be transferring lessons learnt to similar organisations/settings (horizontal) or transferring lessons learnt and integrating results into policies and practices (vertical).

Mainstreaming is under EQUAL a shared responsibility between the programme management and the DPs. Different models of mainstreaming have been developed and implemented, inspired by the four steps earlier presented

For the identification of good practices, several approaches were used by the Member States. Thematic activities are in general considered to be excellent mechanisms for identifying good practices. In the context of NTN, criteria were developed for the identification of successful innovations. Several Member States launched databases with inventories of good practices. The combination of sound criteria and relevant mechanisms to implement the criteria are crucial for the identification of good, still valuable after the specific programme.

While the validation models were introduced in the 2008 synthesis, these models have been further developed and tested. Especially the Portuguese validation model inspired other Member States. The EQUAL product validation model as developed in Portugal is recognised as best-practice. This model is an important step in establishing quality standards regarding new solutions which are intended to bring added value to practice and policy in the social domain and which are funded under EQUAL. At the same time, evaluators and MA/NSS report that the process of validation should be given more attention and that validation activities have to better coordinated with other activities in the mainstreaming strategies of Member States.

For dissemination purposes a mix of instruments was used, ranging from passive tools (like brochures, newsletters) to more interactive approaches (conferences, workshops).

Mainstreaming at DP level was mainly guided by the dedicated plans developed, however, at the same time these plans were not always sufficiently sound. At DP level the partnerships played an important role in horizontal mainstreaming. Vertical mainstreaming was in general less part of DP mainstreaming plans. Contacts and networking with policy makers is identified as crucial for successful vertical mainstreaming.

NTN played not only an important role in the identification of good practices, but also in the rest of the mainstreaming process at project and programme level. Thematic activity was considered to provide a broader perspective on the work of the projects. Furthermore, complementary actions to the NTN were developed by some Member States (like e.g. strategic groups in Germany).
Stimulating and hindering factors in relation to mainstreaming are summarised on the basis of evidence identified at DP and CIP levels. Factors of success are related to the innovation itself ("a good product sells itself"), the partnership that developed the innovation (e.g. previous experiences and expertise acquired through other European programmes and projects, the involvement of relevant partners, good use of HR available in the partnership), communication tools (mainstreaming plans, mix of tools) but also a positive climate for the innovation (supplementing policy and legislative gaps). Deficiencies in these aspects were considered to be hindering factors for mainstreaming.

## *2.4. Gender mainstreaming*

Four final evaluation reports present findings on gender mainstreaming (Finland, Germany, Greece and Spain). Equal opportunities as a goal and gender mainstreaming as a strategy are of important significance within EQUAL. Equal opportunities is addressed as one of the five themes in EQUAL and at the same time, all projects had to integrate equal opportunities in their objectives and therefore had to operationalise a gender mainstreaming strategy.

In general, the final conclusion on gender mainstreaming is ambivalent. While it has been considered to be important, it was not included as one of the main priorities for evaluators in their final reporting, nor was it part of the common evaluation approach. However, positive were the various instruments that were offered to DPs in relation to equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming, like e.g. specific newsletters, workshops, thematic activities, etc. At the same time, it became also clear that the potential of EQUAL in relation to equal opportunities is limited. Only when also the funding environment is oriented towards equal opportunities, a programme like EQUAL can make a difference. This is not a plea against mainstreaming, but rather an appeal for the integration of gender mainstreaming in all policy fields.

The German evaluators report that the importance of the both approaches (equal opportunities as a theme and gender mainstreaming as a strategy) was bigger in round 2 compared to round 1. This is by the evaluators explained by the fact that the DP actors had the opportunity in round 1 to become more familiar with the issue of equality and gender mainstreaming; while in round 2 ideas could be implemented. At the same time the German evaluators describe that the participation of women in projects decreased when comparing round 1 and round 2. Measures in which the participation of women was 90% or more, decreased from 1/3rd to 1/5th from round 1 to round 2. Only 5% of the innovations in round 2 followed a women-specific approach. Also in relation to participants there was a decrease in female participants: 54% in the first round to 48,5 in the second round. This is according to the evaluators related to the shift in focus, but also to changes in sharper allowance modalities since January 2005. The operationalisation of the mainstreaming strategy was obviously one of the difficulties faced. Different concepts were used (gender training, gender competence, etc) but for those involved it was not exactly clear what these concepts were about.

The Finnish evaluators claim that while the definition of strategies related to equality have been a requirement for partnership agreements one third of the DPs felt that this had succeeded very poorly or poorly. Also about 1/3rd of DPs considered that they had been successful or very successful in this matter. They report that it seemed that projects need quite a lot of assistance with regard to tackling equality issues. In round 2, projects had access to an external expert in equality issues. The evaluators conclude that too little attention has been paid to keeping records of beneficiaries by gender and concrete measures taken. Furthermore, the concepts used around equality and gender mainstreaming were not always defined in a precise and concrete way.

Equal opportunities as a goal and gender mainstreaming as a strategy were both of importance in EQUAL. While the role of cross-cutting issues on gender mainstreaming became more important, the specific stimulation of women to participate in projects became less important in round 2. The operationalisation of the gender mainstreaming strategy at DP level was one of the main difficulties faced in this respect. Different concepts were used without exactly knowing the meaning of these. More (external) input of expertise could have been useful.

## 2.5. Partnership, empowerment and transnationality

While the key principles partnership, empowerment and transnational cooperation were not part of the common evaluation approach, 6/8 Member States report on at least one of these issues (the Netherlands and Spain did not report on these key principles).

In the EU-wide evaluation the principles of partnership and empowerment were addressed together also because according to the EQUAL guidelines, the concept of empowerment can be read as complementary guidance of how EQUAL DPs should operate as a partnership. In the reports analysed for this synthesis, results on partnership and empowerment are reported in some cases separately.

### 2.5.1. Partnership

Partnerships are one of the basic structural features of EQUAL. Five evaluators report on this principle (Finland, Greece, Belgium-Fl., BFRG, Germany and UK-NI) in their final deliverable. In the final EU-wide evaluation report, it was concluded that the implementation of the partnership principle has been one of the main successes of EQUAL.

A good set of aims and targets is considered to be the basis of a viable and fruitful partnership; while at the same time, setting targets and achieving them in the time available, is one of the biggest challenges. A shared understanding of these targets is crucial. The efficiency of a partnership is largely depending on the allocation of responsibilities and roles of each of the partners corresponding to their competencies. The size of the partnership plays also a role: according to the Finnish evaluators, the largest problem in partnerships with more than five partners appears to be making different operating cultures compatible. In smaller partnerships was the lack of commitment of the partners one of the largest problems. The geographical scope is mentioned by the Finnish evaluators as being positive in terms of dissemination of best practices if all the actors are committed. Some projects organised development days, to learn about each other's operating culture and negotiation.

The UK-NI evaluators present the work done by the Workers' Educational Associated, contracted by the MA to provide developmental support to the DPs funded under round 2. The overall aim was to increase the effectiveness of the DPs through training in partnership building. Recommendations were formulated on the basis of this experience towards future support to projects, like e.g.:
– Support should concentrate on the process of building the partnership and not on the content of the partnership.

– Support should be based around the common challenges faced to some degree by all DPs involved in the programme.
– Once established, partnerships should attend a partnership development event. At an appropriate point in the life cycle of a project, partners should be called back to a reflection event were progress is assessed and possible improvements are identified.
– Engagement with support should be a prerequisite for funding.

The Greek evaluators report that the implementation of the partnership principle in round 2 did not differ very much from the implementation in round 1. However, the participation rate of NGOs decreased, as well as the participation of public authorities. The evaluators also estimate that on the basis of the partners' profile potential future exploitation of project results is assumed. Furthermore, the size of the partnership has decreased from round 1 to round 2.
In Belgium-Fl., the size of the partnership remained about the same from round 1 to round 2. Also in Flanders, the participation of the NGO sector has decreased in round 2, while the participation of private organisations has increased.

