

Executive Summary

According to the EC, the evaluation of the EQUAL programme must answer the question of how and to what extent EQUAL has succeeded in attaining its objective to experiment with and transfer new means of implementing employment policies, seeking over the long-term to reduce the discrimination and inequalities encountered by underprivileged groups on the labour market.

The evaluation process introduced in French-speaking and German-speaking Belgium began in 2002 and is expected to last until 2007. Its main milestones are the mid-term evaluation carried out in 2003, and the final evaluation, the subject of this report.

Subject of the evaluation: CIP EQUAL

The objective of the EQUAL Community initiative is to promote new practices in combating all types of labour market discrimination and inequalities in a context of transnational co-operation. In addition, the initiative takes due account of the social and labour-market integration of asylum-seekers.

This initiative is reflected by 6 key principles (thematic approach, development partnerships, innovation, transnational co-operation, empowerment and mainstreaming). In addition, equal opportunity between men and women is considered as a cross-disciplinary priority throughout the programme.

In this programme, the public authorities in French-speaking and German-speaking Belgium (FGB) have emphasised 5 priorities:

- **Measure A:** improving the quality and efficiency of the labour-market integration process and keep employed those persons who experience the greatest difficulties on the labour market.
- **Measure C:** promoting the setting up of companies - more specifically, very small firms - by persons who are victims of discrimination and inequality, notably, by integrated support and by detecting promising sectors.
- **Measure E:** encouraging the emergence and implementation of human resource management mechanisms promoting continued employment and/or the development of employability of workers whose jobs are not secure.
- **Measure G:** seeking out and experimenting with new means for finding a more effective balance between professional life and personal life, especially for women on the labour market, while developing more effective and more flexible forms of work organisation and assistance services for people.
- **Measure DA:** With respect to asylum-seekers and within the framework of legislation in effect, promoting the quality of support and the development of training that facilitates access to employment and training mechanisms.

To this end, a total budget of more than EUR 83 million has been earmarked over the programming period (2000-2006), of which 50% is allocated by the ESF. The other 50% is provided by the Belgian public authorities.

The programming is spread over two calls for proposals (2000-2003 and 2004-2006). Some 37 Development Partnerships (DPs) were set up during the first call for proposals and 35 were set up in the second, for a total budget of nearly EUR 42 million on the ESF budget, with nearly one-half of the funds allocated to measure A.

Main conclusions

The conclusions that follow are based on the evaluation of the first call for proposals, which is now over.

Contribution of the DPs to several measures at once

The analysis by measure has shown that the DPs, in addition to their contribution to the measure of which they are a part, also contribute to the expected results of other measures. For instance in measure E, the largest contributions of DPs take the form of the development of innovative tools and methods for raising awareness, based on positive discrimination and improved access to the labour-market integration of vulnerable groups, two results expected for measure A.

This confirms the mid-term evaluation conclusions on the lack of consistency of the Community Initiative Programme (CIP) EQUAL in terms of measures and the DPs, namely, the objectives assigned to the measures are too general and/or too broad and are not always consistent with the themes to which they relate. This lack of consistency in formulating DP objectives, results and actions is also found at the level of the DPs' contributions to expected results. It makes it more difficult to understand the programme and therefore its actual results, and complicates the efforts to disseminate good practices.

Massive contribution to the labour-market integration of vulnerable groups

Labour-market integration, which already largely dominates all public discrimination policies, is by far the most important intervention area. This is because the efforts of DPs, regardless of the measures of which they were a part, focused on reinforcing labour-market integration mechanisms for all vulnerable groups.

The survey³ with the DPs demonstrated that 84% of the respondents (including partners and co-ordinators alike) contributed in one way or another to improving access to the labour-market integration of persons excluded from it and that 60% did so in a significant or even decisive manner. The analysis by measure showed that this result, expected for measure A, was largely attained by the DPs belonging to other measures: 40% of the DPs of measure C, 45% of the DPs of measure E and 67% of those of measure G said that they contributed significantly to this result.

³ A survey was carried out with all of the DPs (co-ordinators and partners) in May-June 2005, the results of which are available in Annex 8.

