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ACRONYMS

DPA	Development Partnership Agreement
TCA	Transnational Cooperation Agreement
DP	Development Partnership
MA	Managing Authority
BOE	Official Gazette (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*)
Autonomous Regions	Autonomous Regions
PC	Programme Complement
DG	General Directorate (*Dirección General*)
SU	Support Unit
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound
EPA	Active Population Survey (*Encuesta de Población Activa*)
ECDB	EQUAL Common Database
EES	European Employment Strategy
ETCIM	Equal Transnational Cooperation Internet Module
ESF	European Social Fund
ETG	European Thematic Group
NTG 1	National Thematic Group on Access
NTG 2	National Thematic Group on Business creation and Adaptability
NTG 3	National Thematic Group on Equal Opportunities
NTG	National Thematic Group
CI	Community Initiative
EO	Equal opportunities
INE	National Statistics Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*)
CSF	Community Support Framework
EMS	EQUAL Monitoring System
MTAS	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (*Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales*)
ICT	New Information and Communications Technologies
CIP	Community Initiative Programme
PNAIn	National Plan of Action for Social Inclusion (*Plan Nacional de Acción para la Inclusión Social*)
PNE/PNAE	National Plan of Action for Employment (*Plan Nacional de Acción para el Empleo*)
PO	Operation Programme
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
GES	General Evaluation System
SSU	Mainstream ESF Monitoring System in Spain
ESF Unit	Spanish Unit to Administer the European Social Fund

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Executive Summary

This Update of the Mid-term Evaluation of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) for Spain 2000-2006 has as its **main objective** *to evaluate the extent to which the EQUAL programme has achieved its objectives: creation, testing and promotion new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work.* The **specific objectives** of the evaluation are to analyse the initial results and impacts of the EQUAL Programme in Spain; to examine the evolution of the programme from Round One to Round two in terms of its design and implementation and to consider how the Programme contributes to the European Employment Strategy (EES) and the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion (NAPSI). This report puts forward a series of conclusions on the evolution and implementation of the EQUAL Community Initiative based on the research evidence collected by the evaluation team. In addition it proposes a set of operational recommendations with a view to improving the delivery of the Initiative in Spain, as well as a set of strategic recommendations to inform the future programming of the Structural Funds (2007-2013).

The evaluation team's **methodology** was based on the analysis of a large amount of information obtained through different quantitative and qualitative methods. The focus was on qualitative information, which was then cross-referenced with the quantitative results to draw the report's conclusions. The qualitative methods included documentary review, case studies, face-to-face meetings, discussion groups and interviews with stakeholders involved in the design, management or implementation of the programme as well as to those involved indirectly with an interest in the potential impacts. Quantitative methods included the review of statistical sources and databases, as well as surveys with Development Partnerships (DPs) and to final beneficiaries of the Initiative. The research information was then analysed in-depth to draw out the conclusions and recommendations.

As the Up-date of the Mid-term Evaluation of the Equal CIP for Spain the starting point for the work was to look at the initial mid-term evaluation to check for patterns or changes and also to see how the Initiative had progressed through experience gained from the implementation of the Programme and from the results of the previous evaluation.

The evaluation started by looking in Round One of the Programme and analysing the implementation of the project work programmes (Action 2) and mainstreaming of successful approaches to combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market. The analysis of the effectiveness and the intermediate and final impacts of Round One of the Programme was part of the previous evaluation, as was the launch and project selection phase of Round Two as well as the renewed Action 1 stage. This evaluation paid special attention to study the progression of the Initiative in its Second Phase, examining the extent to which lessons had been learned from Round One and the reorientation of activity to ensure the greatest impact possible.

The analysis of the projects' **implementation** of their **national and transnational work programmes** was done by thematic area. The team looked for common themes and highlighted positive aspects and areas that needed addressing. From this work it was found, for instance, the success of working in partnership and this was most productive the greater the representation of key stakeholders in the area

of work of the project. It was also found to be important that within the partnership there was a flexible dynamic, democratic and participative decision making system, giving beneficiaries the opportunity to inform the process. On the other hand the need for greater complementarity among national and transnational partners was identified as well as the need to set up monitoring instruments that not only provided feedback to the project but which also enabled data to be aggregated to draw conclusions at a Programme level.

In relation to the assistance provided by the Support Unit during project implementation the personal dedication and availability of the technical staff of the Support Unit was highlighted as a positive factor, also the efforts to design and make available many tools to help with the understanding of the Initiative and project implementation. Some of the approaches this report seeks to encourage are a clear division of technical and administrative responsibilities, organisational co-ordination that ensures consistent ways of working and more pro-activity with projects which are more reluctant to request support.

The analysis of the **implementation of the Second Phase of the Initiative** enabled the evaluation team to observe the **evolution** of the Initiative. The evaluators found evidence of the relevance in the selection and definition of the thematic areas after the adjustments made to the Programme following the Mid-term Evaluation, although there was still excessive 'weight' placed on the "asylum seekers" theme. In terms of the **launch of the call for projects**, the evaluators noted on-going cooperation among the organisations that participated in Round One of the Programme. Also there was progress in attitudes with DPs taking a more participative and 'equal' approach, and they had built on the experiences gained from their participation in Round One of the Programme. In addition evaluators noted more co-ordination between central and the regional administrations to ensure greater complementarity. **The project selection process** during Round Two attached more importance to the leading principles of the Initiative as opposed to technical aspects. The evaluators did not note any changes in the assessment criteria nor an increase in the time taken for undertaking appraisals, which would have followed the recommendations made during Round One. However, the evaluation team felt that it would have been very useful, where requested, to provide unsuccessful applicants with qualitative feedback on why their project was rejected in addition to the quantitative information supplied.

Progress in the Initiative in Spain was most noticeable in the **Renewed Action 1** activities. The evaluators saw an improvement in the partnership collaboration agreements and a higher technical quality of the projects. Also the effort made by the Support Unit to provide a higher quality of the technical assistance in the modification of work programmes was observed. However, there is still a need to provide more support for strengthening diagnostic activities and to promote early consolidation of the technical structure of the Development Partnerships (DPs). There were positive efforts to provide flexibility in the deadlines for the consolidation of agreements and work programmes but this was not accompanied with the same administrative flexibility which would have helped ease administrative issues.

As **mainstreaming** lessons to policy makers in the employment area, enterprises and structures is the main objective of the Programme the evaluation team examined the organisation of mainstreaming at all levels. As a result the evaluation team verified the relevance of the main objectives set out in the

Mainstreaming Plan, but detected a lack of more specific objectives and of a work programme, that, on the one hand, included the division of mainstreaming responsibilities among the stakeholders and, on the other hand, acted as a link with the general mainstreaming objectives of the developed activities. The evaluators highlighted the need for a stronger organisation of the top-down mainstreaming strategy to complement the mainstreaming efforts of the DPs (bottom-up). Regarding the organisation of the Thematic Networking Groups (TNGs) there was a need to allocate them specific responsibilities including the identification of mainstreaming opportunities for DPs, for national mainstreaming as well as vertical mainstreaming.

From the analysis of the mainstreaming and the dissemination undertaken by projects in the framework of **Action 2** (implementation of work programmes), the evaluation team noticed a general lack of DP mainstreaming plans and activities more focused on dissemination than on mainstreaming. The evaluators observed much better results in basic horizontal mainstreaming (self-mainstreaming), i.e. continuation of the activity financed by EQUAL once the project was over. Concerning mainstreaming results, enlarged horizontal mainstreaming, i.e. activity with other organisations that operate at the same level of the DP would come in the second place. Vertical mainstreaming (that is a bottom-up approach as the DPs had mainly a local base), showed less success because, according to the evaluators, a greater commitment was needed from political stakeholders from the relevant areas and secondly because the DP was not the most suitable "unit" to support on its own the full responsibility of the vertical mainstreaming. This responsibility should be shared between the different parts of the EQUAL structure.

The implementation of the **Action 3 projects**, (projects specifically aimed at mainstreaming activity or successful outcomes developed by EQUAL projects), started with a call for projects, followed by the submission and selection of Action 3 proposals. The evaluation team noted that the Support Unit provided intense support in the bid submission process but considered that there was a need to further standardise the bid appraisal process and to clearly define the role of each member of the selection process. It was noted that because Action 2 and Action 3 finished at the same time some DPs did not put forward Action 3 proposals or, once proposals were approved, these activities took second place with the priority being given to the completion of the Action 2 work programme. The evaluators thought that intensive support with the implementation of Action 3 would be very positive. This support should cover the whole period from drafting a detailed mainstreaming plan with detailed objectives, setting out how these would be achieved and dividing responsibilities between the organisations.

The evaluators believed that it would be beneficial to focus the mainstreaming and dissemination action to be carried out by projects in Action 2, on dissemination and awareness raising within the area of work covered by the project as well as on the implementation of basic horizontal mainstreaming (self-mainstreaming). Mainstreaming within Action 3 could then be focused on wider mainstreaming activities with the support of the Thematic Networking Groups (TNGs). Finally, the TNGs and other organisations involved in the implementation of the Initiative would be responsible for the nation dissemination and the vertical (bottom-up) mainstreaming.

The leading principles are a key feature of EQUAL and what differentiates this Initiative from other ESF activities. The evaluators therefore focused part of their analysis on studying their implementation

within the EQUAL CIP for Spain, their progression within the Initiative and, last but not least, their utility and added value.

The partnership and empowerment principle was, for Spain, one of the main contributions of the Initiative, introducing a way of working that is not usual in the country. In many cases it was the first time that key socio-economic actors from the same area collaborated. The putting into practice of this principle showed the importance of including beneficiaries, or their representative organisations, in the drafting of the project strategy (assuming that there is feedback on the work programme with the information provided by the consultations done to beneficiaries). Also the role of policy influencers and entrepreneurs was positive and helped to facilitate mainstreaming to policy makers, structures and enterprises.

The **principle of complementarity** was mainly delivered by including organisations with previous knowledge of other programmes and/or activities in the EQUAL areas of work within the DP, and in many cases these organisations were the ones responsible for the implementation of these programmes and/or interventions.

Regarding the results from the analysis of the **thematic approach and concentration principles**, the evaluators identified as best practice the undertaking of diagnostic and beneficiary needs analysis work and up-dating these throughout the project. It was also necessary and appropriate to design and develop strategies to signpost beneficiaries not suitable for EQUAL to alternative services. Finally, the thematic approach which dealt with the whole of the problems affecting the beneficiaries of the EQUAL Initiative, that is, persons excluded or threatened by exclusion from the labour market, proved to be the right approach to help the integration of these groups into the labour market.

The application of the **innovation principle** by DPs is a key aspect of the Initiative, so participants have made important efforts to demonstrate the innovative aspects of their projects. The main innovation that the evaluators observed was related mainly to the context in which projects were developed and their objectives. There was a satisfactory implementation of the innovation requirement, but nevertheless it would be advisable to go a step further and focus efforts on the utility of innovation, as well as maintaining innovation through the life of the project. Finally, a key issue was mainstreaming the successful innovative elements so the evaluators recommend certain measures including producing Innovative Best Practices Guides.

Analysis of the **mainstreaming principle** showed that there was more dissemination than mainstreaming activity. Within mainstreaming activities there was confusion between the concept of mainstreaming and the results of the mainstreaming and as a consequence sometimes the planned mainstreaming had not taken place. There was a need, from the projects' point of view, to draw up a mainstreaming plan that included specific objectives, with more support from the EQUAL structures and a greater commitment to mainstream from the policy influencers within the DP.

The analysis of the **transnationality principle** showed that although projects recognised the benefits of the transnational cooperation, it was relegated to second place behind the national work. It was also observed that the problems faced in working transnationally limited the results of this cooperation. Therefore there was still a need for greater support form the Support Unit and not only during the first

phase of the transnational project (looking for transnational partners), but on-going throughout the whole life of the project. The importance of the planning and distribution of responsibilities for successful co-ordination of the transnational project, as well as a continuous monitoring and evaluation was noted.

Spain gave the **equal opportunities horizontal priority** the category of leading principle, and focused on equal opportunities between men and women. This was because of the particular push needed for his priority in the country. This principle was correctly applied and understood in all the phases of the projects. It also had a positive impact in the internal management of the DPs. However, to notice the impact of the awareness raising activities will need more time. The evaluation team would like to emphasise the need to undertake specific awareness raising activities targeting policy makers, to achieve greater participation of men in awareness raising and to extend the application of the principle to future programmes.

