

NO MORE TILTING AT WINDMILLS

The Pangea Development Partnership operates in the Spanish Region of Castilla - La Mancha where [Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra](#) set his story about the idealistic, but totally unpractical, adventures of [Don Quixote](#) and his faithful servant [Sancho Panza](#). However, unlike these two characters, there is no element of day-dreaming within this project, as it has adopted a range of well-targeted, realistic approaches to the social and vocational integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

In Comarca Mancha Conquense, a rural area of the province of Cuenca, the rate of migration has increased dramatically from 63 people in 1996 to 3832 people in 2005. While many of the immigrants may have initially arrived in regions along the Mediterranean Arc like Catalonia, Valencia, Murcia and Andalusia, some have come inland in search of employment or a better job. Of course once the initial immigrants, who are usually men, are settled in a particular town or village, their wives and children join them and gradually other members of their extended families might also arrive and so the numbers grow even higher. These immigrants face the same problems as the local population, such as few employment opportunities, inappropriate training provision, poor public transport, lack of childcare and difficulties with communication and access to public services.

This situation has generated the need for [Pangea's activities](#), which are geared towards creating more favourable conditions for employment and preventing social exclusion and any outbreaks of racism and xenophobia. This Development Partnership (DP) is making an important contribution to the fulfillment of a specific proposal in the Council's Recommendations ([2004/741/EC](#)) on the implementation of Member States' employment policies, which states that Spain should ensure greater access to, and efficiency of, active labour market measures for disadvantaged people, in particular young people, disabled people, immigrants and the long-term unemployed.

"Pangea sees immigration not as a threat but as a new challenge," says Jose Carlos Jimenez the coordinator of the DP, *"but everyone needs to work together and that includes the staff of institutions, professional workers in integration services, those involved in social and economic development and the general public - both the existing, as well as the new, citizens."*

Responding to this challenge is the 'raison d'être' of Pangea and the DP has put together a wide and stable partnership to help in it in experimenting with new solutions to the discrimination and inequalities faced by immigrants. Many more details about the operation of this Association Mancha Conquense can be found towards the end of this text.



A COMPLETE AND COORDINATED SERVICE

The main aim of the project is to promote the participation of immigrant men and women in the local labour market by establishing integrated and specialised services to give advice about employment opportunities and on-going support to the employer and new employee once a job has been acquired. Assistance is also available to immigrants to help with other aspects of their everyday lives.

Inter-Cultural Links or Facilitators

Much of the success of the project hinges on the people who the DP calls "inter-cultural links." These links are based in each of the four main towns where the project has a centre, namely El Provencio, Las Pedroñeras, Mota del Cuervo and San Clemente and together they also operate in another 35 municipalities. These links provide a bridge between the immigrant population and the host communities and the opportunities and services that these communities provide, especially those that relate to the labour market. All of the four links and their coordinator come from immigrant backgrounds and were selected by open advertisement. They then had to follow a course of 150 hours of training covering topics such as the history of immigration, legislation

relating to immigrants, intercultural communication, mediation in different settings and job search skills.

Naturally, as the role of the inter-cultural links is to ensure effective communication, there was a lot of role play and group discussion during the training course. Contact is made with members of the immigrant population wherever they are to be found. Markets have proved to be very useful meeting points but perhaps the best places to make contact are the shops or centres that immigrants use to keep in contact with friends and family by using and paying for phone calls or sometimes faxes and e-mails. Almost half of the DP's beneficiaries have been recruited in this way. Another very important aspect in making contact is language. Within the DP are professional workers who, in addition to communicating in Spanish, can speak Arabic, Romanian, Russian, English and French. Also, members of staff are equipped with multilingual "business cards" that they can hand out to anyone who might be interested in using the services of the DP.