The BFRG evaluators claim that on the basis of the difficulties encountered in round 1 (e.g. unequal investments in the project, divergence between partners in understanding the objectives of the project) DPs have anticipated, limited and overcome problems faced in round 2 more rapidly. Still one of the main problems encountered by partnerships was the feeling of 'competition' between partners active in similar professional domains. In this context, the role of the coordinator and of the MA has been determining. The evaluators identify a number of factors influencing the success of a partnership, which were also identified by other evaluators (see e.g. Finland):
– The commitment of each of the partners to the project.
– A shared vision of the project and its objectives.
– The complementarity of competences and the precise definition of the role of each involved.
– The representativity of the partnership in the sector.
– The precise definition of each involved and the valorisation of the competencies of each partner.
– The initial definition of the functioning mode of the partnership.
– Ownership of the project by each of the partners.
– For larger partnerships: cooperation structures that take into account each type of partners.
– The determining role of the coordinator to feed the dynamics and to create confidence between the partners.

In Germany, the partnerships were conceived as networks and these were conceived to be strategic instruments of EQUAL. Complex innovation could be developed and implemented because of the network approach.

In Ireland a study on partnerships in EQUAL was conducted in 2007. Three issues emerged from this study:
– The importance of collective commitment to the partnership and organisational commitment of individual partners to the effective operation and for the achievement of outcomes. Securing organisational commitment was cited as a difficulty experienced. Furthermore, significance was attached to the extent to which the work of the partnership is perceived as additional or subordinate to the core work of the organisations and individuals involved.

–   A dedicated budget is a significant factor contributing to the achievement of outcomes from working in partnership. Also the availability of resources to develop the capacity of the partners to operate as a collective is key to support the achievement of sustainable outcomes.
–   The adoption of a strategic approach is also considered to be key for achieving results and finally outcomes.

The size of the partnership is not as important as the quality of the partners, their ability to collaborate and the expertise they bring it which is necessary to achieve the common goals.

In the context of the second call, the BFRG ESF Agency asked projects to express their opinions about the added value of the partnership principle. According to a majority of DPs, the added value of the partnership principle is the identification of common needs and solutions, the complementarity of competences and the 'openness' towards cooperation perspectives, the exchanges of approaches and the putting together of information/sources.

EQUAL has shown the effectiveness and the added value of working in partnerships, for the partners involved as well as for policy actors:
–   A shared reflection on instruments and approaches has permitted partners to reflect on their practices and to identify common and coherent solutions.
–   A coordination of actions and approaches of each partner has permitted a rationality and an extension of services offered to beneficiaries.
–   An institutional visibility permitted to reinforce and to better structure the exchanges between authorities and field actors.

*Evaluators report that a majority of DPs estimates that cooperation will continue after EQUAL (e.g. BFRG and Finnish evaluators report that about 80% of the DPs believed this.). It is however likely that cooperation will continue to shape itself largely according to funding opportunities, which are also related to successes in mainstreaming.*

### 2.5.2. Empowerment

Empowerment is tackled in 3 final evaluation reports (UK-NI, Belgium-Fl. and Greece). The UK-NI evaluators report that the DPs made positive efforts to include their beneficiaries in the decision making processes.

> The SEA project (UK-NI) aimed to promote an innovative approach by identifying barriers faced by people with disabilities in the labour market and seeking ways to remove them through testing the model of Supported Employment. The model aims to assist people with disabilities to access and stay in employment by providing a person-centred approach and providing ongoing employment support. A Beneficiary Focus Group was created in the project composed of two beneficiaries of each of the practitioner organisations involved. The Focus Group met every six weeks and one member of the Focus Group was nominated to sit on the DP to contribute to the DP work. The main activities of the Group were:
> –   To contribute to the collective voice of the people with disabilities at policy level.

> – To identify good practice within employment and training practices for people with disabilities, in particular in Supported Employment.
> – To identify barriers that people with disabilities encounter when seeking work and put forward recommendations to address these.
> This initiative was considered to be a success.

In Flanders, empowerment was mainly realised via boosting the capacity of the partnerships and the professionalization of project management structures. On the basis of the survey amongst DPs, it is presented that 92% of the DPs state that the final target group is involved in the project; this is an improvement compared to previous research rounds. However, the evaluators point also to the fact that 'involvement' could mean involvement of the final target group in testing the products or services developed. Involvement could also relate to involving intermediary organisations representing final beneficiaries. Success factors for a strong empowerment are determined by the following elements:

– Negotiation structures in which all partners are involved in order to develop a shared vision.
– The involvement of the most suitable target group (final of intermediate) who can shape and integrate the concept of empowerment in the different organisations involved. The target group can be involved as 'test group', or direct partner or sound board.
– From the outset the concept of empowerment should be given attention how to best translate this into practice. This is important, since it has consequences for the choice of the most suitable partners and the definition of the target group.

The Greek evaluators report that in round 2, the active participation of the target groups is more noticeable, either directly or indirectly. This is done through open consultations, meetings and discussions with the target groups, participation of target groups in relevant field studies, participation in the planning and in evaluation of the projects.

Empowerment as a principle for shaping projects, but also for the governance of projects could have been further subject of experimentation in EQUAL, taking into account the very nature of the programme.

### 2.5.3. *Transnational cooperation*

Different benefits have already been reported in relation to transnationality in the EU-wide evaluation final report, such as contribution to fostering a European identity, contribution to a better mutual understanding, mirror and benchmarking effects for DPs, etc. Five evaluators present results on the issue of transnational cooperation as part of their final reporting (Greece, Germany, Belgium-Fl. and UK-NI).

While the positive findings of earlier reports are confirmed, problems are also presented which have not only to do with the construction and functioning of transnational cooperation but also with the results and added value, e.g.:

– Transnational partnerships are often limited to the exchange of ideas, rather than the development of common innovations.
– The transnational aspect is not easily integrated into the national/regional project.

While transnational cooperation is often conceived to be the most effective way of achieving results[55], evaluators point to its barriers and downsides, affecting effectiveness and efficiency in achieving results such as in relation to the construction of partnership, the development of an innovative and highly qualitative product together with other partners within a relative short time period, etc. Certainly in round 1, the ambitions might have been too high, while in round 2, on the basis of the expertise gained some progress could be made.

The Greek evaluators refer to transnationality as a basic instrument and not just a principle for integrating and transferring innovation and diffusing best practices. It is noted by the evaluators that it is mainly about innovation diffusion and promotion and not so much about innovation development. As to the Greek DPs participating in transnational partnerships, there does not seem to be any direct and proven connection between the transnational partnership and addressing policy gaps. The benefits that are identified are mainly concerned with the development of a common European conscience, the application of new strategies in the labour markets of the different countries involved via comparative analysis of the experimental practices, the formulation of a common framework for combating discrimination causes in the labour market and the expansion of capacities for improving strategies of desegregation in the labour market.

In general the perception of the DPs about transnational cooperation was more positive during the interim evaluation compared to round 1 on the basis of the 2008 DP survey among Flemish projects. The survey at the end of the programming period shows more tempered results. The interviews with DPs revealed that partners involved had though a positive perception of transnational cooperation and considered it as an enrichment. One of the main progressions has been the development and delivery of products as a result of transnational cooperation. This was not (yet) the case in round 1. The transnational cooperation had also certainly an added value in relation to dissemination and mainstreaming by constituting a wider support system.

The UK-NI evaluators report (2009) a mixed picture as well, pointing to the fact that transnational cooperation was very time consuming and that it was not sure whether it would lead to the desired return on investments of time and expertise.

The Finnish evaluators explain in their final report that the added value or benefit of transnational cooperation can be crystallised in new operational models, views and the personal advantages of the background organisation and those responsible for implementing projects. The problems of transnational cooperation may be put into three categories:
– Operational and cultural differences.
– Different levels of objectives or addressing a common objective
– Partners' personnel changes.
Furthermore, the fact that the second round of applications started at different times in the countries participating in the EQUAL initiative made it difficult to organise activities[56]. This was in general often presented as a major problem DPs were faced with (see e.g. the Flemish survey). Those involved in almost 20% of Finnish projects in the second round were rather dissatisfied with their own transnational partnership. The main contributing factor to this was the choice of

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[55] Equal, (2006), *The principle of transnational and interregional cooperation in the new ESF programmes (2007-2013). A framework of programming*, Brussels

partners, which in the case of too many projects happened pretty much unsystematically.