The **Information Society priority** meant a greater awareness of the participating organisations and technical staff on the importance of the use of ICT (Information and Communications Technologies) for the co-ordination and communication of the DP and the application of the thematic approach, what in itself promoted the use of ICT among disadvantaged groups. The **environment priority** promoted a greater exploitation of the new sources of employment linked to the environment. Finally the **promotion of local sustainable development** has been achieved through the delivery of local based EQUAL projects.

The analysis of the **financial effectiveness** of CIP EQUAL for Spain showed a significant allocation of resources to Objective 1 regions, both in the number of projects developed in these regions as well as in the higher co-financing rate. In terms of the distribution of the Programme's finances across the themes, it was shown that the amounts allocated to each theme for the implementation of Action 2 were not proportional to the amounts allocated for Action 3. This maybe could have been due to a greater need for mainstreaming activity to be carried out in the area of equal opportunities. The degree of financial absorption for 2004 was 88.29% and, looking at the rate of expenditure in the first quarter of 2005, the evaluators noted the need to increase the degree of absorption of resources. This situation was partly due to the cyclical character of the projects that had a lot of expenditure concentrated in a small implementation period (the preparation of projects does not entail great expenditure so it concentrates mainly in the implementation of Action 2). To overcome this potential problem of absorption of resources, the evaluators considered it essential to increase the expenditure allocated to theme 6 (Technical Assistance), together with an increase of its activities to ensure the success in achieving the objectives of the Initiative in its last phase. An increase in Action 3 activity at all levels (TNGs, regions - Autonomous Communities - and DPs) could also contribute to solving this problem and guarantee the success of the Initiative.

The analysis of the **physical effectiveness** was restricted by a problem in the estimation and counting of beneficiaries and the difficulties in securing further information once the projects were closed. The evaluators stated that the physical effectiveness of EQUAL was different to the effectiveness of other programmes, since the Initiative promoted broader objectives than a standard employment programme. It is interesting to point out that there was a lower participation in the equal opportunities awareness activities by men that would have been desirable.

The analysis of the **impacts** differentiated between the **medium term impact** (over policies, structures and enterprises) and the **final impact** (impact over the final beneficiaries).

The evaluators identified in their analysis of the **impact on the policies**, a **"top-up" impact,** that is, the influence of the Initiative over the policy guidelines, and on the design and contents of the employment programmes in general. There was a positive and sustainable impact although a bit slow. The evaluators found it very hard to separate the influence of the EQUAL Initiative from that of past Initiatives and other European programmes, since at this level the evolution and influence is more of a process rather than punctual actions. It would have been easier to have a greater impact along the lines of what has been described if there had been a fully articulated mainstreaming strategy. Special attention had been paid to the influence that the CIP EQUAL for Spain had in reaching the objectives set by the European Employment Strategy (EES) and the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion for Spain (NAPSI).

As for **the impact on policies reached through a bottom-up process,** a certain impact was observed through the implementation of the leading principles of the Initiative. Even although evaluators came across positive impacts, these were limited, mainly due to the difficulties in finding evidence due to poor monitoring and the indirect relation between activities and their influence in policies, the time-scale was too short to obtain impacts and also due to the limited amount of vertical mainstreaming. In addition evaluators stated that another reason why there was no limited evidence of impact was due to the excessive responsibility accorded to its achievement to the DPs, since these were not the ideal vehicles to implement vertical mainstreaming.

From the analysis of the results of the **impact of the EQUAL Initiative on structures and systems**, the evaluators identified an impact on organisational structures consisting mainly of the creation and sustainability of new networks and collaboration structures between the members of the DPs and other relevant actors. There was also an institutional change: creation of new mechanisms to improve the education and training of the beneficiaries of activities and the introduction of new occupational/occupational profiles. Once more the evaluators observed that impact could be increased with more effective mainstreaming activity.

The Initiative had some **impact on companies** even if according to evaluators, there was a greater need for commitment and active participation in projects by business and in the process of labour market integration to achieve a greater and more sustainable impact. Concerning activity aimed at access and return to the labour market, a greater commitment from employers' organisations and trade-unions would have been desirable. Concerning activities that combat racism and xenophobia it was recommended the measures used in companies should be monitored. In the area of business creation it was important to help the new start-ups to be competitive and to ensure their sustainability. To ensure a positive impact from activities aimed at adaptability, it was helpful to carry on with the dynamic of working with small pilot projects looking for a "demonstration effects". Finally the impact of the equal opportunities between men and women in the labour market was achieved through an increase in activities targeting entrepreneurs.

The last aspect that was analysed in this evaluation was the **final impact** of the Initiative on beneficiaries. Among the different impacts observed the most remarkable were the improvements in employability; improved interpersonal skills; employment; increased awareness; and indirect impacts such as improvement in self-esteem. These impacts were common to all areas, but with different degrees of intensity and variations depending on the specific objectives of each thematic area. In general, the evaluators observed an increase in employability of final beneficiaries, which must be considered as a first a key step towards employment in the medium to longer term. This is even more relevant when considering the special characteristics of the EQUAL target groups, which have to overcome barriers before reaching the right work integration.

Finally, it was noted that the qualitative impact of the Initiative was higher than the quantitative impact. There was also a high degree of efficiency of the projects, and some emerging positive impacts were observed, although the time-frame of this evaluation is limited to obtain an impact with an adequate perspective. Moreover, the evaluation of the impacts was been limited in various occasions due to weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of the results of the developed actions. The higher effect of the participative and personalised actions stands out. Awareness raising actions have constituted one of the added values of this Initiative.

SECTION 1: OBJECTIVES, METHODS AND CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION

This section sets out the objectives of the Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) for Spain 2000-2006. Below is a detailed description of methods used to undertake this evaluation, and a presentation of the context in which the EQUAL CIP operates in Spain.

CHAPTER 1: EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

This Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL CIP for Spain 2000-2006, has as its **general objective** *to evaluate the degree of success of the EQUAL programme in achieving its objectives to create, test and mainstream new forms of implementing employment policies, and seeking to reduce discrimination in the workplace and inequalities faced by disadvantaged groups in the labour market.*

The two key aspects to achieve this objective are included in the actual definition of the Initiative:

- "***to create, test and mainstream new forms*** *of implementing employment policies*": EQUAL's added value is that it is not limited to undertaking activities to facilitate access to employment, but it is also a laboratory for new ideas.

- "***to reduce discrimination and inequalities***": EQUAL is focused on a particular segment of the population facing particular problems to enter the labour market and who, therefore, require a specific approach to their problems, which are more complex than those affecting the population as a whole.

EQUAL does not only seek to increase the rate of employment and improve its quality, but also to innovate and mainstream. This is why, **this Programme's evaluation is not limited to examining the classic aspects of evaluation of an Operating Programme** (performance analysis, results, and impact on final beneficiaries), but, is more far-reaching and includes the **examination of other particular aspects of the Initiative** (application of EQUAL principles and mainstreaming articulated throughout the Initiative), providing added value in respect of actions financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) within the framework of other programmes.

The specific objectives of this evaluation are:

- To analyse the **impact** of the Programme to-date on policies, structures, systems, businesses and persons up to the present.
- To evaluate the **added value of the Initiative** by examining the level of implementation of EQUAL features in projects, and the level of success of mainstreaming as a result of the Programme.

- To evaluate the **evolution in the implementation of the Initiative,** examining any changes and improvements undertaken during Round Two as a result of the conclusions obtained in the implementation of Round One.

- To assess **the effective working of the structure created to launch the Initiative**: we seek to analyse the actions taken by the Managing Authority, the Payment Authority, the Monitoring Committee, the structure created to support the management of the EQUAL programme, the National Thematic Groups, and the Development Partnerships (DPs), assessing how their operation has contributed to the achievement of the Initiative's objectives.

- To formulate, based on the analysis undertaken, a series of **recommendations** of which there shall be two kinds:

  ⇨ **Operational recommendations**, seeking to contribute to the success of the Initiative's implementation in Spain;
  ⇨ **Strategic recommendations**, seeking to support Structural Fund programming 2007-2013.

This analysis has been performed based on the **<u>analyses and conclusions provided in the Mid-Term Evaluation</u>**[1], without the current work overlapping the preceding evaluation. Thus, the Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL CIP (2000-2006) takes as its starting point the prior evaluation's analysis, and examines the Initiative's evolution in the light of the recommendations issued in the previous report.

Lastly, please note that an effort has also been made **<u>to co-ordinate this evaluation with the evaluation of the Community Support Frameworks (CSF)</u>**, in order to analyse the existing complementarity and relations between the different European Social Fund (ESF) instruments.

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[1] Mid-Term Evaluation of the Spanish Programme for the EQUAL Community Initiative. GPI Consultants. October 2003.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY USED FOR THE EVALUATION UPDATE

This chapter provides a succinct description of the methodology used to compile and analyse the information in order to draft the present Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) for Spain 2000-2006. The methodology used is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative information sources, always giving priority to qualitative information, providing support and confirmation for any conclusions by means of a quantitative analysis.

Our methodology has consisted of three stages: a first stage focused on data gathering, a second stage of detailed analysis of the results of the study and, finally, a third stage for drafting, based on the preceding analysis, of a series of conclusions and recommendations.

2.1 DATA GATHERING

Information has been collected by a combination of documentary and statistical investigation, working with survey results and area work. The latter has basically consisted of the detailed study of a sample of our Development Partnerships (DPs) selected for case studies, and interviews with the different stakeholders involved and/or affected by the Initiative.

2.1.1   Gathering of documentary and statistical information

The **documentation** used in the evaluation includes methodological documents taken from the European Commission, the Women's Institute (*Instituto de la Mujer*), and the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and also documentation regarding the context of the Initiative in Spain. Furthermore, documentation relating to the EQUAL Initiative and past initiatives has been examined, as well as their respective evaluations (national and European), allowing a review of the evolution of EC human resources initiatives, and changes made in the EQUAL programme for Spain. Lastly, extensive documentation has been collected relating to approved projects and beneficiaries of the Initiative, thus obtaining first-hand information on the implementation of EQUAL[2].

As regards the gathering of **statistical and quantitative information,** different variables have been analysed which permit an assessment of the baseline in Spain for population groups to which the EQUAL Initiative is targeted, exploiting the indicators provided in the EQUAL Common Database (Monitoring System) managed by the Spanish ESF Unit (*Unidad Administradora*) (UAFSE).

In an **effort to bring the evaluation of the Initiative closer to the current evaluation of the European Social Fund (ESF) at a Community Support Framework (CSF) level**, common indicators have been used where possible, with a breakdown between Objective 1 and non-Objective 1 regions.

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[2] All documents used are listed in the bibliography appendix.

2.1.2 Performance of surveys of Development Partnerships (DPs)

An **email survey has been carried with DP co-ordinating partners responsible for implementing projects in Round One of the Initiative, and another on partners taking part in the implementation of Round Two.** The first survey performed in Round One co-ordinating partners has addressed the main aspects relating to the implementation of work programmes, compliance with the EQUAL principles and results and impact of the projects. The second survey with DPs delivering projects in Round Two of the Initiative has investigated issues relating to the launch and re-launched Action 1 stage of Round Two.

The response rate was satisfactory, exceeding 50% in both surveys.

2.1.3 Performance of case studies

Case studies have been a **central element** in drafting this evaluation, as they fulfil a **qualitative approach to the evaluation of the Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL Programme in Spain.**

For Round One a sample covering **25.3% of all projects** has been selected. Out of the 158 DPs which implemented projects in Round One[3], **40 DPs have been randomly selected** by applying the following **selection criteria**: **thematic area, geographical coverage of the project, type of organisation of the partner representing the Partnership, size of the DP (number of partners) and financing (size of the project) and delivery of projects in Action 3.**

The sample selected for Round Two studies has covered 13.1% of all projects, randomly selecting 30 DPs as case studies. The **selection criteria** used were as follows: **geographical coverage of the project, type of organisation of the partner representing the Partnership, size of the DP (number of partners) and financing (size of the project), and participation in Round One.**

The case study research has consisted of **prior comprehensive collection of documentary and quantitative information** concerning selected DPs. To complement the document and information included in the **Monitoring System**, a series of **group interviews** have been undertaken, with the assistance of the DPs' co-ordinating partner. Such interviews have sought **the participation of at least, the partner representing the DP, the co-ordinating partner, and the partner representing the project beneficiaries and of any other partner wishing to take part in the interview as a result of its responsibility in the DP**. Lastly, we have tried to interview a **policy maker stakeholder** who could potentially be affected by the project, whether or not they were a partner in the DP.

In addition to these interviews, **one transnational partner** of each DP selected as case studies in both Round One and Two was **interviewed by telephone**. This interview has allowed us to complete our information regarding the development of transnational cooperation, providing the non-Spanish partner's view on such cooperation and on the performance of the partnership.