Privileged approach: the development of tools to improve the quality of interventions

The vast majority, if not all, of the DPs have worked on the development of tools and methods. This may take the form of a system for validating lessons learnt and referential, a method for evaluating expertise, as well as computerised tools, such as the creation of Internet information or awareness-raising sites, or training modules adapted to certain types of groups. As such, CIP EQUAL was mostly an opportunity to work on the processes of implementing their activities in order to improve the quality and efficiency of their interventions.

Discrepancy between targeted groups and effective beneficiaries

As pointed out by the mid-term evaluation, the target group has not always been clearly identified and clearly targeted based on the activities carried out. For example, only 41%⁴ of the plan's trainees were affected in practice. The results of measure E are especially below the estimates and may be explained by a lack of clear vision of the target group. This contributed to limit the impact of this measure on those who may perhaps have needed it most.

In addition, the trainees are not always those with limited qualifications: nearly 30% of them hold at most a primary school certificate, but 10% have a university diploma. Some 1/3 of the measure C trainees have this level of education, as a result, no doubt, of the skills required by the measure.

Although the object of the CIP is not to maximise the number of trainees, the rate of attainment of what was planned is actually very weak and raises the question of the DPs' commitment to the implementation of their activities. In addition, in the absence of objectives fixed in terms of results to be attained for the trainees hired, it is impossible to assess the programme's efficiency.

New practices mainly in terms of processes

Most of the new practices identified, including all measures, are associated with the processes: i.e. everything that relates to methods, training techniques, integration models, strategic management tools, and others. Accordingly, it was mainly intended to improve the quality of the integration, training and company setup process.

Focus on personalised support

The contribution of DPs to the guidelines fixed by the European Employment Strategy (EES) for 2003-2005 demonstrates overwhelmingly that it focused on everything concerning the introduction of mechanisms for the early identification of needs, employment search help, and orientation and training within the framework of personalised action plans.

⁴ See appendix 7 for more details.

What prevails are the individualised approaches, whether in terms of supporting employment (individualised coaching for employment searches and personalised monitoring when the person starts his/her employment) and the integration process (development of approaches focused on individuals, process of individualised support for integration, support with the user's appropriation of his integration process, etc.) or in terms of individualised training.

Development of new training techniques

Overall, the new practices at this level mainly involve improvements to that which is already being done, adapting it to a context that is evolving in terms both of technical issues and of the characteristics of the labour market. However, the truly innovative aspect is limited.

Preponderance of the development of tools

CIP EQUAL was first an opportunity to take an objective look at standard practices and to have them evolve based on accumulated experience, the targeted group or the partnership context. The most common approach was to improve processes and reinforce the efficiency of interventions, while developing new tools.

Targeting of specific groups

Extra attention given to vulnerable persons is also a certain contribution by EQUAL to existing practices. The main groups having thus benefited from specific support in the form of training and integration are: prisoners, the illiterate, asylum-seekers, people from sub-Saharan Africa, those over the age of 45, and the disabled. This does not mean in any way that these groups did not benefit of any support before; rather, the DPs in question did not support them systematically prior to EQUAL.

Networking and partnerships

Networking, whether in the DPs or between the DPs and other actors, is identified by most of the DPs as a new support. In particular, this made it possible to introduce operators who were not necessarily in the habit of working together on a common project, to bring together all the actors active in a single area on a given geographic zone, or to have the various teaching networks work together.

However, it is rather surprising that the partnership and the broader networking were considered by so many people as a new practice, because this is a key principle and therefore not the objective of the Community Initiative. Accordingly, partnership should be understood as a means of promoting new practices, rather than as a new practice in itself. Indeed it is undeniable that since the beginning, partnership has been a central component for the DPs. Even though the majority of DPs mention the partnership as a new practice, we should nevertheless point out that it is never mentioned as the first or only new practice. This means that the partnership has become both a key principle and a new practice.

New practices but low degree of innovation

The degree of innovation of the practices identified is relatively low. Most of the practices identified involve approaches already known, although they achieve their results by improving the quality of interventions and covering new target groups.