The evaluators classify the added value or benefits of transnational cooperation under three headings and this on the basis of the DP survey:

– Some projects have attempted to bring models/practices from other countries to Finland. However, the transfer conditions should be considered.

– If a transnational partner has proven to be relevant in terms of activity and aims, it creates the prerequisites for future cooperation. On the basis of a survey held in 2007 85% of the projects stated that their cooperation would continue after the current transnational cooperation.

– Transnational cooperation has helped the partners to reflect on their own activities. A strong aim of working with partners has been to increase their own competence in relation to a better understanding of the target group or to approaches in general.

The German evaluators report that through the transnational contacts critical reflection on the own work was made possible. This led to a positive influence on the own development of innovation and to quality control. Transnational cooperation has not so much been used for mainstreaming of national or international developed innovations. It was influenced by various factors:

– The experience with transnational cooperation of those involved.

– Language and cultural barriers.

– Different systems of employment and training.

– The implementation of the DPs in the different Member States did not happen in a synchronic way.

The evaluators state that when these factors are influenced in a positive way, the 'bilan' of transnational cooperation is positive.

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Partnership is considered by the evaluators to be a key factor for the development of innovation. Evaluators present the main successes and challenges of working in partnerships. While a collective commitment to the partnership, a shared vision and a good set of targets are considered to be the basis of a viable and fruitful partnership, this is at the same time one of the biggest challenges. External support in relation to cooperation in partnerships was considered to be useful and important to take into account in future programming. This external support contributes to develop the capacity of the partners to function as a collective, but can also help in the specific activities of the partnership, such as mainstreaming support.

EQUAL has shown the effectiveness and the added value of working in partnerships, for the partners involved:

– A shared reflection on instruments and approaches has permitted partners to reflect on their practices and to identify common and coherent solutions.

– A coordination of actions and approaches of each partner has permitted a rationality and an extension of services offered to beneficiaries.

– An institutional visibility permitted to reinforce and to better structure the exchanges between authorities and field actors.

Progress was made from round 1 to round 2 in relation to empowerment, meaning that the active participation of the final beneficiaries (directly or indirectly) has improved. The conscious involvement of beneficiaries in the project life-cycle had has an important impact on the quality of the interventions. Nevertheless, the

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laboratory function of EQUAL in relation to empowerment could have been further exploited.

Views on the added value and actual results and outcomes of transnationality are mixed, but at the same time progress was identified by the evaluators. While in round 1, transnational cooperation was mainly used for dissemination purposes, in round 2, the transnational setting led to actual innovation development. The five evaluators reporting on this key principle all list advantages and problems related to transnational cooperation. The difficulties encountered are mainly related to operational (like coordination of timing of national and transnational activities) and cultural differences, addressing a common objective from different viewpoints, and the integration of the transnational aspect at national or regional level. The identified benefits are mainly related to the development of a common European conscience, the possibility of critical reflection on the own work by mirroring it with others, the constitution of a wider support system for dissemination and mainstreaming and comparative analysis of experimental practices.

## 2.6. Results and (potential) impact at thematic level

EQUAL is about developing innovative approaches to tackle discrimination and inequality in the labour market. Innovation has been developed in relation to different thematic fields. The results and (potential) impacts of these innovations have been described in the different (evaluation) reports, to a varying extent. While in the evaluation reports used for the 2008 synthesis, the thematic results presented were fragmented, reported as examples and not complete; in the final evaluation reports, analyses of results and impacts at thematic level are also limited. *The reporting of the evaluators has concentrated on outputs rather than on (potential) changes that these outputs have instigated.*

To support the processes involved in mainstreaming (identification of good practices, validation, dissemination and transfer), thematic networks at national and European level have been created. Reporting on the results of national thematic activities is one approach that member states took to present results and impacts of EQUAL (German and Finnish final evaluation reports, whereby the Finnish evaluators also presented results by theme). Other evaluators took a different approach and reported on the themes as such, however, varying from descriptions of projects in round 2, to preliminary results and (potential) impacts. The Dutch MA/NSS referred to the reports that were written on the basis of the results and impacts of the themes tackled in the NTN. In these NTN examples are given of good practices ("pearls"), but also in these reports it is not always clear what the final results and eventual impacts have been. However, analysing these reports would be beyond the scope of this synthesis exercise.

In general it can be said that there are not much figures presented by the evaluators in relation to findings. When figures are presented, it is not always clear what the meaning is of these figures. According to some interviewees it is too early to measure impacts. It is only now that some impacts of round 1 become visible.

In this paragraph an overview is given of the results and (potential) impacts as reported on by evaluators clustered by theme. The presentations made by evaluators in their final evaluation reports are mainly related to results. Therefore, the choice was made to also present a summary of the results and (potential) impacts presented in the 2008 synthesis report, since they also include (preliminary) impacts of round 1.

### *2.6.1. Employability*

About 39% of the DPs in EQUAL were related to the employability theme in round 1 and round 2 (representing 37% of the budget). This theme is divided into re-integration into the labour market on the one hand (86% of the DPs related to this theme – round 1 and 2) and combating racism on the other hand (14% - round 1 and 2).

Results and preliminary impact presented in the 2008 synthesis report
Two Luxembourg projects have delivered results in relation to this theme:
– *The RESET project* which is coordinated by the *Centre Pénitentiaire de Givenich*, an open structure prison to which only adult male prisoners are transferred. In Givenich prisoners work in workshops such as agriculture, horticulture, carpentry, etc. The social guidance and coaching is carried out by the internal psychological, social and educational service as well as by the Social Aid Service of the Public Prosecutor's Office. Some prisoners may benefit from partial release in order to work outside. The generic objective of the project is located in the objectives laid down by the Council of Europe Recommendations concerning employment of prisoners (R(75)25) and education (R(89)12). Specific objectives are about offering rehabilitation to prisoners, enabling them to integrate into the labour market. In the framework of these objectives, the employability of the target group is improved through the acquisition of social competencies, and also vocational competencies. The project has permitted an improved professional orientation of the target group to be put into place.
– *The Pro-actif project – passerelle vers l'emploi,* addresses the implementation of socio-professional reintegration of socially and professionally excluded people, such as addicts, offenders, homeless people and those with almost no chance on the labour market. The main objective of the project was to increase the employability of the target group through education and training, to ensure the placement and follow-up of the people, and to create a national network to improve the conditions of and for these people. Results can be identified at the level of structures, rather than at the level of people.

The representative of the MA/NSS of Northern Ireland gave the example of the PPS project (Personal Progression System) (EQUAL round 1). The partnership in the project represents the vehicle for the development of an innovative strategy to enhance the employability of ex-prisoners which, if successful, should be considered as a reduction of re-offending and recidivism. Different actors were brought together to come up with a sound and integrated plan for individual ex-offenders. The process approach seemed to be very successful and has been mainstreamed. In round 2, a follow-up of this project has been selected (Reach Out). There is evidence according to the interviewee that the ex-prisoners who have volunteered in the project have a lower rate of recidivism compared to those who did not participate. The innovation in the project is related both to the new forms of cooperation between the parties involved and to the individualised approach taken in the project.

An example is given by an interviewee from Ireland of the Carlow project (round 2); creating a labour market in Carlow that is accessible, accommodating and inclusive to older people. The project recognises that any response to the labour market

situation of older people in Carlow needs to address the issues of ageism, discrimination and inequalities at the employer level, in tandem with up-skilling older people to secure employment opportunities. Participants take part in scheduled training, up-skilling, and activities in accordance with their own priorities. They participate in the programme over a 3-18 month period depending on their training needs. 150 places are available on the programme between January 2006 and June 2007. Awareness raising activities towards employers are developed and cooperation with employers is sought to develop policies and procedures in relation to recruiting, retaining and advancing older workers within their organisations. Furthermore, a labour market survey is done of over 255 Carlow-based employers and identified sectors where employment opportunities were expected to arise in the short to medium term and the relevant skills required for these employment opportunities. It is considered by the MA as a successful model including a multi-disciplinary approach.