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[3] One sole DP approved in Round One was dissolved without having implemented its work programme.

Also **two final beneficiaries of the project** have been interviewed for each case study in Round One, in order to find out in greater depth their opinion, their situation and the impact of their participation in the project.

2.1.4 Survey of the target population

As well as interviewing final beneficiaries, a **general survey was conducted of a sample of final beneficiaries of Round One case study DPs**, seeking to make the sample as representative as possible of the variety of groups within each thematic area. The case study DPs were thus requested to provide contact details of their project beneficiaries.

The sample has allowed us to interview more than 2,000 final beneficiaries, which in quantitative terms constitutes a representative sample. However, please note that, the randomness of the sample is not assured, because no suitable sample of the target population was available. This was because the contact details provided by the DPs were not always comprehensive (i.e. for all beneficiaries), and the number of DPs which did provide the information requested was below expectations. The results have been used in aggregated form in respect of the programme and separately for each thematic area.

2.1.5 Complementary Action 3 Interviews

As well as interviews conducted within case studies we have interviewed DPs which have conducted mainstreaming activities within the framework of Action 3 and which were not selected as case studies, in order to examine in detail a **sample equivalent to 33% of all Action 3 projects delivered** by the DPs.

The purpose of these interviews was to **find out in greater depth the dissemination and mainstreaming strategies designed and implemented by the projects**, thus complementing the case study interviews. DPs interviewed were **randomly selected, proportionally to their thematic area.**

2.1.6 Interviews of relevant stakeholders in the EQUAL Initiative

As well as interviews conducted within case studies, we have **interviewed stakeholders involved in the design, planning, organisation, management and start-up of the programme**.

To obtain additional information about the management and implementation of the Initiative, the suitability of its structures and processes and the adequacy of any actions and the implementation of the recommendations of the EQUAL CI Mid-Term Evaluation, the evaluation team has interviewed, either in person or by telephone, different stakeholders with a relevant role in its performance. We have thus interviewed members of the **Managing Authority, the Support Unit, the Monitoring Committee, the National Thematic Groups, the European Thematic Groups, and managers of Regional Information Points**[4]. Additionally, we have interviewed **stakeholders outside of EQUAL,**

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[4] In certain residual cases, the interviewee preferred to reply to the interview questions in writing.

in order to assess the Initiative's influence on players not directly involved, but who may be potentially affected thereby[5].

2.2 CO-ORDINATION WITH THE EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

In order to provide an overall view of the impact of the European Social Fund in Spain, the Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL Initiative was conducted in co-ordination with the evaluation of the Community Support Frameworks (CSF).

In this regard, **we have tried to use tools and indicators similar to CSF evaluations, in order to homogenise both evaluations**.

However, **it has been impossible to co-ordinate the different aspects of the evaluation**, as the EQUAL Initiative, as well as being addressed to a **more specific target group** than the recipients of the European Social Fund Operational Programmes, it is more far-reaching than actions on the general population. EQUAL is **a pilot programme and aims to achieve, among other things, mainstreaming, innovation and transnationality which does not permit an evaluation in the same terms as a classic Operating Programme**.

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The methodology used has been mainly based on a **qualitative approach**. **Quantitative information obtained generally has been used to support the conclusions reached by analysing the qualitative information.**

The data gathered by the tools already mentioned and the evaluation team on an ongoing basis has shared the analyses, ideas, and opinions concerning the different patterns observed. This has allowed us to **distinguish the characteristics of each thematic area from the effects of the programme as a whole,** and to pull out the emerging patterns and relate certain attitudes, realisations or results to a certain kind of Development Partnership, thus enabling us to reach conclusions and make recommendations.

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[5] List of interviewees in the relevant appendix.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT OF THE INITIATIVE

The past years have witnessed an important growth in employment and a major reduction in the rate of unemployment, which has reduced the gap with the average European Union (EU) rate. However, the Spanish labour market still shows a series of imbalances, which result in a high rate of temporary employment, low productivity - in part due to the low quality of available jobs - gender inequalities and a low entrepreneurship, among others. On the other hand, there are a series of groups, which find it especially difficult to access the labour market, such as young persons, immigrants or people with disabilities.

Below is a description of the evolution of certain labour market indicators and other areas relating to the themes and areas of the EQUAL Community Initiative (CI), in order to put into context the impact of the programme in Spain. For such purposes, and in view of the fact that EQUAL financing is determined depending on whether the region of destination is an Objective 1 or non-Objective 1 region, to the extent that the information required is available, data shall be broken down by gender and by each of three geographical areas: Spain, Objective 1 and non-Objective 1 regions, for the 2000-2004 period.

3.1 THEME 1: EMPLOYABILITY

The Theme 1 objectives (thematic areas 1.1 and 1.2) of the EQUAL CI are focused on facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into the labour market and combating racism and xenophobia as it affects the labour market.

3.1.1 Thematic area 1.1: Facilitating access and return to the labour market

The objective of thematic area 1.1 of the EQUAL CI is to reinforce and improve the ability to access the labour market for all who have difficulties.. This theme seeks to reduce the unemployment rate and, especially, long-term unemployment, and to increase the rate of employment, while reducing territorial differences and targeting the most disadvantaged groups in the labour market.

Although the labour market situation in Spain has considerably improved in the past years, there are still regional gaps. Most significant are differences between employment and unemployment rates between Objective 1 and non-Objective 1 regions, which are closely linked to the differences in economic development between regions (see Table 3.1.).

Gender differences are also noteworthy, especially in terms of activity and employment rates, where female employment rates differ by more than 20 percentage points from the male rates, and women's unemployment rate is double that of men. Such results are explained by women's late entry into the labour market and, to a large extent, by difficulties in reconciling family and professional life. Another particularly vulnerable group is persons younger than 25, who register the greatest unemployment rate, especially in Objective 1 regions and, mostly among the female population.

Table 3.1 Rates of activity, employment, unemployment, 2000-2004

	Total			Men			Women		
	2000	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (Points)**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (Points)**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (Points)**
Rate of activity									
Spain	54,0%	56,1%	2,1	66,9%	67,7%	0,8	41,7%	45,1%	3,4
Objective 1	52,4%	54,6%	2,2	65,9%	66,9%	1,0	39,6%	42,9%	3,3
Non-Objective 1	56,2%	58,2%	2,0	68,5%	68,9%	0,5	44,8%	48,2%	3,5
Employment Rate									
Spain	46,7%	50,3%	3,5	60,7%	62,6%	1,9	33,5%	38,6%	5,1
Objective 1	43,9%	47,8%	3,9	58,4%	61,0%	2,6	30,1%	35,3%	5,2
Non-Objective 1	50,8%	53,8%	3,0	64,2%	64,9%	0,8	38,4%	43,4%	5,0
Unemployment Rate									
Spain	13,4%	10,4%	-3,1	9,3%	7,6%	-1,7	19,8%	14,4%	-5,4
Objective 1	16,3%	12,4%	-3,9	11,4%	8,8%	-2,6	24,0%	17,8%	-6,2
Non-Objective 1	9,6%	7,6%	-2,0	6,3%	5,8%	-0,5	14,3%	10,0%	-4,3

Source: Active Population Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa), IV quarter 2000 and 2004, INE.

Difficulties accessing to the labour market increase considerably the longer the period of unemployment (Table 3.2). In 2004, 17% of total unemployment in Spain was of long duration (1 to 2 years), while very-long-term unemployment (more than 2 years) represented more than 20% of the total. This situation, however, has improved in recent years, especially in Objective 1 regions.

Table 3.2. Rates of long and very long-term unemployment, broken down by gender and areas, 2000-2004

	Long-term unemployment					
	% population			% total unemployment		
	2000	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**
Spain	2,2%	1,8%	-0,5	16,5%	16,9%	0,4
Objective 1	2,6%	1,9%	-0,7	16,1%	15,5%	-0,7
Non-Objective 1	1,7%	1,5%	-0,1	17,2%	20,1%	2,9
Very long-term unemployment						
Spain	3,8%	2,1%	-1,7	28,5%	20,4%	-8,1
Objective 1	4,5%	2,5%	-2,0	27,7%	20,1%	-7,6
Non-Objective 1	2,9%	1,6%	-1,3	30,3%	21,1%	-9,1

Source: Active Population Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa), IV quarter 2000 and 2004, INE.

A person's educational achievement determines to a great extent their relationship with the labour market, and the quality of the employment to which they have access, as seen in **Error! Reference source not found.** In general terms, the unemployment rate is reduced as the level of a person's training increases, being highest among the illiterate population and lowest among persons with a university education. Thus, the reduction in unemployment in the past years has been associated, to a great extent, to the increase in education of the population, especially women.

Table 3.3. Unemployment rate broken down by level of training, by gender, 2000-2004

	Total			Men			Women		
	2000	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**
Total	13,4%	10,6%	-2,8	9,3%	7,8%	-1,5	19,7%	14,6%	-5,1
Illiterates	27,3%	23,6%	-3,7	19,2%	17,4%	-1,8	39,6%	33,4%	-6,2
Primary Ed.	13,9%	11,6%	-2,3	10,7%	8,9%	-1,8	20,5%	17,0%	-3,5
Secondary Ed. 1st stage and relevant training	14,8%	11,9%	-2,9	9,7%	8,7%	-1,0	23,9%	17,6%	-6,3
Secondary Ed. 2nd sate and relevant training	13,7%	10,9%	-2,8	8,8%	7,3%	-1,5	19,9%	15,6%	-4,3
Training with secondary schools qualifications (2nd stage)	10,9%	16,8%	5,9	6,2%	11,2%	5,0	26,9%	24,4%	-2,5
Higher ed. Exc. Ph D.	11,2%	8,1%	-3,1	7,4%	6,0%	-1,4	15,4%	10,4%	-5,0
Ph. D.	6,7%	2,9%	-3,8	6,2%	2,3%	-3,9	7,7%	4,2%	-3,5

Source: Active Population Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa), IV quarter 2000 and 2004, INE.

Employment is an essential element for social inclusion, to the extent that it is the main source of income for the population, as well as a social structuring mechanism (Room, 1995[6]). However, certain characteristics of the labour market, such as sub-employment or large-scale temporary employment, result in its not always being a guarantee for success, with the consequent phenomenon of so-called "poor workers", i.e., persons who, in spite of being employed, do not receive the necessary income to maintain a decent lifestyle. In accordance with the latest Homes Panel data of the European Union, in 2001, 10% of salaried employees were below the poverty risk threshold, with more men affected than women, and more persons older than 25. On the other hand, the risk of poverty increases among self-employed workers, among temporary workers and persons with a lower level of education.

Employing people with disabilities has registered a considerable reduction in the period under consideration, of 14.1% (Table 3.4.), lower for Objective 1 Regions, where it has fallen by 8.8%. Furthermore, the share represented by these contracts over the whole has fallen slightly, representing only 0.06% of the total in 2004.

Table 3.4 Employing people with disabilities, by areas

	Contracts w. people w. disabilities			Contracts w. people w. disabilities % of total contracts		
	2000	**2004**	**Var 04/00**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**
Spain	11.062	9.497	-14,1%	0,08%	0,06%	-0,02
Objective 1	5.773	5.267	-8,8%	0,07%	0,06%	-0,01
Non-Objective 1	5.289	4.227	-20,1%	0,09%	0,07%	-0,02

Source: INEM

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[6] For a more detailed discussion on this point, see Room, G. (1995) "Beyond the Threshold: The measurement and analysis of social exclusion". The Polity Press.

To address the weaknesses in Spain regarding access to the labour market of persons with special difficulties, the (CIP) EQUAL Initiative programme promotes innovative actions mainly in two areas:

- Promoting the creation and maintenance of integrated counselling and follow-up services to access the labour market, promoting, among other measures, a personalised follow-up system before during and after the access process and offering services tailored to individual needs.

- Promoting new approaches and contents for job training, for example by issuing specialised forms of training which take into account each person's individual circumstances, needs and potential.

3.1.2 Thematic area 1.2: Combating racism and xenophobia in the labour market

As noted above, there are certain population groups with special difficulties to access the labour market, such as women and young people – already described in the preceding section - immigrants or people with disabilities.

As regards immigrants, Table 3.5 shows a major growth in foreign nationals' participation in the Spanish labour market. This increase has, however, been lower in Objective 1 Regions, partly explained by the lower economic development of such areas, which entails, in general terms, the regions' reduced attractiveness for the immigrant population.