Training and Employment Opportunities

One of the facilities that Pangea offers is an Employment Club for immigrant women, which provides a mutual support mechanism. Through the club these women receive advice and support in their search for training and employment and they can also find help with problems or difficulties that they might be encountering in other areas of their lives. *"The professional workers in this project are very kind and warm and speak to us as if we were part of the family,"* says Cristina Condruz who was working part time in a telephone/fax centre when she came into contact with one of the DP's inter-cultural links. Cristina feels that *"this means that we can explain personal things and maybe other services, where they only quiz and interview you, could try this type of relationship!"*



One avenue that is open to the women in the club and to all the other beneficiaries is vocational training. The DP does not attempt to compete with other training providers and will guide people towards suitable courses where these exist. What it does provide is specialist training for immigrants in job search and interview techniques, social skills and new information technologies. Another aspect of training is the Pangea's Entrepreneurship Itineraries that prepare people for self-employment, and already there are some signs of success,

with one of the beneficiaries who helped the DP with Russian interpretation and translation moving on to work with outside agencies and companies, and another beneficiary, a Romanian man, taking over a coffee shop from the former owner.

Possible self-employment is also featured in the DP's housing activities. At the moment, 29 people are being trained as builders, electricians and plumbers – all trades that are related to the renovation of houses. The idea is to create a company at the end of the training that can take advantage of existing grants from the municipalities for the refurbishment of old housing stock that are never used, as they are too complicated for an individual to manage. However, it should be possible for a company to make such an application and to cope with all the related paperwork. In general, housing is always a problem for immigrants, so Pangea is there again to offer support and legal advice. The project workers, as they move around the various towns, also look for properties that might be available to rent and the DP enters into agreements with the owners, if they are willing to let this accommodation to immigrants. Also, during the various harvests, and particularly when the grapes are being picked, this rural area is inundated by temporary workers and Pangea has been working very hard to improve the conditions of the hostels where they live during this relatively short period.

Awareness Raising and Research

In terms of awareness raising, the DP uses every possible opportunity to promote its messages. It is involved in exhibitions, fairs and cultural events and it also has a weekly radio programme and contributes a column to local newspapers. There are two main messages that are reinforced by these activities. The first is addressed to employers, as



Mamen Escudero Cruz one of the members of staff in Las Pedroneras explained, *"Employers simply don't believe that immigrants have experience and skills that can really benefit their enterprises and that is why we keep focusing all our stories of success on agricultural employers, employers' organisations and federations of employers or cooperatives."* At another level, the DP is anxious to make sure that the inhabitants of these Spanish towns and villages understand the opportunities and the benefits that might emerge from the arrival of this new active population. For example, plans to close local primary schools and health services have had to be re-examined in the light of the increased numbers of potential users.

All of Pangea's work, and especially its awareness raising, is underpinned by research activities that the project calls its ["Inter-cultural Barometer."](#) These include studies on:

- The Immigrant Population;
- Temporary Agricultural Workers;
- The Nature of the People who have come from Abroad;
- Immigration in the eyes of the Host Community;
- The Contribution of the Immigrant Population to the Locality in terms of Social and Economic Development and Cultural Enrichment.

Employment Mediation

However, the central aspect of Pangea's work is its employment mediation approach that has been built on the outcomes of a First Round EQUAL DP called [Res Laboris](#). As has already been indicated, the potential employee receives personalised attention, advice about training or actual training in certain aspects that are designed to help them find a job. To a potential employer, Pangea offers an analysis of the local labour market and an explanation of what diversity has to offer them, a bank of employees with useful skills and experience, help with the training and the induction of new employees and on-going support in the workplace. These are all based on a very detailed Protocol that is signed by the project and the employer.

One specific case illustrates this approach in action. Alla Kobets came from the Ukraine to Spain in the hope of finding a better job. She had a degree in Financial Management and had worked, in the Ukraine, for a pharmaceutical company that had been developing and testing new drugs. She thought that when she arrived in Spain she would only have to learn the language to be able to work at a higher level. However, as an immigrant, she had to stay in the country for three years to get the official papers that enabled her to find a job and during that period she worked as a farm labourer. At the same time, Alla made lots of new friends and one of them told her about the Pangea's intercultural link who worked in El Provencio and arranged for her to meet him. As a result, her CV was quickly added to the project's employment bank.