In Germany the evaluators state in their 2006 report that a large part of the DPs involved in combating racism actions succeeded in implementing concrete measures, such as:

– Awareness raising: e.g. of medical personnel to the situation of traumatized refugees; the development of curricula for intercultural competencies.
– Making structural causes of discrimination and integration disappear, e.g. in the health sector where the current system does not guarantee sufficient care for certain groups such as asylum seekers.
– Stimulation of groups affected by racism, e.g. language courses, professional-oriented training courses.
The evaluators specifically report the high quality of projects in this domain.

Four evaluators explicitly report in relation to this theme (Germany, Finland, Greece and BFRG) in the reports used for this 2009 synthesis; one of them reports on the results of the related NTN (Germany).

The BFRG evaluators give a description of the domains of innovation in relation to round 2[57]:
– professional insertion (55% of the DPs): new models of integration into the labour market have been developed (models of work-based learning companies), strategic management and awareness raising tools have been created (e.g. in relation to handicapped employees on the labour market) as well as accompaniment measures in the search for a job (e.g. psychological dimension, internships abroad, etc.).
– employment (22%), e.g. in relation to the international solidarity sector valorizing interculturality,
– training (17%), e.g. using learning technologies for vulnerable groups on the labour market.
– partnership (6%); development of models of cooperation of different types of actors focused on a specific theme or problem.

The Greek evaluators report that the implementation of the actions in relation to this priority was mixed: satisfactory for actions on re-integration into the labour market; mixed for actions on combating racism. New structures that have been created for re-integration purposes show a lower sustainability rate compared to

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[57] Covering 19 projects related to re-integration into the labour market (54% of the DPs in round 2 in BFRG).

structures operating in agencies already engaged in employment promotion. The main reasons for discontinuity of structures is the inability to ensure resources. It is estimated that almost 40% of the actions developed for re-integration purposes are appropriate for successful mainstreaming; however this mainstreaming is mainly defined as 'integration at the level of individual agencies' rather than at a general policy level. In relation to combating discrimination, the increased need to support the target group (being individuals affected by discrimination due to racism) with legal support actions in conjunction with actions to raise the awareness of employers is a significant finding according to the evaluators. However, it is also reported that the percentage of those who, after participating in the measure's actions identified improvement in their work environment, is low compared to the total number of beneficiaries (no numbers are presented).

In Germany, 43% of the DPs in round 2 were related to employability, of which 86% to re-integration into the labour market. Different thematic networks were related to employability, e.g. the network on youngsters, on age management and cooperation networks on e.g. migrants. In the evaluation report, a short description is given of the activities developed by these networks. Specific brochures with results have been published.

In the final Finnish evaluation report, the evaluators state that the projects in this measure have been successful in promoting three main objectives:
– An improvement of the life management of the target group by increasing activity and participation.
– The development of partnership cooperation based on the needs of various target groups.
– The construction of different methods to improve employment for vulnerable groups on the labour market.
The evaluators argue that different concrete impacts and outputs have been created for several target groups. Young people have been an important target group in projects under this measure. Different approaches have been developed to help prevent the exclusion of young people. The results and outputs of this measure show a continuing need for advisory services for different target groups and closer dialogue between different actors in order to improve impact.
Finnish projects in the field of combating racism have been successful in promoting ethnic equality and equal opportunities. In contrast, employability of immigrants and ethnic minorities and improving their prerequisites and employment has not been as successful (the reasons for this are not really explained). Projects under this measure have worked towards and also achieved broader social impact by means of practical cooperation between immigrant associations and the authorities.

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In relation to employability different results and (potential) impacts have been identified in round 1 and round 2.

Policy impact
Results have been achieved at the level of specific target groups, to increase and/or improve their competencies. like an improved professional orientation of prisoners (e.g. Luxembourg and UK-NI) and preventing the exclusion of young people. There is evidence of these results e.g. in enhanced skills of target groups and lower rates of recidivism for those ex-prisoners who participated in one of the proposed schemes. Furthermore new models have been created for the integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market, like e.g. work-based learning models.

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Institutional impact
Evaluators report that successes have been achieved with specific target groups as a result of <u>institutional innovations</u>. There is evidence that successful cooperation between strategic partners active in a specific domain improve the conditions of certain target groups in relation to the labour market (e.g. ex-offenders, homeless, etc.). Successful cooperations of different types can be identified: between different public bodies (in the case of the project on enhancing the employability of ex-prisoners in UK-NI), between public authorities and employers (e.g. in the case of the Irish project on stimulating labour market participation of older workers), between public authorities and NGOs (e.g. in the case of the Finnish projects on combating discrimination and racism in the workplace). The creation of structures to increase the employability of specific target groups is an important result of activities developed within this theme. The originally temporary socio-economic networks that were created by EQUAL led in some cases to more sustainable partnerships, like in examples were a follow-up of a project in round 1 was selected for round 2. Some evaluators reports that results are in the first place identified at the level of structures, rather than at the level of individuals or target groups.

Within this theme much <u>awareness raising activity</u> has taken place e.g. addressing employers. The need was identified in different DPs to engage and work with employers to address issues of ageism, discrimination and/or inequalities in the work place. However, it is not clear what the actual changes have been which may have taken place in companies as a result.

Organisational impact
The actual impact of activities developed by DPs on organisations in the sense of changes in HR policies, career advancement, etc. was not reported by the evaluators. The analyses presented stop in general by the tools and approached used vis-à-vis organisations to initiate changes, but do not comment on the changes that have been instigated as such.

### 2.6.2. Entrepreneurship

DPs related to entrepreneurship represent 20% of DPs in round 1 and round 2 (representing 18% of the budget). 43% of these DPs is linked to business creation, 57% to social economy.

<u>Results and preliminary impact presented in the 2008 synthesis report</u>
Two promising Irish projects in the area of business creation are the project in County Longford on women and entrepreneurship, and the Emerge project on ethnic entrepreneurship (both Round 2 projects). The County Longford project on women and entrepreneurship starts from the low level of entrepreneurial activity of women, where especially in rural area with limited employment opportunities, barriers to self-employment are particularly serious. Research by the Longford Women Centre showed that women experience particular difficulties trying to earn money by working for themselves; in obtaining information, in obtaining start-up financing, and in trying to balance a working life with roles as a parent or partner or carer. To redress this issue, five local agencies (Longford Women's Centre, Longford County Enterprise Board, Longford Community Resources Ltd, Longford County Development Board, and the County Longford Vocational Educational Committee) formed the Longford EQUAL Development Partnership. Longford EQUAL Development Partnership's project is the identification of underlying causes

of low levels of female entrepreneurship within County Longford, and the testing of new approaches in order to create a robust enterprise culture for Longford women.

The aim of the Emerge project (Ireland) is to develop methodologies for the development and expansion of ethnic minority businesses and to assist ethnic minority entrepreneurs in overcoming business obstacles within the regulatory and cultural environment. The project has established a nationally-coordinated and locally-delivered training programme designed to address some of the specific needs of ethnic minority entrepreneurs. Different stakeholders are involved in the project such as FAS, the Cork City Enterprise Board, the Small Firms Associations, a community based enterprise centre, etc.

These two issues are relatively new in Ireland and policy makers are very much interested in the outcomes according to the interviewee.

In the reports used for this 2009 synthesis three evaluators present some results in relation to entrepreneurship. The Greek evaluators present that 91 new enterprises were created in the context of this measure (mainly entrepreneurs without personnel). The amount of business tools developed for supporting new entrepreneurs is significant, as well as the contact points created for supporting entrepreneurs and structures developed. At the same time, the evaluators report that there is already a surplus of structures and services in Greece in support of entrepreneurship although they are fragmented.
In relation to social economy the evaluators claim that despite the training on social entrepreneurship with highly satisfactory levels among participants, the creation of social enterprises was delayed. Within the context of the measure, 30 new social enterprises were created.