Table 3.5. Foreign workers as a percentage of total persons registered with the Social Security, by areas

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Var 04/00 (points)
Spain	3,0%	3,9%	5,2%	5,6%	6,1%	3,1
Objective 1	2,4%	3,3%	4,3%	5,1%	5,0%	2,6
Non-Objective 1	3,7%	4,6%	6,2%	6,7%	7,5%	3,8

Source: Labour Statistics Journal, Ministry of Labour and Social Security

As provided in the EQUAL CIP, it is necessary to prevent and eradicate racism and xenophobia in the labour environment. To do this it is necessary to promote a range of measures including research showing the contribution of immigration to economic growth and to the enrichment of the social structure, encouraging the extension of employment opportunities for immigrants, putting into practice dissemination campaigns to raise awareness among the population, promoting training to combat discrimination and establishing mechanisms for the early detection of racist behaviour, etc.

3.2 THEME 2: THEMATIC AREA 2.1: PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The close relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth makes it essential to encourage the entrepreneurship in Spain, where statistics still show a certain lag. Thus, theme 2 (thematic area 2.1) of the EQUAL Community Initiative (CI) seeks to open up the business start-up process,

providing the necessary instruments for business creation and survival, and to identify and exploit new employment opportunities in urban and rural areas.

In accordance with the data provided by the Active Population Survey (*Encuesta de Población Activa*), (EPA) (Table 3.6), in 2004 only 18.4% of total employment was self-employment, with a 1.3 percent reduction in respect of the year 2000. This reduction is greater among women, more particularly among residents in Objective 1 regions, and mainly responds to a lower share of self-employed workers in total employment figures.

Table 3.6 Self-employed workers as a percentage of total employment, broken down by gender and areas, 2001-2004

	Total employees		Employers		Businesses w.out employees or self-employed		Cooperative members		Family subsidy	
	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004
Total										
Spain	19,7%	18,4%	5,3%	5,5%	11,9%	10,9%	0,6%	0,5%	1,9%	1,5%
Objective 1	21,9%	20,2%	5,9%	5,9%	13,0%	11,9%	0,6%	0,5%	2,5%	1,9%
Non-Objective 1	17,0%	16,0%	4,6%	5,0%	10,6%	9,6%	0,6%	0,5%	1,1%	0,9%
Men										
Spain	21,8%	20,8%	6,6%	7,0%	13,5%	12,4%	0,6%	0,6%	1,0%	0,8%
Objective 1	23,3%	22,2%	7,3%	7,3%	14,1%	13,1%	0,6%	0,6%	1,4%	1,1%
Non-Objective 1	19,7%	19,0%	5,6%	6,6%	12,8%	11,5%	0,7%	0,5%	0,6%	0,5%
Women										
Spain	16,2%	14,5%	3,1%	3,2%	9,3%	8,5%	0,5%	0,4%	3,3%	2,4%
Objective 1	19,2%	16,9%	3,3%	3,4%	11,0%	9,8%	0,5%	0,4%	4,4%	3,2%
Non-Objective 1	12,8%	11,8%	2,9%	2,9%	7,3%	7,0%	0,5%	0,4%	2,0%	1,5%

Source: Active Population Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa), IV quarter 2001 and 2004, INE.

The Spanish entrepreneurial fabric is mostly made up of companies with less than 250 employees (Small to Medium Sized Businesses - SMEs). According to data provided by the Labour Ministry (Table 3.7), in 2004 68.7% of total employees were in SMEs, which percentage amounted to 71.2% in Objective 1 regions.

Table 3.7 Number of SME workers and percentage in respect of total workers, by areas

	SME Employees			SME Employees/Total Occupied Population		
	2001	2004	Var 04/01	2001	2004	Var 04/01
Spain	8.078	8.906	10,3%	68,67%	68,73%	0,1
Objective 1	4.158	4.698	13,0%	70,85%	71,24%	0,4
Non-Objective 1	3.920	4.207	7,3%	66,50%	66,12%	-0,4

Source: Labour Structure Survey, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

The EQUAL CIP recommends that actions undertaken within this theme start with the identification of additional barriers faced by persons suffering inequality or discrimination in the labour market. For such purposes, it recommends:

- Encouraging entrepreneurship among persons with more difficulties in accessing the labour market, especially women, through awareness and dissemination measures.
- Encouraging integrated advisory and follow-up services to entrepreneurial initiatives.
- Encouraging and enabling access to flexible finance to generate new activity.

3.3 THEME 3: THEMATIC AREA 3.1: ADAPTABILITY

Improvements in labour quality and productivity entail promoting adaptability and mobility in the labour market, as a result of which Theme 3 (thematic area 3.1) of the EQUAL CI is focused on supporting the adaptability of companies and employees to structural economic changes and to the use of information technologies and communications.

One of the main problems of the Spanish labour market is employment instability, resulting in a high rate of temporary employment (Table 3.8), which, as well as preventing the attainment of qualifications, increases accident rates. In 2004, 30.6% of employment was temporary, a percentage which increased to 37,1% in Objective 1 Regions[7]. Among women, the rate of temporary employment is even greater, with less progress compared to the year 2000 than for men.

Table 3.8 Temporary employment rates, as a percentage of total employment, by gender and areas, 2000-2004

	Temporary employment								
	2001	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**	**2001**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**	**2001**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**
	Total			**Men**			**Women**		
Spain	31,7%	30,6%	-1,0	30,0%	28,7%	-1,4	34,3%	33,5%	-0,8
Objective 1	38,1%	37,2%	-0,9	36,8%	35,1%	-1,7	40,4%	40,5%	0,2
Non-Objective 1	24,1%	22,7%	-1,5	21,4%	20,2%	-1,2	28,0%	25,9%	-2,1

Source Active Population Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa), IV quarter 2001 and 2004, INE.

On the other hand, flexible working hours is at the early stage of development, and part-time employment is rare. Part-time employment may be an instrument to reconcile family and professional life for women, to the extent that it allows them to work reduced hours, making work compatible with the home. According to Table 3.9, in 2004 10.4% of salaried employees worked part-time, with a slight increase in respect of 2000. Among women, this amounted to 20.5%, reaching 22.2% in Objective 1 regions, where on the other hand there has been a slight reduction in 2004 compared to 2000.

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[7] In the EU as a whole, the temporary employment rate is around 12.8%.

Table 3.9 Part-time employment, as a percentage of total employment, by gender and areas, 2000-2004

	Part-time employment								
	Total			**Men**			**Women**		
	2000	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00 (points)**
Spain	9,9%	10,4%	0,5	3,5%	3,5%	0,0	20,1%	20,5%	0,4
Objective 1	10,7%	10,9%	0,3	3,8%	3,7%	-0,1	22,5%	22,2%	-0,3
Non-Objective 1	9,0%	9,9%	0,9	3,1%	3,1%	0,0	17,5%	18,6%	1,1

Source: Active Population Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa), IV quarter 2000 and 2004, INE.

Continuing training is becoming an important factor in supporting the adaptability of employees facing changing in the labour market. According to the EPA data (Table 3.10), a total of 898,900 of those employed took some kind of training course in 2004, a 19.4% increase compared to 2000. Most of them were women, which becomes even more relevant when one considers that they represent only 39% of those employed.

In relative terms, according to Eurostat, in 2003 4.8% of the employed in Spain were taking some kind of ongoing training course, which percentage contrasts with the 10.3% EU-15 average, and still far from the EU goal of achieving 12.5% in 2010. Women's share in this percentage was 6.3%, compared to 3.9% for men.

Table 3.10 Employed persons undergoing training by gender and objectives of such training, 2000-2004

	Both			Men			Women		
	2000	**2004**	**Var 04/00**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00**	**2000**	**2004**	**Var 04/00**
	Thousands		**%**	**Thousands**		**%**	**Thousands**		**%**
Total	753,1	898,9	19,4%	383,0	440,1	14,9%	370,1	458,8	24,0%
Initial Prof. Qualifications	228,7	250,5	9,5%	118,6	116,9	-1,4%	110,0	133,6	21,5%
Updating of skills	116,3	125,5	7,9%	59,3	66,9	12,8%	57,0	58,6	2,8%
Preparation for a raise	15,0	19,8	32,0%	8,5	10,7	25,9%	6,5	9,2	41,5%
Preparation for change of activity or occupation	59,4	56,7	-4,5%	28,1	29,6	5,3%	31,2	27,1	-13,1%
Other objectives	333,8	446,4	33,7%	168,4	216,1	28,3%	165,4	230,4	39,3%

Source: Active Population Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa), IV quarter 2000 and 2004, INE

The use of new technologies, to the extent that it considerably facilitates access to information and communications, is another key factor to encourage business adaptability. According to data provided by the Spanish National Statistical Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*) (INE) (Table 3.11), in 2003 87.4% of all businesses had an Internet connection (5.7 per cent more than last year), with an upward trend depending on the size of the business.

Table 3.11 Use of ITC and e-commerce in businesses (percentage)

Employees	Total		From 10 to 49		From 50 to 249		250 and above	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
% Businesses with computers	95,0	96,5	94,4	96,2	98,0	98,4	99,9	99,6
% Businesses incl- Land Area Network (LAN)	55,3	57,8	51,0	53,8	75,5	77,9	93,4	90,7
% Businesses inc- Wireless Land Area Network	3,4	7,4	2,4	5,7	7,2	14,4	18,9	29,6
% Businesses incl. Intranet connection	29,5	32,6	25,8	28,6	45,6	51,3	71,6	73,7
% Businesses incl. Internet connection	81,7	87,4	79,4	85,9	93,4	95,4	99,1	99,1
% Businesses incl. Extranet connection	12,2	16,9	10,0	13,3	21,6	33,7	40,0	48,9
% Businesses incl. e-mail)	76,0	83,7	73,1	81,8	90,6	93,3	98,1	98,5

Source: Survey on the use of ITC and E-commerce, INE

In order to support business and employee adaptability to economic changes and to new information technology and other new media, the EQUAL CIP is promoting the following measures:

- To favour business adaptability by encouraging awareness, dissemination, and advice on new forms of business management and work organisation, strategic planning design, including studies, analysis of experiences and evaluations systems which favour flexibility and health and safety in the organisation of labour, supporting formats for flexible organisations and promoting cooperation between businesses, to enabling them to share common services.

- To favour employee adaptability, especially for those with particular difficulties in the labour market (women, older people, less qualified workers and young persons), by incorporating training processes adapted to the latest changes in management systems, and enabling the use of new technologies, the promotion of new occupational profiles and the adoption of practices adapted to individual needs, allowing the reconciliation of family and professional lives.

3.4 THEME 4: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEN AND WOMEN

The priority focus of Theme 4 (thematic areas 4.1 and 4.2) of the EQUAL CI is to reduce the inequalities between men and women in the labour market. To achieve this, it is necessary to achieve a more equitable distribution of family and domestic responsibilities between men and women, to improve support for dependants and to eliminate workplace segregation.

3.4.1 Thematic area 4.1: Reconciliation of family and professional life

One of the main obstacles faced by women in accessing the labour market, which is reflected in activity and employment data, is the difficulty to harmonise family and professional life. According to EPA data (Table 3.12), in 2004 119,200 persons left the labour market for family reasons, of which 93.2% were women. If compared to year 2000 data, there has been an increase of 7% in their total number, although the proportion of women has been reduced slightly. On the other hand, people

leaving work to care for children increased between 2000 and 2003 by 66.4%, up to 13,879, with women representing 96.4% of all leaves requested.

Table 3.12 Exit from the labour market for family reasons and to care for children

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Var 04/00*
Exit from labour market for family reasons						
Both sexes (thousands)	111,40	124,40	113,40	109,60	119,20	7,0%
% Women	94,17	94,45	94,89	93,89	93,20	-0,96
Leaves to care for children						
Both sexes	8.339	10.163	12.694	13.879	-	66,4%
% Mothers	96,02	96,43	96,16	96,38	-	0,4

* Rate of growth in data corresponding to both sexes and difference in % of women and mothers.
Source: Active Population Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa), IV quarter, INE e Instituto de la Mujer.

In order to address the weaknesses observed in Spain, the EQUAL CIP suggests the following measures:

- To experiment with new forms of work organisation which allow men and women to make family and domestic responsibilities compatible with their work; which promote shared responsibility between men and women around domestic tasks and care of the family; and to offer support services allowing work compatibility to care for dependants, among other measures.

- To provide training and re-qualification systems adapted to the specific requirements of persons who have been away from work for a long time; which help the availability of persons during temporary gaps in employment, permitting them to gain access or return to the market under equal conditions; and to train specialists in equal opportunities, among other measures.

3.4.2 Thematic area 4.2: Reducing the gender gap between men and women and supporting the elimination of workplace segregation

The past years have witnessed important improvements in women's access to the labour market. However, the female unemployment rate is still almost double the male rate, and women, to a much greater extent than men, tend to access employment through temporary labour contracts and in less qualified positions. In addition they receive on average a salary below that of men for similar activity, occupation and age.