Pilar Moya Paños is the Chief Executive of a family-owner company that supplies building materials and she was looking for an effective and efficient Personal Assistant. As El Provencio is quite a small town, she had heard about Pangea's employment bank and had also been visited by one of the project's member of staff and so she decided to ask the DP for help in recruiting a suitable person.

As Alla's profile matched the company's needs a meeting was arranged and during the meeting an induction training programme was organised that focussed on computer training. Pilar also agreed to act as a job coach over this nine month period. As she says *"it wasn't all one way during the induction, as we learned from each other and Alla quickly understood the nature of our company and its clients and with the aid of her dictionary she also became familiar with the types of products that we supply."* Now Pilar considers Alla to be *"my right hand"* and shortly, Alla will lead the company's action to introduce a Quality Management System.

CREATING A SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP

The Association Mancha Conquense was formed at the beginning of the 2001, as the final product of a process, which had begun five years before. In 1996, the first activities in terms of employment and local development began, financed by several programmes such as PRODER (rural development) and the NOW and YOUTHSTART strands of the EMPLOYMENT Community Initiative.

These initial activities led to the creation of a Strategic Plan for Regional Development, and within its action lines, there was a proposal to establish a project to provide integrated employment measures for the most disadvantaged groups in the territory. This proposal was presented, as an application to the First Round of EQUAL, and the project that was called "[Res Laboris](#)" was selected. The organisation that was created to implement this project was the "Mancha Conquense Development Partnership", and this was given a legal form, that constituted it as an association, which now aims to have a life beyond the implementation of its EQUAL projects.

The other partners that are involved in the partnership are:

- Asociación De Jóvenes Agricultores De Cuenca (Association of Young Farmers of Cuenca);
- Asociación De Nuevos Ciudadanos Baraka (The Baraka Association of New Citizens);
- Ayto. De El Provencio (The Town Council of El Provencio);
- Ayto. De Las Pedroñeras (The Town Council of Las Pedroñeras);
- Ayto. De Mota Del Cuervo (The Town Council of Mota Del Cuervo);
- Ayto. De San Clemente (The Town Council of San Clemente);
- Cruz Roja Española De Cuenca (The Spanish Red Cross);
- Servicio Público De Empleo of Junta De Castilla La Mancha (Regional Employment Service);
- Unión De Pequeños Agricultores Y Ganaderos (Union of Small Farmers).

These partners are involved for a range of reasons. Some are the key players when it comes to developing any action with immigrants, whilst others already have programmes that address this target group. In the case of the Baraka Association, it represents immigrants and its inclusion in the DP reflects the empowerment principle of EQUAL. The agricultural organisations represent the employers and the Town Councils represent, in a global way, the communities that receive these new citizens. In the case of the Regional Employment Service, it is responsible for the active employment policies and the many good practices generated by Pangea will be incorporated into this Service. Jose Carlos Jimenez, the coordinator of the DP, is convinced that *"for a suitable intervention with this target group, the implication of all the key organisations in the territory is required and it is also necessary for the sustainability of the new approaches generated by the project, since these partners can adopt and adapt them for their activities or their own services."*

Each organisation contributes to Pangea according to its strengths and abilities, particularly as the DP has gathered together a very heterogeneous group of partners. The Regional Government offers resources such as technical assistance and information and it also facilitates cooperation and delivery, whilst the Baraka Association facilitates the access of the project to the final beneficiaries. The four Town Councils have provided the project with buildings and some of the infrastructure necessary for its implementation. The agricultural organisations have helped with improving the conditions of the temporary workers and have even persuaded some employers to offer temporary contracts rather than paying these workers in the black.

A number of measures have been taken to ensure the smooth coordination of the work of the partnership and these include:

- The organisation of a training course focusing on how communication within the partnership could be improved;
- The creation of committees with clearly defined remits helped to spread the work and the responsibility;
- The functions and tasks related to the follow-up of the project's performance have also been distributed between partners;
- The outcomes of the formative, external evaluation are used to correct any faults or failings in the performance of the DP.