The German evaluators describe the activities the NTN on social economy developed, like e.g. management instruments and methods for social entrepreneurship. A specific brochure has been developed and published.

7 DPs (20% of DPs in round 2) were involved in entrepreneurship measures in BFRG. The activities developed by these DPs are briefly presented in the final evaluation reports. Three kinds of activities were undertaken:
– Creation of businesses: e.g. networking between relevant partners.
– Accompaniment projects: e.g. coaching and the development of information instruments.
– New employment possibilities: new professional profiles.

In Finland, new tools have been created for social entrepreneurship and experiences have been collected in order to develop the business of social enterprises. In addition, the majority of new social companies in recent times have been established out of the cooperation that has existed in EQUAL projects. The Finnish projects under entrepreneurship experienced thematic activity as more beneficial than the other projects. Overall realization of the objectives for the measure can be considered significant. The outputs and results of the projects have had very much impact on developing a Finnish model for social entrepreneurship. Projects under the measure have also achieved international impact.

A concrete example was the establishment of the European Economic Interest Grouping SerraNet (Finland). It provides new international business opportunities and it is aimed at promoting long-term cooperation between small and medium-sized social enterprises, long term cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises, social cooperatives and actors in the field of recycling, re-use and environmental service.

The projects under this measure in Finland have succeeded in creating 97 new businesses, however it most be noted that not all of these are actually new. Some have changed from another form of business to social enterprise. Project activity has lead to the creation of 253 new jobs. Because the majority of the projects was still in progress at the time of reporting (December 2007), the data is not final.

In relation to entrepreneurship different results and (potential) impacts have been identified in round 1 and round 2. These are again clustered around policy impacts, institutional impacts and organisational impacts.

Policy impacts:
In terms of policy impacts, under EQUAL progress has been made in relation to social economy. This has been an area of important new developments in Member States where the social economy lacked structuring or where policy initiatives were lacking. Tools have been developed for social entrepreneurship (like books on how to start a social enterprise, management methods to run a social business, etc.) and for promoting social responsibility (like training sessions). Some Member States report that innovations in this area have been of higher quality compared to the average innovation quality in their Member State.
The results of the DPs have led in some cases to the development of a 'national' model of social entrepreneurship.

Institutional impact:
Within this theme different partnerships and structures have been developed to support enterprise creation by vulnerable groups, like ethnic women. These partnerships involved different stakeholders ranging from vocational training agencies to local enterprise boards. Setting up a business by vulnerable groups involves various dimensions that are grasped in a partnership construction. Therefore, the building of links between various stakeholders is considered to be innovative as such.
Furthermore, the amount of tools developed for supporting new entrepreneurs in significant. These tools accompany the set up of a business through coaching, training, etc.

Institutional impact is also likely to happen at local level, in cases where different local agencies worked together to bring about improvement in the development and sustainability of business (like in County Longford in Ireland).

Organisational impact:
As a result of the implementation of activities in this theme some evaluators report the creation of new enterprises (91 reported in Greece and 97 reported in Finland).

### *2.6.3. Adaptability*

24% of all DPs in round 1 and round 2 developed activities in relation to adaptability (representing 23% of the budget); 59% of these projects is linked to lifelong learning while 41% is related to adaptation to change and NIT.

Results and preliminary impact presented in the 2008 synthesis report
Lifelong learning has been a major issue on the Irish policy agenda. Projects selected within EQUAL are well placed to have an influence on policy, not only because of their quality, but also because of the right timing and the people involved. An example is the County Clare Life Learning project (round 2), aimed at developing a lifelong learning system through the development of a formal structure of promoter collaboration and the use of ICT to develop alternative modes of programme delivery.

In the reports used for this 2009 synthesis three evaluators present results on adaptability. In BFRG, 7 DPs (20% of the total number of DPs in round 2) were linked to adaptability; lifelong learning more specifically. The evaluators give a summary of the activities these projects were involved in, like the use of new technologies in life long and distance learning, the establishment of reconversion initiatives to accompany economic restructuring in enterprises, creation of partnerships and the set up of working groups to combat illiteracy.

The Greek evaluators report a high satisfaction rate of those entitled to the actions in the framework of life long learning (83%). At the same time implementing the actions presented delays and the percentage of those directly benefiting from the measure is still low (no figures are given). In the scope of this measure flexible employment and production organisation systems are applied. It is estimated that broader integration of supporting mechanisms and tools developed to face structural economic changes will be hindered by the characteristics of SMEs which represent 98% of all Greek business.

In Finland the development of business 'godfather' activities was reported, which led to the set up of an association of business godfathers in one region. Furthermore, the networking of businesses has been one of the important results of activities under this theme, leading e.g. to the development of a training model for supervisors in networked businesses. Information technologies were used in training courses for personnel in sectors in restructuring (shipyard industry).

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In relation to adaptability, different results and (potential) impacts are reported:
Life-long learning has been an important issue on the policy agenda in some Member States. One of the main result areas is the use of ICT in life-long learning for e-learning and distance learning purposes.
At the level of institutional impacts structures have been created to implement life long learning arrangements at regional level (like e.g. in County Clare – Ireland). Other types of structures developed are networked businesses to improve adaptability to a changing environment.
Organisational impact has been identified in cases of new (flexible) organisation and production systems.

The mainstreaming potential within this theme is estimated to be significant since funding sources for training and (life-long) learning are usually well developed. Some of the projects indeed continue in the new ESF programming period.

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### *2.6.4. Equal opportunities*

15% of all DPs in round 1 and round 2 are developing innovations related to equal opportunities (representing 14% of the budget). 41% is related to reconciling family and professional life; 59% is related to reducing gender gaps and de-segregation.

Results and preliminary impact presented in the 2008 synthesis report
The Luxembourg *Caritas Qualiflex project* is about the development of training in the domain of child care addressing unemployed people. The project is also about the awareness raising of the public in general and in particular policy makers about the reconciliation of family and professional life. The representative from the MA/NSS explains that the project has an impact since it responds to various identified needs:
– The flexibility of the opening hours responds to the need of working parents.
– The mix of staff (with and without a diploma) responds to a need on the labour market to create job opportunities for less qualified (un)employed.
– The settlement of child care services at the local level responds to a need to have service at a close distance.
The flexible child care system has been integrated into policy.

In the framework of the 'equal opportunities' theme in Germany, different examples of projects are reported that also made progress in the domain of child care facilities, thereby facilitating the reconciliation of family and working life. However, at the time of reporting, progress presented is mainly related to supporting instruments. Effects of the implementation of these support mechanisms are still to be identified.

In Greece, some progress has been made on this theme, notably the development of structures to support employees in their attempts to balance family and professional life and new flexible forms of work. On the other hand, actions to involve businesses in implementing new flexible forms of work have not yet made progress.

Results on equal opportunities as such are presented in the Dutch and German reports. In the Dutch report equal opportunities is analysed in relation to the NTN on this topic. It is explained that not many results are yet available due to the late start of this NTN. The analysis on EQUAL opportunities is in the German report mainly related to descriptions on how to this theme has been approached in EQUAL in Germany, i.e.:

– women-specific approach as a classical way of intervening in the domain of equal opportunities for men and women, such as training needs of women/girls; ICT training for women/girls, etc.
– men-specific approach is considered to enhance participation of men in sectors/professions currently dominated by women such as pedagogical professions and social services. Efforts are made e.g. in relation to the combination of work/life and men and part-time work.
– gender approach to make the gender dimension more visible in specific contexts, such as using sex-differentiated statistics in databases in specific economic sectors.

In relation to results, the evaluators report on the one hand that creative and successful projects have been initiated and implemented. On the other hand they

also state that the theme 'equal opportunities' in relation to innovation was not used to its full potential in the first round.