Graph 3.1. shows that, as concerns the salary inequality index, defined as the difference between the average gross income per working hour between men and women, average male income was 17% in 2001 (last available data). This means that, for similar activity area, occupation and age, women received 17% less than men. This percentage has increased since 1998. By age group, salary differences are less marked in younger sectors of the population (16 to 24), and are greatest for persons over 55.

Graph 3.1. Salary inequality index by age group, adjusted for sector, occupation and age
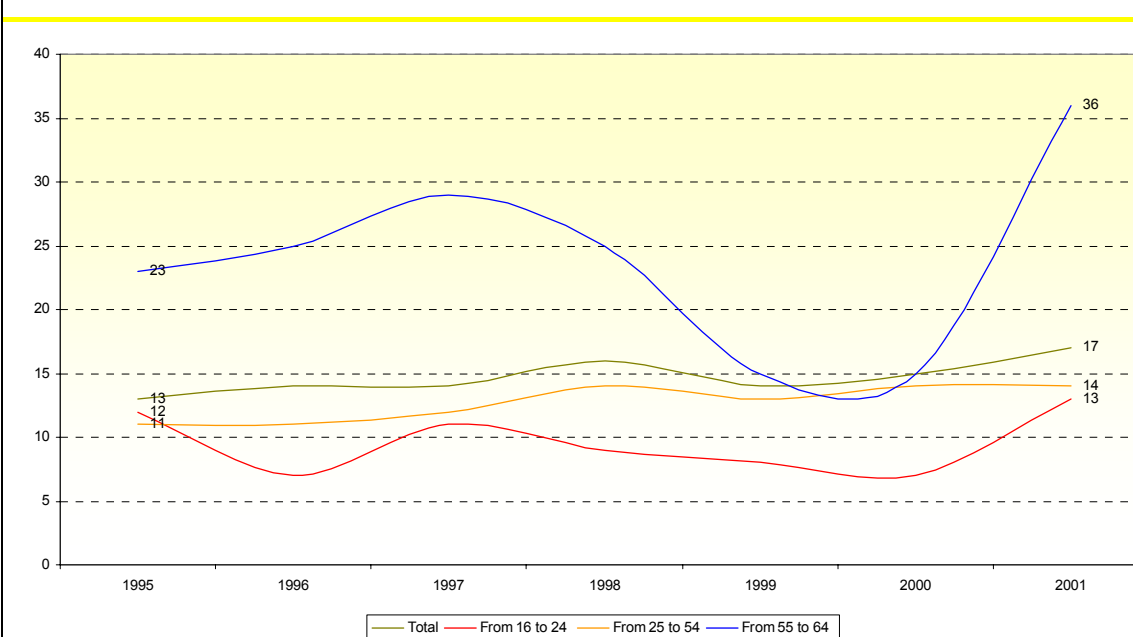
Source: Home Panel European Union, Eurostat

In order to combat segregation and solve the problems faced by Spain in this area, the EQUAL CIP proposes:

- To develop positive action plans for business environments, with an impact in women's career development; promoting access and participation of women in collective decision and collective bargaining processes; trying to achieve a balanced of men and women in all production sectors and at all levels; and which are accompanied by measures addressed to stakeholders in the labour market to support and/or develop such plans.

- To implement promotional plans for the participation of women in the labour market allowing to start up specific actions directed to preventing segregation in the educational system; which stimulate diversification of training and work options; which introduce equal opportunities to the professional practices of the main stakeholders in the labour market; and which encourage a positive attitude in society as a whole and in families to the promotion of women in the work environment.

3.5 THEME 5: THEMATIC AREA 5.1: CONTRIBUTING TO THE INTEGRATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

The objective of Theme 5 of the EQUAL CI is to favour the social and professional integration of asylum seekers. In 2004, according to Interior Ministry data, 5,553 persons requested asylum in Spain, a figure below that of previous years (Graph 3.1.). Countries of origin were mostly Nigeria, Algeria,

Colombia, Mali, Equatorial Guinea and Congo D. R. Although we do not have the distribution by Autonomous Regions for 2004, data for previous years show a greater concentration of asylum seekers in Madrid (52% of the total for 2003), followed by the Autonomous Town of Ceuta (26%).

Graph 3.2. Evolution in asylum seekers, 2000-2004
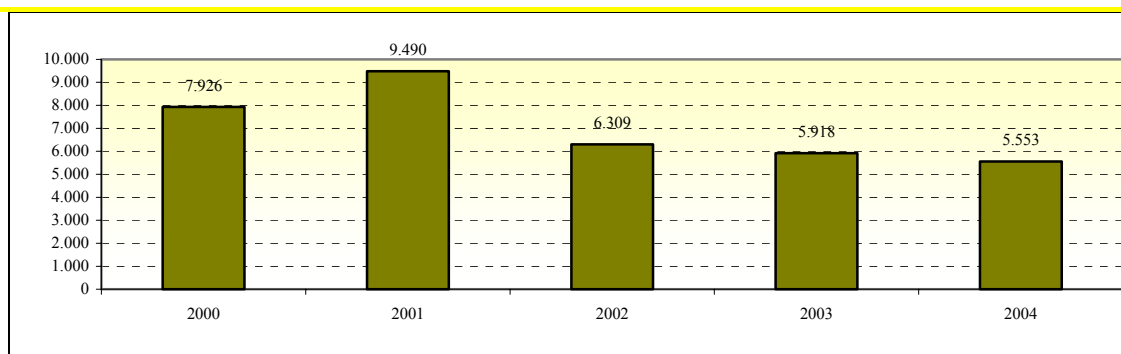
Source: Interior Ministry.

In view of the situation of asylum seekers in Spain, the EQUAL CIP proposes, in the first place, a series of direct actions to create an employment and labour market network for asylum seekers; another objective is to provide access to new technologies to this group as a means to seek employment by creating a labour exchange. All of these actions should be accompanied by measures such as learning the language, communication skills, the acquisition of basic social skills, knowledge of Spain, training, etc. As well as these actions, the EQUAL CIP proposes complementary actions geared towards: exchange of information allowing the different institutional players working to support these individuals to become more aware of legal proceedings and the situation applicable to this group; performance of studies and publishing of documentation concerning asylum and refugee status; drafting of specific training proposals; and awareness actions to prevent discrimination in the workplace.

SECTION 2: ANALYSIS OF ROUND ONE OF THE PROGRAMME

Section 2 analyses in detail the mechanics of the implementation of Action 2 of EQUAL projects approved in Round One, analysing the implementation of national and transnational work programmes, with a special focus on delivery and re-orientation mechanisms established and/or used by the projects. This analysis has been based on a separate study of each thematic area, so identifying features common one particular theme and also looking at common themes for all or several areas.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF THE MECHANICS OF ACTION 2

Chapter 4 analyses the mechanics of Action 2. The context of our analysis requires in the first place a presentation of the different thematic areas of the EQUAL Initiative, and, subsequently, a detailed analysis of implementation of the EQUAL projects. In this regard, we have studied the internal organisation and co-ordination of the Development Partnerships (DPs) and their objectives, the implementation of national and transnational work programmes, and the products developed within their framework, as well as aspects relating to financing of the projects, and their monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Lastly, this chapter analyses the role of the Support Unit (SU) in the implementation of Action 2, evaluation the assistance provided and the tools made available to the DPs to implement the projects.

4.1. PRESENTATION OF THEMATIC AREAS

This section **provides the context for the analysis** on **work programmes developed by the EQUAL projects** in the following sections. To achieve this, this section highlights the **key features of each thematic area** and the **issues** they deal with, also providing **data** on projects implemented within each thematic area.

The purpose of this section is to **examine each thematic area's case studies** and to **identify the specific details around the implementation of the work programmes.**

4.1.1. Thematic area 1.1: Facilitating access and return to the labour market

The objective of thematic area 1.1 is to *facilitate access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into the labour market, which must be open to the population as a whole.*

Eligible actions within this thematic area are targeted at encouraging the creation and survival of integrated advisory and monitoring services to facilitate access to the market for disadvantaged groups and to promote new approaches and contents for employment training.

The **main features of the projects implemented** in Round One for thematic area 1.1 are shown below:

Table 4.1.

	Budget 2000-2006 (€)	no. Projects (Round 1)	Size by no. partners (1)		Size Financing (2)		Representative Partner		Scope		Takes part in Act. 3
A. T. 1.1	239.020.311	48	**L** 13		**L** 31		AGE	0	OBJ. 1	28	22
							Aut. Region	24	non-O.1	18	
			M 24		**M** 16		Local Auth.	18			
% TA 1.1 on EQUAL CIP	29,6%						Other (3)	6	Multi-reg.	2	
			S 11		**S** 1						
THEME 1	281.762.448	55									
% Theme 1 on CIP	35%										
EQUAL CIP	**790.223.904 €**										

1. Size depending on number of Partners: Large: L (more than 20 partners) - Medium: M (between 9 and 20 partners) - Small: S (between 2 and 8 partners); **2. Size pursuant to financing:** Large: L (more than 2 mill. €) - Medium: M (between 1 and 2 mill. €) - Small: S (less than 1 mill. €) ; **3. Representative Partner:** the category "Other" includes foundation, association, social economy, business organisation, trade union, university/investigation centre, commercial company, chamber of commerce

Source: Drafted by ECOTEC based on data in the EQUAL Database and Annual Report 2004

Of most note, out of the project activities undertaken, are *actions leading towards the establishment of tailored services and systems to help employability*; the *integration of actions* such as Personalised Plans for Social-Labour Integration, incorporating the project's own resources and network resources for that area, *promoting awareness and seeking the active involvement of businesses* in employability actions, such as canvassing businesses, including activities around information provision, awareness raising and providing advice, seeking the work experience agreements and other actions; *in-company work placements;* and the *creation of ICT tools* such as interactive computer networks to facilitate co-ordinated management and networking of technical personnel.

4.1.2. Thematic area 1.2: Combating racism and xenophobia in the labour market

This area's objective, within Theme 1 *"Employability"*, is to combat discrimination and inequalities in the labour market and in social life, in order to facilitate the participation of immigrants in the labour market and to eliminate racist and xenophobic attitudes.

The **Main features of the projects implemented** during Round One in thematic area 1.2 are shown in the table below:

Table: 4.2.

	Budget 2000-2006 (€)	no. Projects (Round 1)	Size by no. partners (1)		Size Financing (2)		Representative Partner		Scope		Takes part in Act. 3
T.A. 1.2	42.742.137	7	G	1	G	6	AGE	0	OBJ. 1	2	
							Aut. Region	2			
			M	4	M	1	Local Auth.	1	non-O.1	2	5
% TA 1.2 son EQUAL CIP	5,4%						Other (3)	4			
			P	2	P	0			Multi-reg.	3	
Theme 1	281.762.448	55	**1. Size depending on number of Partners:** Large: L (more than 20 partners) - Medium: M (between 9 and 20 partners) - Small: S (between 2 and 8 partners); **2. Size pursuant to financing:** Large: L (more than 2 mill. €) - Medium: M (between 1 and 2 mill. €) - Small: S (less than 1 mill. €) ; **3. Representative Partner:** the category "Other" includes foundation, association, social economy, business organisation, trade union, university/investigation centre, commercial company, chamber of commerce								
% Theme 1 on CIP	35%										
EQUAL CIP	**790.223.904 €**										

Source: Drafted by ECOTEC based on data in the EQUAL Database and Annual Report 2004.

In this area we find actions focused on the development of legal, labour and official validation *advice and advisory services*. These services can be accessed anonymously by telephone or in person. New positions have been created, such as the *intercultural labour mediator*, which serves as a champion between the business and the employee. Projects in this area have sought to *promote employment opportunities for* the target population through mechanisms such as self-employment, and bi-cultural job formulas. To achieve this, projects have devised personalised training programmes and business follow-up. However, these activities have been the least developed due to the difficulties faced with validation of qualifications, work permits and residence permits. In general, DPs have performed *awareness* campaigns promoting the positive benefits of immigration aimed at Spanish people and businesses. Among these are several campaigns aimed at fighting stereotyping of immigrant women and to help with their integration and training, as a key factor in their social integration. As this immigrant group is particularly vulnerable and doubly discriminated against there have been some actions targeted solely on women e.g. training courses, seminars and facilitating follow-up measures to encourage their participation.