EQUAL was above all a mean to improve existing practices in terms of integration, enterprise creation or training, while giving the opportunity to develop methodological, awareness-raising and information tools, and to create an area permitting new types of co-operation.

The low degree of innovation may be explained by implementation conditions, which do not promote risk-taking and innovation. Among these, there is the duration of implementation, already addressed in the mid-term evaluation, which is insufficient to design and test a completely new practice, as well as the uncertainty concerning the monitoring given to these innovations. The key principles (see below) are intended to facilitate innovation and they do contribute in this respect, although they also imply administrative and financial burdens that absorb a great deal of the time and energy of the persons involved.

Dissemination and promotion of new practices

Lack of documentation of new practices

Once the new practices have been identified at the level of the DPs, it is important to analyse and document them before disseminating them. However, until now, the documentation of new practices has been inexistent and there are few analyses at a level higher than the DPs. In addition to the issue of equal opportunity, only the theme of “age management” has been analysed collectively and pooled in terms of experiences.

The DPs: promoters of the dissemination of new practices

Naturally, the DPs play a key role in the dissemination of their new practices, in particular via the reports that they transmit on a regular basis to the Agency, but above all thanks to the seminars and workshops they have organised to present their results. Some of them have also developed an informal process of exchanges with the public authorities competent in their area. However, the dissemination of new practices has mainly taken place horizontally, to actors from the sector and transnational partners, in particular via the organisation of seminars and workshops at the national and European levels. The DPs have also engaged in vertical mainstreaming, sometimes very directly as a result of the composition of their support committee, which, for example, may include functional administrations and government offices.

Very weak promotion of new practices

Although it is clear that some new practices can be highlighted, the way to do this, whether through public policies or through the recurring activities of the operators in question, is completely vague and is primarily based on the closeness of DPs to the authorities, the dynamism of the DPs and the interest that the authorities have in a particular DP. No systematic approach has been introduced to learn from these practices and to examine how they could be integrated in policies and in the main actors' activities. This was not done when the programme was designed or when it was implemented and is a major shortcoming of the programme in FGB.

The ESF Agency holds a strategic position between what happens at the micro level (the DPs) and what is discussed at the macro level (public policies at FGB and European level). Although it is certain that it is not a necessary passage for mainstreaming, it is in a unique position, one that enables it to assume a key role as interface between these levels. As such, the Agency has been very active at the level of its participation in an entire series of international conferences and project support committees. It has also organised a number of meetings in order to facilitate exchanges between DPs. However, the results are more qualified in terms of the identification, analysis and dissemination of new practices.

Community added value

One of the central questions of the evaluation of a programme supported by the EC is to identify its added value vis-à-vis existing national policies or vis-à-vis other structural programmes financed by the EU. In the case of EQUAL, in addition to the financial added value, which is indisputable (but not specific to EQUAL), the CIP's Community added value is intrinsically linked to the contributions of the key principles in combating labour market discrimination and inequalities, as well as equal opportunity.

Major contribution of partnership

Overall, partnership has been a clear success factor in the implementation of projects. The combination of experience and the expertise of the partners of a project is recognised by the vast majority of actors as representing one of EQUAL's major contributions, to such an extent that most of the DPs have identified the networking of partners and the development of co-operation as being one of the most interesting innovative practices to address the issue of inequality and discrimination.

However, the implementation of a project in partnership also has a cost that is not easy to measure. Despite this, it clearly requires time in order to ensure the consistency of the project and the effective integration of each partner in the activities.

Minor contribution of empowerment

The study showed that the decision-making processes introduced by the DPs satisfy most of them. Following partnership, the principle of empowerment is globally perceived as facilitating the implementation of actions and improving their efficiency. Even though the mid-term evaluation concluded that the beneficiaries were not highly involved, things

appear to have evolved positively for certain DPs. The operators see the application of this key principle as an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the needs of beneficiaries. Thanks to this active participation, certain DPs were able to develop self-assessment tools and to refocus their projects' activities to adapt them to the needs of their target group.