In the reports used for this 2009 synthesis evaluators from Greece, Finland and BFRG report on results in relation to equal opportunities as one of the themes. The Greek evaluators say that a significant number of actions for promoting equality and removing clichés regarding gender roles have been implemented. At the same time, there was a severe delay in the actions for mobilizing enterprises to apply new flexible employment forms. There were no training tools created for orienting women towards non-traditional skills. The majority of beneficiaries has been involved in implementing equality plans and work environment improvement techniques. The evaluators also report that the number of companies participating in actions related to encouraging desegregation is noticeable smaller in relation to round 1. A general concern is expressed in relation to the broader immediate application of practices in companies, as it is estimated that a greater effort will be needed on awareness raising of employers in combination with combating the traditional standard of roles.

The Finnish projects on equal opportunities have had their own impacts on the objective of developing equal work communities and related services. The outputs have been aimed at promoting the identification of diversity. One of the most important objectives of the projects under this measure has been to increase the opportunities for female entrepreneurship. The increase in the professional skills and business competence of female entrepreneurs has been significant. A total of 28 new business were created in the projects and all of them are female-owned.

In BFRG only one DP was involved in the measure on reconciliation, developing a network of partners to improve and generalize child care provisions. No further results are reported.

The NTN on reconciliation, presented in the German final evaluation report was mainly about awareness raising and policy influencing. A separate brochure on this topic was published.

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In relation to the theme of equal opportunities, the following results and (potential) impacts are reported:

Policy impact:
Impact on policies has been accomplished e.g. the set up of flexible system of child care in Luxembourg. Also in other Member States child care policies were influenced by EQUAL results (e.g. Germany).

Institutional impact:
At institutional level, impacts are located at the level of the development of flexible forms of work, like e.g. in Greece, but also networking of partners to improve or generalise child care provisions (as was the case in Luxembourg, but also in BFRG).

Organisational impact:
New female-owned business were created as a result of project activities on increasing opportunities for female entrepreneurship (e.g. Finland). Significant changes were enabled through the introduction of work-life balance policies and schemes in organisations.

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### 2.6.5. Asylum seekers

Only 3% of the DPs in round 1 and round 2 were focused on this theme. In the reports used for the 2008 synthesis not many results were reported on. The Luxembourg evaluators reported that EQUAL did not result in concrete steps in this domain.

In the reports used for this 2009 synthesis the Greek evaluator report that through actions under this measure, the target group's increase of skills and qualifications ranges around 28%. Also the increased percentage of the group's integration degree through participation in the actions of this measure is reported. Good practices identified are much easier to be integrated at the level of the competent authorities adopting the application practices rather than at the level of the national policy customisation for asylum seekers.
In BFRG also in this theme, only one DP has been operational. This DP developed activities related to the social integration of the target group, amongst others by language courses.

The NTN launched in Germany on asylum seekers and the projects participating in it has according to the evaluators contributed to a change in policies. This was also confirmed in a conference organised on this issue. A specific brochure has been published on asylum seekers in the German labour market.

The Finnish evaluators report on the single project related to this theme in their country. The project aimed for an impact on two levels: the starting point at the micro level was to bring as many asylum seekers as possible within the scope of various functions to improve life management and situation. At the policy level, the focus was on creating close relationships with officials and influencing political decision-making in order to bring asylum seekers into the scope of labour administration services. Tools have been developed to assist asylum seekers in becoming part of the social structures and to coach structures in how to receive asylum seekers (e.g. by the creation of a further education and training system for personnel and instructions for a client-oriented approach in the form of books).

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In relation to asylum seekers, only a few projects were developed. Although some results and (potential) impacts are identified, i.e. at the level of individuals, through e.g. language courses and other courses aimed at increase skills and qualifications (Finland, BFRG). Furthermore, other tools have been developed and implemented like counselling and coaching systems in which continuing education is supplemented with psychosocial assistance and social counselling (Germany). Also regional structures have been developed to give specialised (psychotherapeutic, legal, translation) help to traumatised persons.

At the level of policies, impacts are identified like cooperation with local authorities to place asylum seekers in various types of positions in non-statutory welfare organisations.

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# 3. Conclusions and recommendations

These conclusions and recommendations are based on the analysis of the information made available to the expert team. Readers are reminded that evaluation reports (or other contributions) were not provided by all EQUAL CIPs and should therefore consider the possibility of some limitations in the conclusions and recommendations presented here, although they can be safely considered as valid.

1. Conclusion: EQUAL has been a European initiative covering a number of themes, implemented in different ways, in various geographical areas and settings by a multitude of actors. The evaluation of EQUAL had to take this diversity into account. The European Commission stimulated a shared evaluation approach to carry out evaluation and to enhance the comparability of results by providing common landmarks. However, the different evaluators involved in EQUAL adopted various approaches for the assessment and reporting of their findings, mainly taking into account their own national context and priorities. In consequence, it becomes difficult to compare results, to draw common conclusions and to provide consistent recommendations.

   *Recommendation:*
   *For future EU programmes, a common framework for national evaluations is necessary to enhance comparability of results. It could consist of a European-wide part with themes obligatory for all Member States and a part taking into account the specificities and priorities of the Member States, with a consistent methodology to set-up similar devices and tools and to obtain comparable information.*

2. Conclusion: The range of data instruments used by the evaluators broadened from round 1 to round 2. Whereas the focus in data gathering is still on DPs and MA/NSS, triangulation of these data with a wider set of users of results happened more often, e.g. in the cases where end-beneficiaries were involved in the evaluation.

   *Recommendation:*
   *For future EU programmes it is recommended that for evaluation purposes the triangulation of data collected from DPs and MA/NSS with input from EQUAL users and a wider set of policy makers is promoted as good practice at the level of projects and of programmes to make a more in-depth impact analysis possible.*

3. Conclusion: Monitoring systems fulfil an important role in programme management for follow-up and adjustment. The monitoring systems in EQUAL evolved from perhaps too detailed and too much focus on financial data towards more simplified systems allowing for a combination of content and financial data. Interactive and personalised approaches of follow-up of projects were highly appreciated. Difficulties were reported in relation to combining data from different programmes in one single monitoring system not allowing enough to take specificities into account.

   *Recommendation:*
   *Time investment is needed in the set up of an appropriate monitoring system from the outset of a programme allowing a combination of content and financial data. Interactive and personalised approaches for the follow-up of projects should be*

*promoted whereby a balance is necessary between timeliness, relevance, user-friendliness and feasibility.*

4. <u>Conclusion</u>: The limited integration of DP self-assessments in national evaluation reports, has also limited the possibility to look at different aspects (e.g. strengths, weakness, difficulties and successes) of each project and to take the analysis into a deeper level. Self-assessment by each project is important to meet the monitoring requirements at programme level, but also to allow project to deal systematically with issues related to performance, effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the project. Self-assessment tools and approaches were not used to their full potential. Despite efforts taken by Member States to promote self-assessment, it did not become an instrument of integral quality management at project and programme level.

*Recommendation:*
*It is recommended to require self-assessment as part of integral quality management at project and programme level. Self-assessment tools should be accompanied by practical guidance and coaching at project level provided by the Managing Authority or National Support Structure, based on clear guidelines.*

5. <u>Conclusion</u>: Innovation is at the heart of EQUAL and it is evident that a number of innovative initiatives have been developed in the context of the programme. Different definitions and typologies have been used, whereby the widespread typology of goal, process and context innovation was often used as a source of inspiration. Social innovation, as complementary to technical innovation, is not much reflected on in an explicit way, while the fact that EQUAL is mainly about social innovation has certainly consequences for the reporting of results. Outputs and results of social innovation are often much more difficult to grasp and to measure e.g. due to the absence of an (objective) point of reference.

*Recommendation:*
*It is recommended to gather theoretical reflections on core concepts,(like social innovation in the case of EQUAL), from the start of a programme in a guide for project promoters to better understand the processes during the life span of the programme and results of it.*

6. <u>Conclusion</u>: For identifying whether the activities developed by the projects within EQUAL could be labelled as innovations, different approaches were developed, varying from self-scoring methods used by projects to scoring of projects by the evaluators. Process type of innovations (new techniques, new methods, or instruments) have been pre-dominant as well as product innovation. Interesting is the approach of some evaluators to link the developmental stage of innovation to the theme. For some themes (like e.g. measures in relation to enterprise creation) innovation was mainly focused on the earlier stages in innovation cycle (conception and experimentation), while for other themes (e.g. life long learning), practices were developed that were implemented on a larger scale.