4.1.3. Thematic area 2.1: Promoting entrepreneurship

The thematic area of business creation is focused on facilitating *the elimination of obstacles in the creation and survival of businesses,* which are highlighted and more marked in *persons suffering discrimination or for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into the labour market.*

There are two main priorities within this thematic area to promote entrepreneurship: the first is focused on establishing integral and personalised business creation and survival plans, and another on financing instruments. There has been much more activity for the exploitation and development of the first priority during Round One.

The **main features of the projects implemented** during Round One in thematic area 2.1 are shown in the table below:

Table: 4.3.

	Budget 2000-2006 (€)	no. Projects (Round 1)	Size by no. partners (1)		Size Financing (2)		Representative Partner		Scope		Takes part in Act. 3
			L	11	L	13	AGE	0	OBJ. 1	18	
T.A. 2.1	118.014.229	25	M	8	M	11	Aut. Region	14	non-O.1	4	10
							Local Auth.	5			
			S	6	S	1	Other (3)	6	Multi-reg.	3	
Theme 2	118.014.229	25	**1. Size depending on number of Partners:** Large: L (more than 20 partners) - Medium: M (between 9 and 20 partners) - Small: S (between 2 and 8 partners); **2. Size pursuant to financing:** Large: L (more than 2 mill. €) - Medium: M (between 1 and 2 mill. €) - Small: S (less than 1 mill. €) ; **3. Representative Partner: the** category "Other" includes foundation, association, social economy, business organisation, trade union, university/investigation centre, commercial company, chamber of commerce									
% Theme 2 on CIP	15,1%										
EQUAL CIP	790.223.904 €										

Source: Drafted by ECOTEC based on data in the EQUAL Database and Annual Report 2004.

In this area, the main characteristic of project activities is that *individual tailored training is followed by advice to the potential entrepreneur, a personalised itinerary, follow-up, tutoring and, eventually, monitoring of the business project* in order to assist the new entrepreneur as far as possible. In most cases, Action 2 also shows the "*construction" of entrepreneurship centres* providing integrated advice and follow-up services to the entrepreneur. The most frequent product of Round One DPs is the establishment of these centres where potential entrepreneurs can find the necessary support to create a business plan. These centres also, through the use of new technologies, help remove obstacles to business creation, which is the main objective of the Initiative in this theme 3.

4.1.4. Thematic area 3.1: Adaptability

The thematic area relating to Adaptability is limited to experiences tending to *"assist employee and business adaptability to structural economic changes and to the use of information technologies and other new technologies".*

The **main features of the projects** implemented during Round One in thematic area 3.1 are shown in the table below:

Table: 4.4

	Budget 2000-2006 (€)	no. Projects (Round 1)	Size by no. partners (1)		Size Financing (2)		Representative Partner		Scope		Takes part in Act. 3
T.A. 3.1	116.918.103	24	L	5	L	14	AGE	0	OBJ. 1	16	11
			M	12	M	9	Aut. Region	10	non-O.1	6	
							Local Auth.	7			
			S	7	S	1	Other (3)	7	Multi-reg.	2	
THEME 3	116.918.103	24	1. Size depending on number of Partners: Large: L (more than 20 partners) - Medium: M (between 9 and 20 partners) - Small: S (between 2 and 8 partners); **2. Size pursuant to financing:** Large: L (more than 2 mill. €) - Medium: M (between 1 and 2 mill. €) - Small: S (less than 1 mill. €) ; **3. Representative Partner:** the category "Other" includes foundation, association, social economy, business organisation, trade union, university/investigation centre, commercial company, chamber of commerce									
% Theme 3 on CIP	14,9%										
EQUAL CIP	790.223.904 €										

Source: Drafted by ECOTEC based on data in the EQUAL Database and Annual Report 2004.

Types of actions delivered by projects in this area have mostly been: *awareness, training, advice and follow-up actions* to implement new management systems allowing businesses to adapt to changes in the environment, by promoting awareness and pursuant to the "demonstration effect" shown by certain small groups of businesses within which effective implementation experiences were undertaken. As regards employees, the actions sought to *improve skills* in order to keep their position, especially in areas such as computer awareness. In some cases actions have attempted to take tentative steps to *change the business culture,* to create a framework to introduce *flexibility measures through collective bargaining*, to introduce new occupational profiles in sectors or territories requiring greater dynamism, or to make *advances in online transactions* between companies or between the former and the administration and/or intermediate bodies. Another characteristic of this theme is the *development of IT business management tools* for different environments, network diagnosis applications on professional skills or business management and e-training platforms.

4.1.5. Thematic area 4.1: Reconciliation of family and professional life

Within thematic area 4.1, EQUAL purports to overcome one of the most important obstacles faced by women in accessing and remaining in the labour market, reconciliation of family and professional life, by developing more flexible and effective forms of organising work and support services.

The **main features of the projects implemented** during Round One in thematic area 4.1 are shown in the table below:

Table: 4.5.

	Budget 2000-2006 (€)	no. Projects (Round 1)	Size by no. partners (1)		Size Financing (2)		Representative Partner		Scope		Takes part in Act. 3
T.A. 4.1	104.392.717	22	**L**	4	**L**	12	AGE	0	OBJ. 1	15	
							Aut. Region	11			
			M	14	**M**	7	Local Auth.	6	non-O.1	6	12
	13,2%		**S**	4	**S**	3	Other (3)	5	Multi-reg.	1	
THEME 4	243.981.976	54	**1. Size depending on number of Partners:** Large: L (more than 20 partners) - Medium: M (between 9 and 20 partners) - Small: S (between 2 and 8 partners); **2. Size pursuant to financing:** Large: L (more than 2 mill. €) - Medium: M (between 1 and 2 mill. €) - Small: S (less than 1 mill. €) ; **3. Representative Partner:** the category "Other" includes foundation, association, social economy, business organisation, trade union, university/investigation centre, commercial company, chamber of commerce								
% Theme 4 on CIP	31,2%										
EQUAL CIP	790.223.904 €										

Source: Drafted by ECOTEC based on data in the EQUAL Database and Annual Report 2004.

Projects within this area have started up experimental *measures to prevent and eliminate labour discrimination in businesses and in organisations*, particularly in trade unions, by drafting self-diagnosis tools to assess enforcement of the Equal Opportunities Principle; the Plan of Action for Equal Opportunities in businesses; training trade union delegates on equal opportunities'; training of Equal Opportunities Agents); support measures to create services which are close to communities (such as the implementation of "services-checks" or the Equal Opportunities Support Agency); *measures in support of female employment* (through training actions - courses and workshops -, promoting entrepreneurial skills; subsidies for self-employment and specific measures for newly launched female entrepreneurs).

These actions have also been accompanied by awareness and information activities targeted at society as a whole, involving both men and women and, in particular, social-economic stakeholders, entrepreneurs and political representatives at all levels.

4.1.6. Thematic area 4.2: Reducing the gender gap between men and women and supporting the elimination of workplace segregation

The objective of actions designed within thematic area 4.2 is *to combat the notorious inequality of women compared to men in the labour market in Spain as regards rates of activity, employment and unemployment, and segregation of women in the workplace.*

The **main features of the projects implemented** during Round One in thematic area 4.2 are shown in the table below:

Table: 4.6.

	Budget 2000-2006 (€)	no. Projects (Round 1)	Size by no. partners (1)		Size Financing (2)		Representative Partner		Scope		Takes part in Act. 3
T.A. 4.2	139.589.259	32	**L**	3	**L**	12	AGE	1	OBJ. 1	23	18
							Aut. Region	14			
			M	21	**M**	14	Local Auth.	7	non-O.1	5	
	18%		**S**	8	**S**	6	Other (3)	10	Multi-reg.	4	
THEME 4	243.981.976	54	**1. Size depending on number of Partners:** Large: L (more than 20 partners) - Medium: M (between 9 and 20 partners) - Small: S (between 2 and 8 partners); **2. Size pursuant to financing:** Large: L (more than 2 mill. €) - Medium: M (between 1 and 2 mill. €) - Small: S (less than 1 mill. €) ; **3. Representative Partner:** the category "Other" includes foundation, association, social economy, business organisation, trade union, university/investigation centre, commercial company, chamber of commerce							
% Theme 4 on CIP	31,2%										
EQUAL CIP	**790.223.904 €**										

Source: Drafted by ECOTEC based on data in the EQUAL Database and Annual Report 2004.

Actions launched by projects have focused on *training and re-qualification measures for beneficiaries.* (Training plans for women entrepreneurs; training for women on entrepreneurial skills, training on new technologies applications). *Measures to facilitate access and return to the labour market* (guidance and advice services for women to access and return to the labour market); *actions to encourage awareness of labour market stakeholders* (training of trade union delegates on the application of the Equal Opportunities principle; training of Equal Opportunities Agents and Equal Opportunities Mediators); and *measures to create positive plans of action in public institutions and businesses.*

4.1.7. Thematic area 5.1: Contributing to the integration of asylum seekers

The objective of this theme is to *provide asylum seekers*, from the admission of their application until notice of resolution of the proceedings, *with the necessary knowledge and skills to access the labour market in Spain or to prepare them for eventual return, and to promote general actions to create an adequate integration framework.*

Only one project has been submitted in Spain within this theme, following a different procedure outside of any bidding round. The following table shows a global view of the **specific characteristics of the only DP** belonging to theme 5:

Table: 4.7.

	Budget 2000-2006 (€)	no. Projects (Round 1)	Size by no. partners (1)		Size Financing (2)		Representative Partner		Scope		Takes part in Act. 3
T.A. 5.1	9.914.796	1	**L** 0		**L** 1		AGE	1	OBJ. 1	0	0
			M 0		**M** 0		Aut. Region	0	non-O.1	0	
							Local Auth.	0			
			S 1		**S** 0		Other (3)	0	Multi-reg.	1	
THEME 5	9.914.796	1									
% Theme 5 on CIP	1,3%										
EQUAL CIP	**790.223.904 €**										

1. Size depending on number of Partners: Large: L (more than 20 partners) - Medium: M (between 9 and 20 partners) - Small: S (between 2 and 8 partners); **2. Size pursuant to financing:** Large: L (more than 2 mill. €) - Medium: M (between 1 and 2 mill. €) - Small: S (less than 1 mill. €) ; **3. Representative Partner: the category "Other" includes foundation, association, social economy, business organisation, trade union, university/investigation centre, commercial company, chamber of commerce**

Source: Drafted by ECOTEC based on data in the EQUAL Database and Annual Report 2004.

The activities undertaken by this project have been focused on *holistic employability plans* (addressed to allowing the qualification and development of this group's skills in order to facilitate their integration into Spanish society, with access to the labour market as the ultimate goal); and *training for final beneficiaries* (from literacy, IT, Spanish classes, qualification and adaptation of their skills to the requirements of the Spanish labour market). Another activity is the development of *self-employment projects* and *activities relating to access to employment*.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL WORK PROGRAMMES AND PROCESSING MECHANISMS DEVELOPED

This section focuses on analysing the operation of the partnerships and performance of national and transnational work programmes implemented within Action 2.

The evaluation team has focused on analysing the internal organisation and co-ordination mechanisms of the Development Partnerships (DPs); the level of achievement of objectives; the types of activities undertaken in national and transnational programmes and any re-orientations and changes undertaken during implementation of the programme; types of products developed; resources provided and support received to finance the project; and lastly, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

This analysis has been undertaken individually for each thematic area, aggregating any aspects common to the whole programme, and highlighting specific characteristics for each area. Please note that, in spite of this analysis by thematic area, the evaluation team has noted that patterns identified in the performance of the Programme cannot always be grouped by thematic areas, but instead certain patterns arise resulting from aspects such as types of representative entity, or the territorial scope of

the DPs. This chapter indicates several of these patterns, always taking into account that the main approach used is analysis by thematic area[8].

4.2.1 Internal organisation and co-ordination of the Development Partnership (DP):

Working in partnership

The evaluation team's analysis shows that the selection of partners is a key success factor for an EQUAL project. All parties involved in the issue to be dealt with or within the scope of the project must be represented, as well as organisations considered necessary to achieve the project's objectives, in order to optimise resources, co-ordinate interventions and to attempt to deal with cases of discrimination and inequality which are difficult to reach by existing policies and initiatives.

In the evaluator's opinion, actual DPs within the different thematic areas have sought to involve relevant stakeholders operating within the subject area of the projects, this being one of the strengths (of both the DPs and of the actual programme) observed during the analysis. Among the many benefits of working in partnership, DPs consider that the main one is *access to new networks and markets* (option selected by 77.6% of DPs in the survey). The thematic area analysis also shows other benefits, depending on the priorities and features of each area. Thus, *access to the target population* is selected by surveyed DPs in areas 1.1 (access) and 5.1 (asylum seekers); *access to new ideas and specialisation* in 1.2 (combating racism), 2.1 (business creation) and 4.1 (reconciliation); *to foster skills within organisations* in area 3.1 (adaptability); and *sharing experiences* in 4.2 (reducing the gender gap).