Mixed results in terms of transnational co-operation (TC)

The results of TC are relatively mixed. On average, TC represents only 5% of the budgets of interventions, even though it was possible to go as high as 10% of the projects (depending on the guidelines at the European level), thereby constituting a contribution to the DPs. The results of the survey corroborate the initial conclusions of the mid-term evaluation in the sense that TC is essentially a place for exchanges and putting into perspective the work carried out at the national level.

With respect to the question of the added value of TC, the survey showed that 45% of the co-ordinators and 51% of the partners believe that it is below or at best the same as that which could have been achieved by reallocating the resources to the DP activities. Its implementation was indeed complicated by a certain number of factors such as differences in timetables, the lack of time to set up transnational co-operation agreements (TCAs), the difficulty in finding appropriate partners, and differences in the objectives pursued by the DPs working in the same TCA.

Clear contribution of new practices whose genuinely innovative dimension is still limited

Innovation is not only a key principle; it is also at the heart of EQUAL's objective. The stimulation of the CIP EQUAL for the launch of an innovation approach among the DPs is undeniable. However, nearly 30% of the co-ordinators believe that the contribution of innovation is limited to the success of their project.

More than anything else, innovation has improved existing integration and training practices and their dissemination with the operators in question. It then gave an opportunity to put into practice the approach considered as new for the networking of operators and working in partnerships. Finally, it has made it possible to integrate new vulnerable target groups more systematically in the supply of training and as part of the integration efforts.

Few projects involve design/experimentation of genuinely innovative practices, as most actions consist of extending or continuing an experimentation phase, disseminating practices at a broader level, or developing tools to capitalise on and disseminate existing practices.

Thematic approach: an insufficiently highlighted principle

Even though each of the DPs work on a theme, the evaluation of the efficiency of the measures demonstrated that many of them contribute to several themes simultaneously.

Moreover, the evaluation also demonstrated that in a certain number of cases, the DPs have adopted one approach for each specific group, which was the approach that prevailed during the previous programming period.

Special attention to equal opportunity

The issue of gender and male-female equality is an important dimension of the EQUAL programme, which, at the beginning, was not very well understood by the DPs. However, later on, this was given special attention by the ESF Agency, which developed several tools to enable the DPs to more effectively include this cross-cutting priority of the programme.

Mainstreaming: essential, but lack of a method for its implementation

Mainstreaming activities are relatively unstructured and are not very inter-connected. The DPs organise workshops to present their results to the other actors in the sector and to the extent possible establish exchange processes with the public authorities. At the level of the CIP, a thematic workshop on the issue of age management and a mainstreaming committee were set up in March 2004, neither of which have been covered by documentation that could be highlighted somewhat systematically. Moreover, a series of activities is organised at the European level, whose effects at the national level are relatively uncertain.

Innovate: yes, but how far and at what price?

The question of the Community added value of the CIP EQUAL first arises with the question of innovation. In the end, the evaluation of the activities carried out by the DPs within each measure shows that searching for truly innovative practices is not a priority. On the one hand, the scope of the needs and the insufficiency of the recurring resources to tackle inequalities and discriminations lead operators to first target those needs that have already been expressed. On the other, the interest of the innovative approach lies mainly in the ability to improve the techniques, methods and tools used. In this, CIP EQUAL in FGB has been consistent with the nature of these needs, rather than imposing a search for innovation “at any price” and has contributed genuine added value to the other programmes and measures.

At the end of the day, to guarantee the added value of CIP EQUAL, it is necessary for the management difficulties which are specific to CIP EQUAL and which are stronger than in other programmes not to exceed the contribution of innovation as obtained in FGB.

Recommendations

Within the framework of this programme

Validate, disseminate and promote new practices

It is important to set up a system very quickly to validate new practices emerging from DPs from the first call and to document them in order not to lose them and be able to disseminate them later on. The ESF Agency has already begun a study on this subject.

It is essential to reinforce dissemination activities quickly in order to benefit from the contributions from the first call for proposals. This may take the form of roundtables or groups who share experiences. These groups should include the DPs in question, as well as those operators active in actions of this type outside EQUAL, in order to reinforce possible relationships with other programmes, as well as representatives of the public authorities, so as to envisage in a highly concrete manner that which could be highlighted within policies. These groups should be systematically supplied by an analysis of tested practices, their feasibility at a broader level and their cost/efficiency relationship.