*Recommendation:*
*The guidelines for the implementation of future programmes should refer to the good practice examples identified in EQUAL in relation to the identification and classification of innovations.*

7. <u>Conclusion</u>: Several factors intervened with the development of innovation within EQUAL, some factors being linked to the nature of the programme; while other factors are external to EQUAL. Networking through partnerships has been a major contributing factor to innovation, as well as National Thematic Networks. Through networking synergy and complementarity have been created thereby permitting the acceleration of innovation development. Factors external to EQUAL played also a role in the development of innovation like e.g. the existing policy framework at local, regional or national level allowing or not for the development and eventually up-take of innovation. The evaluators did in general not present a systematic analysis of the achievements in relation to innovation; mainly the innovation processes as such are commented on. One general conclusion might be that EQUAL has been above all an environment that allowed for the improvement of existing practices.

*Recommendation:*
*It is recommended for future programmes promoting the development and dissemination of innovation to use networks and partnerships as important mechanisms for innovation; networks are important factors for innovation performance.*

8. <u>Conclusion</u>: Mainstreaming is a second core component of EQUAL. It ensures that the innovation developed and tested can reach a wider public in order to maximise the learning. Horizontal and vertical mainstreaming are complementary in the sense that lessons learnt are not only transferred to similar organisations, but also that lessons learnt are integrated into policy and practice. Mainstreaming is considered as a process consisting of four phases or steps: the identification of (successful) innovation, the validation of innovative results, the dissemination and eventually transfer of results. There has definitely been progress in mainstreaming from round 1 to round 2, moving beyond dissemination. Different models of mainstreaming have been developed, inspired by the four phases or steps. While in round 1 horizontal mainstreaming had been more effective, in round 2 efforts have been made to change this imbalance. This mainly happened through events bringing together different types and levels of stakeholders, thereby linking with policy makers (like through NTN functioning more optimal in round 2). In general NTN were highly valued for their role in mainstreaming.

*Recommendation:*
*It is recommended that future programmes make use of the models of good mainstreaming developed under EQUAL. These models go beyond EQUAL and are useful for all innovative projects looking for ways to mainstreaming successful practices.*
*It is recommended to organise future mainstreaming by thematic areas, linking in with policy priorities at regional or national level.*

9. <u>Conclusion</u>: The identification of successful innovation is the first step in the mainstreaming process. Different approaches are used for the identification of good practices, whereby thematic activities are considered to be adequate mechanisms. At the same time evaluators question the mechanisms and criteria identified. It is e.g. argued that criteria like sustainability and cost-effectiveness are only vaguely taken into account. Furthermore, it is said that there is also an issue of visibility: the most active and visible projects are more likely to be identified as good practices. Different Member States developed databases with good practices.

*Recommendation:*
*For future programmes it is recommended that rather than only the identification of adequate criteria to identify good practices, mechanisms or procedures are put forward. These procedures consist of identification of good practice on the basis of a set of criteria (like degree of solution to a problem, innovative degree, proven results, transferability, link with regional/national policies, sustainability and cost-effectiveness), peer reviewing the 'good practice' and assessing it .*

10. Conclusion: Validation is the second step of the mainstreaming process. While validation models were introduced in round 1, these models have been further developed and tested in round 2. Evaluators however, report that more attention should have been paid to validation and to the streamlining of validation procedures with other activities in the mainstreaming strategy.

*Recommendation:*
*In future programmes, validation should be considered as an essential part of the mainstreaming process at project level and it should be part of the budget at project and programme level.*

11. Conclusion: For dissemination purposes a mix of instruments was used by the DPs, ranging from passive tools (like brochures, newsletters) to more interactive approaches (conferences, workshops). While transfer is considered to be a separate step in the mainstreaming process, evaluators do in general not present results or findings related to it.

*Recommendation:*
*It is recommended to continue implementing various instruments in the frame of the dissemination strategy and to enhance guidance in order to mainstream the most effective tools.*

12. Conclusion: Factors of success and hindering factors in relation to mainstreaming are summarised on the basis of evidence at DP and CIP levels. Having a sound mainstreaming plan with realistic objectives, clear 'messages' to transfer and a good mix of instruments is crucial. At the DP level the partnerships played an important role in horizontal mainstreaming. Vertical mainstreaming was in general less part of DP mainstreaming plans. Contacts and networking with policy makers are crucial for successful vertical mainstreaming. Having a positive climate and a supportive policy framework are necessary external factors.

*Recommendation:*
*It is recommended to pay more attention to mainstreaming strategies at the developmental stage of programmes and projects oriented towards innovation. Mainstreaming strategies should involve different levels (national, regional). Programme actors, like Managing Authorities and National/Regional Support Structures should be trained to support project actors in implementing their mainstreaming plans.*

13. Conclusion: Equal opportunities as a goal and gender mainstreaming as a strategy were both part of EQUAL. Equal opportunities is one of the five themes within EQUAL and at the same time, all DPs had to integrate equal opportunities in their objectives. Therefore, they had to operationalised a gender

mainstreaming strategy. The operationalisation of this strategy at DP level was one of the main difficulties faced in this respect. Different concepts were used without exactly knowing the meaning of these.

*Recommendation:*
*Awareness raising in relation to gender equality and gender mainstreaming has to continue in further programming. Sufficient (external) input of expertise into projects in this area should be safeguarded.*

14. Conclusion: The implementation of the partnership principle is considered to be one of the main successes of EQUAL and it has been central in the development of innovations (confirming findings of EU-wide evaluation). Evaluators present the main successes and challenges of working in partnerships. While a shared vision and a good set of targets are considered to be the basis of a viable and fruitful partnership, this is at the same time one of the biggest challenges. It was also reported that lessons learnt during round 1 were used to limit and overcome problems in round 2. (External) support in relation to cooperation in partnerships was considered to be useful. The empowerment principle, closely linked to the partnership principle was experimented in DPs to a differing degree varying from the involvement of intermediary organisations, to the direct involvement of end-beneficiaries.

*Recommendation:*
*Developmental support by Managing Authorities or National/Regional Support Structures to partnerships to increase their effectiveness is recommended for future programming.*

15. Conclusion: Views on the added value and actual outcomes of transnationality are mixed, nevertheless progress was identified by the evaluators from round 1 to round 2. While in round 1 transnational cooperation was mainly used for the exchange of ideas and for dissemination purposes, in round 2 the transnational setting led to actual innovation development. Tools at the disposal of organisations to construct their partnership, such as the projects database (ECDB) could be optimised for a more effective and efficient functioning. On the basis of practice and research done, factors are identified that influence transnational cooperation in a positive or negative way.

*Recommendation:*
*For future programmes it is recommended that transnational projects are planned as such from the outset, which means that sufficient resources (time and money) have to be allocated.*

16. Conclusion: Findings on results and impacts at thematic level are scattered and reported on in various deliverables produced over the life-cycle of EQUAL, like e.g. the NTN outputs, outputs of final conferences. It would be beyond the scope of this synthesis to introduce all these deliverables in our analysis. Furthermore, there are some methodological problems in relation to assessing impact, which the expert team already referred to in earlier reports (EU-wide evaluation report and 2008 synthesis). First of all impacts can only be identified in a longer term perspective. Secondly involving users/beneficiaries in the evaluation is crucial when assessing impacts, especially at institutional and organisational level. A shift could already be identified from round 1 to round 2. In round 2 more evaluators involved end-beneficiaries in their evaluation as well as more policy

actors. Whereas it might be that the original objectives of DPs and at the level of measures have not been achieved to their full extent, side effects have become visible and can be considered as important results. It is certain that a lot of issues are put on the policy agenda thanks to EQUAL (like e.g. social economy, reconciliation issues).