This working in partnership needs an organisation and co-ordination system to ensure the smooth running of the partnership, which is critical to achieve results and to make an impact during implementation of the project.

Internal organisation and co-ordination mechanisms

In general, the evaluation team has observed that the **internal organisation and co-ordination of partnerships has more or less worked according to the initial partnership agreements,** with some logical adjustments to make working plans operational. Thus, 76.3% of DPs surveyed note that there were no changes in the DP's organisation in 2003-2004. An analysis, broken down by thematic area, notes a high degree of stability, with the exception of thematic area 2.1 (business creation) where 42.9% of DPs surveyed have made changes. However, such changes have been minor, almost always at the start of the project, and occur because the partners have delivered as contracted. The greater fluidity of projects in this area may perhaps be explained by the difficulties of ensuring business participation in labour market integration processes.

As a general rule, the internal organisation of DPs, in the opinion of the evaluation team, is based on the aim of **capitalising on each partner's abilities, allowing each of them to take on the role where**

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[8] The regional administration has most frequently assumed the role of representative entity for DPs. The behaviour of the regional administration can have an important influence in the DP's behaviour. However, the analysis requested for this report does not purport to study different behaviours by region, but by thematic area, and therefore the evaluation team has not used this criterion to classify DP behaviour.

they are best equipped and have the most experience. In general, DPs agree that practice has shown that, in order to avoid delays and problems in delivering work plans and to achieve objectives it has been necessary to take into account the skills and experience of different partners, irrespective of their size or type, and, consequently, they needed to take part in decision making, as shown below. This was one of the positive aspects of the Initiative.

Furthermore, **management and co-ordination bodies** have been shown to be **more effective** during the implementation of Action 2, in particular "Working Groups" or "Technical Committees", **in cases where the composition of the bodies reflected the composition of the DP itself,** as revealed by the more in-depth analysis of the case studies. Thus, as a general rule, where the different partners were present in all Working Groups or Committees a more fluid and regular exchange of information was observed concerning the actions performed by other partners and/or Working Groups or Technical Committees, and there was also a more effective horizontal co-ordination of the DP. The degree of decision-making power within the framework of the working groups also favoured co-ordination and smoother project management.

An example of this trend is DP 532 (thematic area 1.1 (access)), PILNAR, which, after agreeing on clear criteria with the Management Committee, allowed the Working Groups to take their own decisions. This provided such groups with certain independence to implement actions without wasting time.

Challenges of working in partnership

In the evaluation team's opinion, experience shows that effective co-ordination and integration of organisations and resources involves the need to grant a certain level of autonomy to the working groups, as mentioned in the Mid-Term Evaluation. This is essential, as the greatest challenge to the DPs relating to their working in partnership has been the **risk of fragmentation within the partnership** (option also selected by 82.9% of DPs surveyed). This risk is due to the absence of mechanisms for co-ordination and exchange of experience, which can render a DP more cohesive, to the unequal involvement of the partners and, in some cases, to the lack of strong and effective co-ordination of the project. This may also be due to a weak culture of cooperation between different types of organisations. In practice, **there are many DPs, especially those with a lot of partners, whose organisations have not managed to articulate a joint vision to implement the project, nor ensure that all organisations are effectively involved.** The evaluation team therefore considers it advisable to limit DPs to 10-15 partners, as determined for Round Two, as too large a number can make decision-making difficult and leads to more complex management.

Communication difficulties are another aspect, which has had a negative influence on the work of DPs (option selected by 75% of DPs surveyed). In the evaluation team's opinion, **communication and participation** has generally shown best results in DPs tending towards more equal participation, as these organisations are more likely to implement efficient vertical and horizontal communication systems, and most encourage involvement in decision making by all interested partners.

However, although case studies have observed that communication in partnerships was fluid as a general rule, sometimes through informal channels, we note, particularly in areas 1.1 (access), 1.2

(combating racism), 3.1(adaptability) and 4.1 (reconciliation), a **need to encourage more formal horizontal communications and exchanges** between working groups. This would help **to avoid the isolation of actions or organisations,** which leads certain partners to lack awareness of the project as a whole and, in fact, hinders the work of the partnership. As shown by the Mid-Term Evaluation, vertical communication between project management and partners of the DP is generally more fluid, especially as regards top-to-bottom flows in different thematic areas.

As for the **participation of consulting firms** in partnerships, particularly when they assume responsibility for project co-ordination, the evaluator has observed that **positive** experiences always relate to **consulting firms which have managed to be integrated into the partnership**, without "monopolising" its duties, contributing their experience and specific skills to reinforcing implementation of the project and making the partnership more dynamic, thus providing added value.

Decision-making mechanisms in the DP

As regards **decision-making**, the partners of the DPs surveyed in different thematic areas all say that performance of actions has take place through **joint participation and decision-making, without any correlation between the weight of the partner within the partnership and its participation and decision-making powers.**

The evaluation team has observed that a large part of DPs selected as case studies show equal participation of partners, in DPs with both a small and large number of partners. However, in spite of the fact that this is a generalised trend, area 3.1 (adaptability) shows that, although as a general rule consensus is sought between the members of technical committees and other decision-making bodies, in certain cases there were clear examples of "cooperation blockage" by a member with major weight in the financing of the project. This is perhaps due to the fact that the different types of organisations making up DPs in this area, mostly linked to the business world, are more used to following the commercial decision-making model (weighted vote depending on the financial contribution of the partner). This kind of situation where partners with greater financial contributions "muscle in" have been softened, although not eradicated.

In most cases an effort was made to include all relevant organisations in the DPs, including beneficiary groups. In this regard, 93% of DPs surveyed say they have tried to involve beneficiary groups and/or their representative bodies. This evidences a positive trend, observed in most cases, which shows the inclusive and representative nature of the DPs.

We have observed that partners have participated in decision-making on the implementation of the project by participating in DP structures such as meetings, management committees, control committees and others. However, as these types of bodies generally meet relatively infrequently. The **true weight of the partners in decision-making processes for the project has been through their active participation in technical working committees,** the real tool for the day to day running of the project, which has rendered decision-making more agile and dynamic.

The following graph shows an analysis of the co-ordination and decision-making mechanisms adopted by DPs from the selected as case studies, showing the distribution of DPs in accordance with the criteria of the Mid-Term Evaluation:

Graph 5.3

Hierarchical coalition model

Coalition model open to cooperation

🔴 Thematic area 1.1		🟢 Thematic area 3.1	
🟠 Thematic area 1.2		🔵 Thematic area 4.1	
⚫ Thematic area 2.1		🔵 Thematic area 4.2	
🟣 Thematic area 5.1			
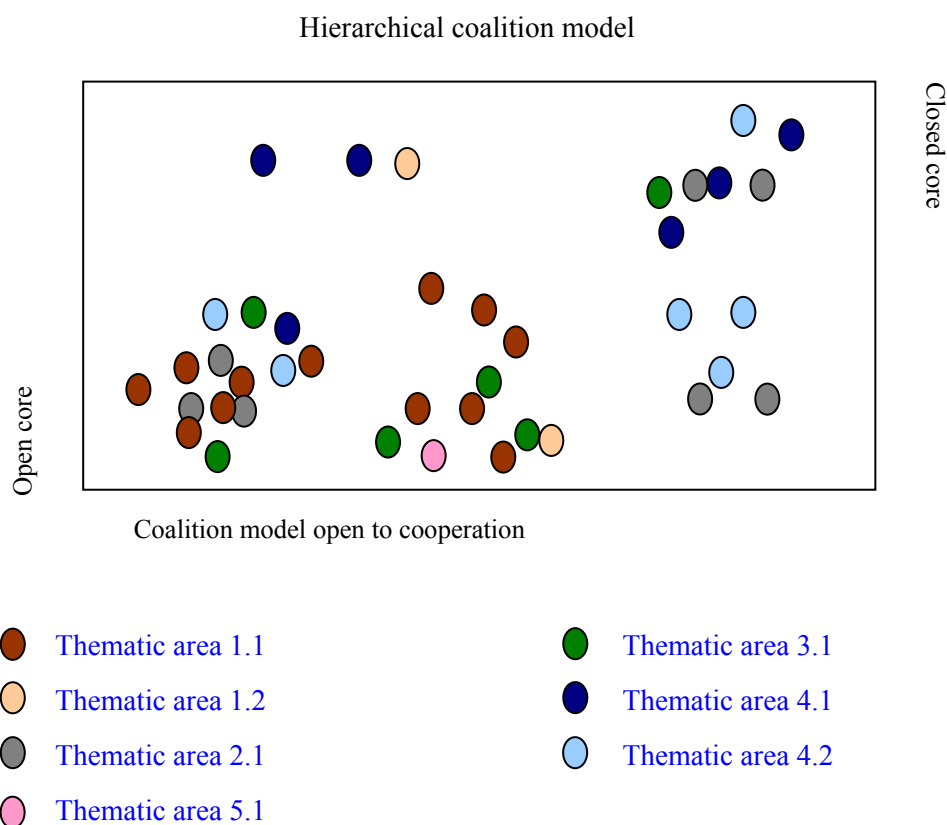
Irrespective of whether the organisation has prior experience in cooperation (core models) or lacks such experience (coalition models), the distribution shows a majority trend towards equal participation (open core and coalition models geared towards participation), instead of a majority of one sponsor or group of sponsors within the DP (closed core models and hierarchically-oriented models). This allows us to conclude that, in the light of the in-depth analysis of the case studies, the general trend is satisfactory, with a predominance of democratic forms of participation. This shows a positive evolution in respect of our observations in the Mid-Term Evaluation, which noted a teed to "democratise" decision-making in DPs.

This **representative and participative spirit** generally observed in DPs surveyed is particularly valuable to small organisations and group representatives, which consider this to be a strength of EQUAL, as it gives them the possibility to participate under equal conditions with other partners, local and regional administrations, a situation which would hardly occur outside the EQUAL framework. Furthermore, this representative and participation structure has allowed, as shown in subsequent sections, to start-up actions dealing with different problems in each thematic area as a whole.

Conclusions

In the reports, surveys and interviews performed in the case studies, most participating DPs have shown that **the internal organisation and co-ordination of DPs in different thematic areas was suitable to achieve their objectives and to implement the working plans.** Notwithstanding is, the DPs interviewed all say that this was achieved after a long consolidation and start-up process of the co-ordination and management system within the DPs, as previously shown in the Mid-Term Evaluation, involving initial delays in the performance of national and transnational working plans. Internal learning processes within the DP have also contributed to this process, as a result of their experience working in partnership and the launching of the different actions.

The evaluation team concludes that the **organisation models and co-ordination mechanisms** shown to be **most effective** from a results standpoint are those which favour the **representation of the different organisations or bodies constituting the DP** within its management and decision-making bodies. Generally, organisation and decision-making models for the DPs have been created to allow equal participation in decision-making, which is one of the strengths of the Initiative, as it encourages the empowerment of the different participating organisations.

The evaluation team has observed a weakness whenever a consulting firm **external to the partnership, takes an excessive role** in co-ordinating the project, to the detriment of the involvement of the remaining partners.

Furthermore, a key factor for the effectiveness of the organisation and co-ordination of the DPs has been the **culture of cooperation between the partners and their willingness to work in partnership.** The more negative trends observed during Action 2 occur in DPs which have been unable to involve their partners in implementation. Whether this was because of lack of effective co-ordination and participation mechanisms or as a result of lack of interest on the part of the organisations, which finally separated from the DP.

4.2.2   Degree of achievement of objectives:

In accordance with the results of the DP survey in Round One, **78%** of DPs surveyed stated they have **achieved between 75% and 99% of the project's global objectives**, with **13.2%** declaring they have achieved **all of them,** which at first sight would evidence the high effectiveness of the DP organisation system and of working in partnership, allowing the EQUAL projects to achieve high levels as regards achievement of objectives.

However, after a more in-depth analysis of the case studies and final reports, the evaluation team considers that, although the contribution of the DPs to the achievement of their **global objectives** is undoubted within all thematic areas**,** it is also true that such global objectives, **although adequate and relevant** from a thematic standpoint, are (save for thematic area 2.1 (business creation) and 5.1 (asylum seekers) where the scope of the actual areas is more precisely defined) **not very precise.** Thus setting global objectives such as "facilitating new employment opportunities", "Launching of advanced multi-media systems to respond to the needs of the labour market" or "greater empowerment in access to the labour market" are common, which objectives are not specific or measurable, not realistic and hard to achieve within the timeframe.