Encouraging the continuation of working partnership above and beyond EQUAL

Work in a partnership has been a major contribution to the implementation of the projects and has also encouraged operators to pursue joint activities. It should be able to make future actions more consistent. It is therefore important for the public authorities to continue to stimulate this partnership work, either through financing joint projects, or through the creation of networks within which information can be exchanged more systematically, improving the relationship between interventions, and improving the consistency of the approaches developed.

Highlighting the lessons learned from EQUAL for the next programming period

We cannot help but conclude that after the guidelines valid until 2004, reformulated for the period 2005-2008, the ESF is offering to work on 4 areas for the period 2007-2013, still formulated somewhat differently. For its part, the EQUAL Community initiative proposed 9 themes, from which FGB chose 5. However, whether we are talking about guidelines, EQUAL themes or intervention areas proposed for the next programming period, beneath the surface, we find the same issues: support for employment, labour-market integration, training, and others.

Intervention areas

Some new practices have been identified, several of which represent significant contributions to combating discrimination, provided that they are documented and validated. It is only to the extent that they are consistent with the lessons learned from the other programmes that they will actually be promoted during the coming programming period.

A. Improving the capacity of adaptation of workers and companies

In this area, EQUAL'S contributions are essentially found at the following levels: continuous training, distance training, new information and communication technologies and alternating work/trainings schemes, the working environment and re-conversions management.

<i>Contributions</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
Continuous training	
Tool for promoting awareness of skills management in the company	This tool could be very useful to increasing investment in human resources in the company. This is perfectly consistent with one of the Recommendations of the European Council (see table 3.4) concerning the need to increase the participation of workers in training, as well as with respect to the recommendation of PANE 2004 concerning the increase in the participation of workers in training while paying special attention to people with limited qualifications.
Alternating work/training schemes	
Tools for information and improvement of alternating work/training methods	<i>Alternating work/training web site including information sheets to manage alternating work/training (supervision of trainers, supervision of tutors, reorientation and validation of skills, and quality charter).</i> Given the large number of operators in this area, it would seem to be highly judicious to systematise the use of tools developed after having adapted them, if necessary. It is also important to encourage operators to adhere to the quality charter, thereby making alternating work/training schemes a genuine integration tool, rather than a financial windfall effect.
Distance training	
New training techniques via the Internet	<i>Putting training content online.</i> To the extent that it is effective, promote the method of e-learning and the new contents accessible from all training operators.
Training in new information and communications technologies	
Dissemination of skills in new information and communications technologies	<i>Contributions to training in new information and communications technologies, whether for specific groups (the disabled), in specific areas (connectors, fibre-optic) or general ones (modules for becoming familiar with information and communications technologies in vocational training), or through a specific process (individualised training, especially in the CEFAs [Centres for Education and Alternating Work/Training Schemes], plus online assistance).</i> All of these lessons learned could, for example, be integrated in the RW mobilisation plan for information technologies and communication.
Work environment	
Strategic management tools	<i>Design of indicators to measure well-being in the workplace and macroeconomic indicators to measure quality of life at the European level.</i> This tool to measure well-being in the workplace in companies and public institutions should be more broadly disseminated in order to be able over time to be included in the preparation of statistics in FGB, thereby supplying the design of policies in this area.
Re-conversion	
Introduction of a reconversion unit	The launch of the CRIREC (Centre of Integrated Resources for Reconversions) is part of the implementation of the Walloon region's decree requiring reconversion units by the employment department in order to support workers. In addition, this initiative contributes to following the PANE 2004 recommendation to anticipate and support company restructurings more effectively, especially in the case of collective redundancies.

B. Improving access to employment for jobseekers and inactive persons, preventing unemployment, extending the active life and increasing the participation of women and migrants in the labour market

This 2nd area is relatively broad and covers, even more than the first area, components belonging to different measures of EQUAL.