*Recommendation:*
*It is recommended for the evaluation of future programmes that the timing should be taken into account (impacts can only be measured on the longer term) as well as the assessment approach (involving various stakeholders, especially end-beneficiaries).*

## *Annex 1:* *Table A1 : EQUAL Round 1 in the EU-15 Member States: number of DPs*

| | 1A | 1B | 2C | 2D | 3E | 3F | 4G | 4H | 5 | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Austria** | 22 | 7 | 0 | 12 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 3 | 59 | 4% |
| **Belgium (fr & de)** | 19 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 38 | 3% |
| **Belgium (nl)** | 10 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 21 | 2% |
| **Denmark** | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 20 | 1% |
| **Finland** | 14 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 37 | 3% |
| **France** | 66 | 22 | 23 | 28 | 35 | 28 | 25 | 0 | 4 | 231 | 17% |
| **Germany** | 45 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 13 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 109 | 8% |
| **Greece** | 11 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 40 | 3% |
| **Ireland** | 10 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 21 | 2% |
| **Italy** | 84 | 7 | 0 | 71 | 81 | 0 | 0 | 34 | 2 | 279 | 20% |
| **Luxembourg** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0% |
| **Netherlands** | 29 | 3 | 13 | 6 | 14 | 6 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 97 | 7% |
| **Portugal** | 30 | 5 | 24 | 6 | 5 | 25 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 106 | 8% |
| **Spain** | 48 | 7 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 22 | 33 | 1 | 160 | 12% |
| **Sweden** | 16 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 47 | 3% |
| **UK-Great Britain** | 23 | 9 | 13 | 8 | 11 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 76 | 6% |
| **UK-Northern Ireland** | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0% |
| **Total** | 444 | 75 | 127 | 153 | 204 | 115 | 75 | 117 | 40 | 1350 | 98%[58] |
| | 33% | 6% | 9% | 11% | 15% | 8% | 6% | 9% | 3% | 100% | |

*Source: Based on ECDB data*

**1A** Employability - (Re-)integration to the labour market
**1B** Employability - Combating racism
**2C** Entrepreneurship - Business creation
**2D** Entrepreneurship - Social economy
**3E** Adaptability - Life long learning
**3F** Adaptability - Adaptation to change and NIT
**4G** Equal opportunities - Reconciling family and professional life
**4H** Equal opportunities - Reducing gender gaps and desegregation
**5** Asylum seekers

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[58] The percentages do no add up to 100%, since the small numbers of projects in Luxembourg and UK-NI have been reduced to 0%.

### Annex 2: *Table A2: EQUAL Round 2 in the EU-15 Member States: number of DPs*

|  | 1A | 1B | 2C | 2D | 3E | 3F | 4G | 4H | 5 | Total |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Austria** | 25 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 52 | 4% |
| **Belgium (fr & de)** | 19 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 35 | 2% |
| **Belgium (nl)** | 9 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 31 | 2% |
| **Denmark** | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 1 | 17 | 1% |
| **Finland** | 15 | 7 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 53 | 4% |
| **France** | 71 | 21 | 21 | 18 | 30 | 37 | 14 | 0 | 8 | 220 | 15% |
| **Germany** | 48 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 16 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 130 | 9% |
| **Greece** | 15 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 64 | 4% |
| **Ireland** | 9 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 22 | 2% |
| **Italy** | 68 | 5 | 0 | 64 | 78 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 2 | 244 | 17% |
| **Luxembourg** | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0% |
| **Netherlands** | 43 | 2 | 14 | 7 | 27 | 4 | 5 | 11 | 3 | 116 | 8% |
| **Portugal** | 19 | 6 | 16 | 6 | 3 | 22 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 86 | 6% |
| **Spain** | 72 | 13 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 38 | 31 | 36 | 1 | 228 | 16% |
| **Sweden** | 10 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 25 | 2% |
| **UK-Great Britain** | 28 | 9 | 13 | 10 | 16 | 11 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 98 | 7% |
| **UK-Northern Ireland** | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 13 | 1% |
| **Total** | **465** | **82** | **134** | **149** | **211** | **147** | **79** | **131** | **45** | **1439** | **100%** |
| % | 32% | 6% | 9% | 10% | 15% | 10% | 6% | 9% | 3% | **100%** | |

*Source: Based on ECDB data*

**1A** Employability - (Re-)integration to the labour market
**1B** Employability - Combating racism
**2C** Entrepreneurship - Business creation
**2D** Entrepreneurship - Social economy
**3E** Adaptability - Life long learning
**3F** Adaptability - Adaptation to change and NIT
**4G** Equal opportunities - Reconciling family and professional life
**4H** Equal opportunities - Reducing gender gaps and desegregation
**5** Asylum seekers

## Annex 3: People interviewed – contacted

### Table A3a: People interviewed – contacted for the 2008 synthesis report

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Belgium-Fl. | Patrick Wauters – Cap Gemini - evaluator | Telephone interview |
| Germany | Michael Heisler – Nationale Stützstruktur Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit | Telephone interview |
| Luxembourg | Alain Calmes – Ministère du Travail et de l'Emploi | Telephone interview |
| Netherlands | Elsa Vruggink – Ministerie Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid – Afdeling Europese Subsidiemaatregelen | Telephone interview |
| Finland | Hannele Syrja – LTT-Research Ltd - evaluator Round 1 Kari Hietala – evaluator Round 2 – Action one Teemu Juntunen – Aluekehitssäätiö - evaluator Round 2 – ongoing | Telephone interviews |
| Italy | Andrea Naldini – Ismeri Europa - evaluator | Telephone interview |
| Portugal | David Figueirôa – Managing Authority | Telephone interview |
| Greece | Tina Orfanidou – TEC Consultants S.A - evaluator | Telephone interview |
| Ireland | Tony Tyrrell - Technical Support Structure - WRC - Social & Economic Consultants | Telephone interview |
| UK-NI | Owen Gillespie and Declan Reilly - Department for Employment and Learning (MA) | Telephone interview |
| Spain | Angel Rivero Recuenco - GPI Consultores - Evaluator | Contacts via e-mail |
| France | Bertrand Gaudin and Yasmina Lahlou - Ministère de l'Emploi Claude Bapst - Racine | Telephone conversation |
| Belgium-Wallonia | Jenny Charlier – Agence FSE | Telephone conversation |
| UK-GB | Ken Lambert - Department for Work and Pensions | Telephone conversation |
| Austria | Michael Forschner - Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit | Telephone conversation |
| Denmark | Dorte Nøhr Andersen - National Agency for Enterprise and Construction | Contacts via e-mail |
| Sweden | Johannes Wikman - The Swedish ESF-Council | Contacts via e-mail |

**Table A3b: People interviewed – contacted for the 2009 synthesis report**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Belgium-Fl. | Louis Vervloet –ESF Agency Flanders | Telephone interview |
| Germany | Barbara Wirth-Bauer – Evaluator Germany - ICON-INSTITUTE GmbH & Co. KG<br><br>Claus Annus-Simons - Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales Referat VIGruGS2 | E-mail contacts<br><br><br>E-mail contacts |
| Luxembourg | Alain Calmes – Ministère du Travail et de l'Emploi<br>Anne-Marie Theisen – Evaluator Luxembourg – ACCORD International | Telephone interview<br><br>E-mail contacts |
| Netherlands | Elsa Vruggink – Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment | E-mail contacts |
| Finland | Harri Lappalainen – Evaluator Finland - Hanketaito Oy | E-mail contacts |
| Italy | Lucia Scarpitti – Ministry<br>Daniela Oliva – IRS Milano | Telephone interview<br>E-mail contacts |
| Portugal | Manuel Pimenta – Managing Authority Portugal | Face-to-face interview |
| Greece | Tina Orfanidou – Evaluator Greece – TEC Group | Face-to-face interview |
| Ireland | Tony Tyrrell – Technical Support Structure | Telephone interview |
| UK-NI | Owen Gillespie - Department for Employment and Learning | E-mail contacts |
| Spain | José Manuel Lacleta Michelena – Technical Support Structure | Face-to-face contact |
| BFRG | Stéphanie Godelaine  - Evaluator BFRG - ADE | Telephone interview |

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