The "Mancha Conquense Association" established for the Round One DP was an innovative method of cooperation, as up to that point no similar structure had existed in the territory that enabled a small group of very heterogeneous organisations to work closely together with a high degree of participation and involvement. Pangea has taken this even further, using the experience of the previous DP and adding two new members, the Spanish Red Cross and the

Union of Small Farmers. The results of its activities and its network are very impressive not only in terms of quality but also quantity. Of the 3832 immigrants that are living in this rural area, Pangea has helped 2000 of them through one or more of its activities.

All of the action is not meant to stop there. A culture of cooperation in looking for solutions to the problems of the territory has been created through the Mancha Conquense Association, which has moved from a local to a regional approach. This culture will continue after EQUAL, and together with the regional government, the Mancha Conquense Association will continue to pioneer new developments in the social and economic fabric of the territory.

The Three Most Important Lessons from PANGEA

1. The whole concept of mediation is central to the success of projects working with migrants. Without intercultural mediators immigrants would not be reached and without the support of employment mediators, employers would neither recognise their skills nor generally be ready to hire them for responsible jobs;
2. Integration has to be a two way process. The new citizens must be prepared to adapt to the host community but that community must also not see them as a threat but as an opportunity and so it must be continually be reminded of the benefits that immigrants can bring.
3. In terms of the sustainability and transferability of EQUAL outcomes, it is vitally important to integrate the action of DPs into the overall social and economic development of the territory, especially if the local or regional government has such a local development plan or strategy.

MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE

Two major aims of the DP are not yet reflected in the action plans. These are tackling the gender pay gap and introducing a gender dimension into strategies for improved health and safety at work. Specific working groups have studied these two issues and have produced a survey on health and safety conditions and another on the wages paid to women and men in the 19 organisations. Both surveys reveal that legal obligations are generally being respected. There were only few cases of discrimination that related to levels of pay, but in-depth case studies indicated that there was a need to address the principle of equal pay for comparable work. There were more obvious concerns about health and safety issues. It appears that when women are worried about the security of their jobs, they may be prepared to accept working conditions that are harmful to their health. In one factory, the survey discovered pregnant women dealing with toxic agents and in another female workers were regularly lifting iron bars weighing over 30 kilos. Then, there was a problem with a ceramics company in which women were prohibited from working close to the ovens and this restriction blocked their access to better paid jobs. The problem could have been resolved if the employer had purchased new safety equipment but he felt he could not make the financial investment. However, there were encouraging responses from three enterprises, which were immediately prepared to redress the deficiencies highlighted by the survey. In addition, five companies with particularly problematical health and safety conditions agreed that the DP should carry out a second analysis in greater depth and, if necessary, negotiate appropriate improvements with the Work's Council.

IMPROVING THE CLIMATE FOR CHANGE

It is still too early to assess the full impact of the DP's activities but the process of change is well underway. Training materials and tools created by the project are enhancing the visibility of the equality action plans and stimulating other employers to follow suit. These organisations then have access to a CD-Rom that presents and explains the experience of the original 19 companies and agencies in tackling discrimination and improving the job situation and working conditions of all their employees. Thanks to the leading role played by the National Trade Union Federation within the project and the country at large, the agreements and action plans are setting new standards for collective bargaining.

THE ADDED-VALUE OF TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

Agir para a Igualdade has transnational partners in [Austria](#), [Italy](#) and Hungary. The Italian DP is working on life-long-learning and the Hungarian project aims to increase the employability of the Roma community. Transnational exchange has generated a learning process that is helping all partners to take more account of the needs of ethnic minorities and to integrate a gender dimension into their activities. Building on the Portuguese experience, partners in "Igualdade.Sociale@it.hu.pt" are producing a guide to support enterprises in introducing equality plans covering both dimensions of gender and ethnicity.

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Link to [EQUAL database description](#)