<i>Contributions</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
Extension of active life	
Overall approach to maintain the employments of workers over the age of 45	This practice, developed in the German-speaking community and highlighted in PANE 2004, as well as the results of the thematic network on age management (notably, a tutorial function) should be capitalised on in the next programming period. This is consistent with the CSE recommendation in its 2005 report on the need to more effectively mobilise older persons on the labour market.
Setting up of companies	
New techniques to support the setting up of companies (for women)	Equal has led to the development of company creation assistance tools by and for women entrepreneurs, as well as collective training for people who have projects to set up companies. These experiments should lead to more effective identification of needs and realities specific to women, and adaptation of the tools currently made available to entrepreneurs.
Company creation projects	<i>Company creation projects (incubators) and a system of individual support for people with company creation projects who come from vulnerable backgrounds.</i> The experiment with networked incubators is already explicitly demonstrated in PANE 2004 as a future solution and, as such, should be promoted in the next programming period.
Equal opportunity	
Professional desegregation	<i>Training in "stereotypes and argumentation" and a campaign concerning trades and gender have been initiated in order to improve awareness about equal opportunity.</i> This should help to diversify professional choices and offset the lack of resources in those trades where there is a shortage of labour. This initiative should be compared with other campaigns to raise awareness of equal opportunity, and, in particular, with what is done at the level of the institute for equality between women and men.
Childhood reception	
Tools for improving the quality and accessibility of reception services	The partnership dynamic and the mobilisation of additional actors to welcome children were intended to develop a consistent policy in this area by taking account of territorial characteristics. This synergy could be reproduced in other entities, thereby helping to improving the overall consistency of the children's reception policy.
Reinforcement of the social integration of migrants	
Employment creation	The use of subsidy AR 60/7 to support employment creation projects for persons of African origin, as well as the creation of employments promoting international mobility by highlighting inter-cultural aspects are two practices that could be compared in order to envisage a joint approach to employment creation for this specific target group.
Qualifying training	Training in entrepreneurship for persons of foreign origin should be evaluated before envisaging more systematic implementation for this specific group.
PANE 2004 recognises that persons of non-European nationality always find it more difficult than the others to access the labour market. Any new practice combating this discrimination should therefore be highlighted and insofar as possible, be integrated in public policies.	

C. Reinforcing the social inclusion of underprivileged persons and combating discrimination

Clearly, this is the area in which EQUAL is most present, essentially in terms of integration and direct support for finding a job. As has already been said, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on personalised support. Accordingly, this component is also present in a number of contributions and should certainly be analysed in-depth, in particular, in terms of cost/efficiency.

<i>Contributions</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
<i>Direct employment support</i>	
Temping for people with little schooling	<i>Local partnerships between temp agencies and training centres have made it possible to find employments for people with little schooling through temporary jobs.</i> This mechanism should be evaluated in order to look into the possibility of development elsewhere.
Direct employment intervention	SIDE provides individualised coaching in finding an employment. This service has already been integrated in a measure to promote employment in the Brussels-Capital Region since 2001. This measure should be evaluated in terms of cost effectiveness, prior to possibly being envisaged elsewhere.
Employments adapted to disabled persons	<i>A number of jobs suited to disabled persons have been created, such as, for example, in the case of a call-centre, electronic archiving, and tele-working.</i> This approach could be developed at a broader scale, notably, in connection with the measure to promote employment in the non-merchant sector for disabled persons, or by creating specific incentives.
Junk removal network	<i>A network for the collection and re-use of junk via transformation and recycling has been set up by employing vulnerable persons and people with few qualifications, trained beforehand in managing bulky items.</i> This network's viability should be evaluated in order to know to what extent this type of activity actually offers outlets for the targeted groups.

D. Mobilise resources for employment and inclusion reforms, in particular by setting up partnerships and agreements through the networking of those actors concerned at the national, regional and local levels.

With respect to the creation of partnerships, EQUAL has brought together a wide variety of experiences that could be usefully capitalised on. This is because, as has already been said, partnerships in EQUAL are not only a key principle of the programme; they are also a new practice for the vast majority of DPs. This has led to a series of contributions, including:

- Networking of all of the operators active in the same zone or working on the same theme, as well as operators active on the issue of employment of unemployed persons over the age of 45 in the German-speaking region.
- Partnership approach for personalised support in the development of job-creating activities.
- Networking of FOREM, IFAPME and FFC advisers in the construction sector.
- Use of TIC (distance work) as tools to manage projects involving different partners.

Most of the DPs considered the partnership as a new practice. However, it entails a non-negligible cost in terms of time and therefore in human resources needed to ensure the project's consistency and the effective integration of the partners. These time and human resource dimensions must be very seriously taken into account when designing new programmes. It would be useful to organise a workshop on this theme and to compare the results of these experiences with the European partnership guide, in order to learn the appropriate lessons by the next programming period.

In terms of a certain number of cross-disciplinary themes

Partnership appears clearly in the regulation proposal not only in terms of areas, but also directly linked to good governance. The elements to be taken into account at the partnership level have already been presented above.

The regulation proposal emphasises the need to take account of **equality between men and women** at the level of scheduling, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Accordingly, the guide, titled “intégrer la dimension de genre dans les projets EQUAL” (“integrating the gender dimension in EQUAL projects”), could make a highly relevant contribution. Indeed, it offers contributions for all phases of a project's cycle (also applicable for a programme).

In the next programming period, special attention is given to the promotion and integration **of innovative activities**. Accordingly, these will no longer be (as is currently the case) covered by a specific programme; instead, they will be integrated directly in all of the programming.

The EQUAL experience has demonstrated that the main interest of the innovation approach concerns improving the ways things are done: in other words, greater efficiency in terms of the techniques, methods and tools used in the projects. Thus, it would be useful to enable the projects financed by the ESF to systematically include in their objectives an innovative dimension focused on ways of doing things, so as to capitalise on their experience.

In addition, given the scope of employment-related problems, the need to innovate above and beyond ways of doing things is imperative. Two approaches are possible at this level:

- either the public authorities themselves define radical innovations (therefore, not in terms of process) in which they wish to invest during the next programming period and launch a few highly specific projects in order to test them;
- or keep to a more bottom-up approach and make calls for proposals in which they include a premium for innovation. In this case, the projects that also pursue the objective of innovation (in a radical way) will be allocated an innovation premium.

Finally, integrating innovation in the programming, rather than making it the object of an initiative separate from the other ESF programmes, should limit the problems associated with mainstreaming seen during this programming period, while reinforcing the consistency of all of the actions implemented on the labour market.

At the European level, **transnational co-operation** is considered as a specific priority area within the programmes.

At the level of DPs, TC turned out to be a place to exchange experiences. In FGB, the public authorities, within the framework of EQUAL, only allocated one-half of the funds that could be allocated to TC, thereby demonstrating a limited interest in this. In addition, European constraints in terms of introduction (the TCAs) and timetable have made it a difficult principle to manage vis-à-vis its added value. This is because 55% of the co-ordinators are of the opinion that TC contributes more added value than that which could have been achieved by reallocating the resources to DP activities. In short, as we said above, the results are mixed.

Given the importance given to TC and interest of more than one-half of the co-ordinators, major efforts should be made at the time of the next programming in order to simplify implementation as much as possible. With this in mind, it is proposed to support the creation, at the European level, of a small TC co-ordination entity that would promote the networking of the various projects, exchanges and thematic work. In addition, it could serve as an intermediary for national projects when defining the most appropriate transnational partnerships based on the objectives pursued by each entity.

At the operational level (implementation)

A few key points emerge clearly:

- Retain a bottom-up approach while focusing more on the objectives, expected results and target groups. This would clarify from the outset those areas in which innovations are possible and expected.
- Promote a trans-regional approach within FGB even though, during the first call, the 3 intervention zones are relatively isolated from each other (only one DP included partners from the Walloon and Brussels areas).
- Improve the supervision of DPs, in particular by extending the approach developed at the Brussels level to the phase of selection and implementation, to that of the documentation of new practices, their dissemination and their highlighting.
- With respect to implementation:
 - adopt the PCM approach,
 - envisage pre-financing for all operators whose projects have been selected,
 - simplify particularly cumbersome administrative and financial procedures.