To this we must add that the **level of information provided by most final reports of the projects analysed in greater depth does not allow us to assess more specifically the degree of achievement of these global objectives**. Thus, please note that the final reports, in general, do not reflect the results of continuing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and only in very limited cases do they provide aggregate information on the indicators provided for such monitoring. These technical deficiencies in the final reports do not permit an evaluation of the degree of achievement of the global objectives by the projects based on the monitoring system. Similarly, during the interviews carried out by the evaluation team within the framework of the present Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation, marked divergences were appreciated between the statements of the partners interviewed and the information provided in the final reports concerning achievement of objectives (in terms of access of beneficiaries to employment, business creation, etc.).

Conclusions

As a general rule and **at programme level**, **the majority of DPs surveyed (78%) say they have achieved most (between 75% and 99%) global objectives** (these do not include mainstreaming objectives, examined below), with logical deviations occurring in experimental projects. At first sight this would evidence a high effectiveness of the DPs' organisation system and their working in partnership, allowing EQUAL to reach high levels of achievement of objectives. However, the more in-depth analysis of case studies and final reports leads the evaluation team to consider that, although in practice the contribution of the DPs to the achievement of their **global objectives** is undoubted within all thematic areas**,** the lack of precision of the global objectives set and the technical deficiencies observed in the final reports limits gathering more precise information on their effects in persons, structures and businesses, and on the actual impact of the projects.

4.2.3   Implementation of activities of a National Project:

An analysis of the surveys shows that, although most DPs surveyed (60.5%) state that there were no changes to activities undertaken during Action 2 compared to those provided upon completion of Action 1, the evaluation team has observed that **when comparing the activities provided** in national work programmes and **activities effectively undertaken** by projects analysed in depth as case studies, certain **changes are apparent**, although they are **not material**. This is why many DPs have not considered them to be changes, but simply "adjustments" arisen from putting into practice any experimental programme. The most usual change or re-orientation of the work plan programming are those affecting the **schedule** initially provided, in many cases as a result of accumulated delays to the effective launch of the project. Other activities were reformulated when the partners became aware of the real needs of the final beneficiaries, after letting these final beneficiaries participate in the final design of the action. Another type of change, although less frequent, is the result of an **incorrect definition of the initial diagnosis of tools to be used**, entailing methodological changes in order to adapt such methodologies to the reality of the beneficiary group.

Another cause for much of the delays incurred by projects has been **changes in government** and hence in the relevant **public administrations** which have formed part of the DPs. The transfer of powers after elections, at both local and regional levels, has caused important delays in the

performance of certain actions within the projects, especially activities for which the public subject to the changes were responsible.

Thus, actions implemented by the DPs have evolved throughout the project, seeking operational improvements through their reorientation and, to a lesser extent, as modifications in the activities initially provided, as noted above. In practice, as observed in the case studies for different thematic areas, the evaluation team may conclude that such **actions have had a greater effect in cases involving constant review monitoring of the suitability of the implemented action;** as well as in cases involving **real participation and involvement of beneficiaries** in the action (leading, on occasion, to adapt the action based on beneficiaries' suggestions).

This **flexibility in the EQUAL programme, allowing re-orientation of activities in accordance with changing circumstances,** receives a very positive assessment both by the projects and by the evaluator, and is considered to be one of the strengths of the Initiative. Such re-orientation and changes show **an evolution and internal learning.** This general trend is illustrated clearly by the words of an interviewed DP: "*At the start of the project certain objectives were set which were later perceived to be too ambitious for the implementation of the project, the reality found in the areas was different, and therefore the action was adapted to the real needs of the territory and the target population*".

However, although changes and unexpected developments are inevitable in experimental projects, and are even positive for their success, they have also caused delays in the implementation of the working plans, increased in certain cases by insufficient planning and co-ordination by DPs, and by the existence of a broad variety of simultaneously co-ordinated actions in the projects.

Conclusions

The analysis of the programme has shown that, as a general rule, projects have implemented their **work programmes** in a way, which **is mostly adjusted to their initial programming**. However, when comparing activities initially provided and those effectively performed, **changes** can be seen, **although not material.** These re-orientations have mainly been due to changes in the schedule, political changes in public organisations DP partners, changes detected in the needs of the beneficiaries and, in some cases, by a lack of effective foresight and/or planning of the actions.

This **flexibility** offered by the programme **in allowing for changes and re-orientations of projects** in accordance with **changing circumstances and the learning curve of the actual DP** has been identified as one of the **strengths of the Initiative**, although without proper planning and co-ordination within the DPs, it may cause (as observed in practice) delays in programme implementations.

4.2.4 Analysis of the performance of transnational work programmes and mechanisms implemented

Benefits and challenges of transnational cooperation

EQUAL differs from other programmes and initiatives in that it integrates innovation on a national scale by means of the DPs, with transnational cooperation and the exchange of best practices. This makes EQUAL present specific features, such as requiring a joint national and transnational approach, a selection of partners which is not geographically predetermined, and the fact that Transnational Groups consist of independent DPs. As observed in our analysis, these specific features determine to a great extent the benefits and challenges of transnational cooperation.

From a general standpoint, **there is an acceptable degree of satisfaction on the part of the DPs regarding the implementation of transnational work programmes**. DPs illustrate this by acknowledging the benefits obtained by organisations (access to new ideas and questioning of one's own ideas within a broader context, creating links with other organisations, creation of networks…) and by the persons involved (increasing personal experiences, contacts, improvement of language skills, improvement of self-esteem and self-confidence). In thematic areas such as 1.2 (combating racism), 4.1 (reconciliation), 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) and 5 (asylum seekers) a special mention was given to the possibility of exchanging experiences and putting them in contact with people in countries with more experience treating such problems.

One of the unexpected benefits of the projects which was most acknowledged both by technicians and partners was, in the words of one of the interviewed DPs that "*transnational encounters have in many cases served to adjust **"the collective self-esteem"** of the population in our territory when we saw that there are similar problems in other places, that similar solutions are applied, and that we can also provide new forms of action*". In the evaluation team's opinion, this is an important aspect, as for many EQUAL organisations this has been their first contact with the European reality, and has served not only to improve their self-esteem but also to validate their work and skills. This is essential to break the trend of Spanish DPs to regard the benefits of transnational cooperation purely from the "receiving" end, and to motivate their active participation in European networks, opening possibilities for future cooperation and adding a European dimension to their work.

Among the **difficulties** identified by DPs in the implementation of the transnational project are, in the first place, **communication and language problems**, and **cultural differences (**option selected by 18.4% of surveyed DPs**),** shown in different work systems. After the aforementioned communication problems, **problems in monitoring and evaluation** in the implementation of the work programme (17.1% of surveyed DPs) and **co-ordination problems** (14.5% of DPs), have been the options most frequently selected as the main difficulty.

The evaluation team has also observed that, in spite of the difficulties mentioned (which in many cases are inherent to the transnational component), in most cases the **difficulty** of achieving a satisfactory result for the cooperation has been due to the **poor selection of transnational partners at the start**, resulting in difficulties during implementation. This has constituted one of the greatest weaknesses of the process.

In one of the DP interviews in **area 1.1 (access)** the lack of a common interest shared by all partners, especially those which joined the DP late, generated friction between the Spanish DP and two out of the three partners comprising the Transnational Group, which led in practice to a purely bilateral cooperation.

To this we must add the **differences in approach between the national projects of the transnational partners,** which hindered the development of the transnational projects. Difficulties in this area arise, on the one hand, when the transnational partner, or the Spanish DP itself, does not give this EQUAL dimension the importance it deserves, and becomes an entity "tagging behind" the remaining DPs, without contributing much to the Transnational Work Programme. This has sometimes been resolved by requesting the Support Unit (SU) to contact its counterpart in the transnational partner's country to communicate this circumstance, but it has undoubtedly has an adverse effect in the rhythm of work and in the performance of the programme.

On the other hand, differences in approach between the national projects of the respective partners of the transnational project have in many cases prevented the experience from being more productive. As a result, the learning curve between transnational partners and the level of feedback between the transnational and the national project could have been higher.

Complementarity has thus been revealed as **a key factor for the success of this cooperation.** The DPs' evaluation has considered the **complementarity of the national and transnational work** to be **average** for the majority of DPs in all thematic areas (64%). In the evaluation team's opinion, this result has been conditioned by the poor selection of partners and differences in approach, which to a great extent has determined the results of the cooperation.

Organisation and co-ordination of transnational cooperation

As concerns **partner participation** in transnational cooperation, in most cases **sponsor partners** of the projects **have been more actively involved** in the performance of the transnational project, although the remaining partners have participated in its actions. It is also true that there have been certain examples of high participation, where personnel from the different organisations in the partnership were involved in the different actions of the transnational work plan, depending on their areas of expertise. Also common was the participation of project personnel in technician exchanges. Less common was allowing final beneficiaries to participate in these exchanges.

There have been successful examples of satisfactory implementation of the transnational project, e.g. by appointing **a person responsible for making the work more dynamic** (in charge of management of the transnational working plan, of organising meetings and events, etc.**)**, and ensuring that partners in the national DP are informed of and participate in transnational activities.

As an example, please note DP 292, of **thematic area 1.1 (access)** which allocated one person to transnational affairs, which, in the words of its Irish partner, made not only cooperation more dynamic, but also allowed a more effective and efficient performance of actions.

Thus the evaluation team deems it essential that the partners be involved in the transnational activities, both for the benefits they can obtain and for what they can contribute, favouring the perception of the transnational project as an integral part of the national project and not as an "add on". Furthermore, this would allow a smoother flow of communication, which, as mentioned in preceding sections, is essential for good co-ordination, preventing the separation of the transnational and national projects.

It has also been observed that, as a general rule, **little attention has been paid to aspects such as management, co-ordination and evaluation of the transnational project**, this being one of the least developed sections in the Transnational Cooperation Agreements (TCA). In practice this has made cooperation complex and time consuming. Thus we recommend a monitoring and evaluation effort, as this ensures proper performance and management of the TCA, permitting an assessment of the added value of transnational cooperation and contributing to the validation and mainstreaming of best practices.

Level of cooperation observed

As regards the **level of cooperation** observed, the evaluators appreciate both the exchange of information and experiences of DPs as examples of personal exchanges, and even of beneficiaries, and examples in which, after deploying a higher level of cooperation, common methodologies and products have been developed with very positive results.

An example illustrating jointly developed methodologies and products is that of **DPs 595 MEDIATION FOR EQUALITY** and **DP 498 RURAL EQUALITY** which have participated in transnational project EQ-MIND, also including a Portuguese and an Austrian partner. Products created within the framework of this transnational project, such as the Guide for Equal Opportunities Mediators and the "Multilevel-ToolBox" (including instruments and tools from different countries, as indicators for rural development programmes with a gender perspective, etc.), have been used by other Round Two EQUAL projects, as a result of their usefulness.

However, **this last higher cooperation level** has been achieved by a **smaller number of DPs.** This group also shows a greater number of organisations with prior experience in community and transnational initiatives. It is also observed that, although the level of cooperation achieved by certain DPs exceeds a simple exchange of experiences and information, working plans tend to emphasise theoretical aspects, such as diagnosing, profiling and reporting, rather than more practical aspects suitable for mainstreaming. In the evaluation team's opinion, although the transnational partnerships have generally been "very productive", the usefulness of the products created is not clearly manifest, which hinders their dissemination and mainstreaming.

Lack of sustainable cooperation

Only in isolated cases is there a **sustainability** of more or less informal cooperation with the same transnational partners, although in certain cases this cooperation has continued through Round Two. However, please note in this regard that the majority of transnational and national partners have declared themselves available for future cooperation.

Evaluation of transnational cooperation

The evaluation team notes that the majority of DPs see transnational cooperation as "excessively" complementary. Indeed, it is observed to be a valid complement contributing some added value to the national programme, but the latter is "what is really important". This leads to transnationality being seen, in some cases, as secondary, and sometimes more of an obligation than an opportunity. In the evaluation team's opinion, this factor may have an adverse impact on the proper implementation of transnational work programmes through time and, subject to the normal pressures of programme performance, could lead to demotivation and a reduction of transnational ambitions.

Conclusions

Transnational cooperation constitutes a path towards finding innovative solutions through a learning process and an exchange of experiences with other countries, which also suffer discrimination and inequality in the labour market. **The added value of transnational cooperation is becoming aware of other ways of working, of approaching and solving problems. Furthermore, it has shown to be an effective way of disseminating and mainstreaming best practices developed by the relevant countries.**

Although it is true that transnational projects, in general, have been useful, especially in order to learn new approaches and solutions applied to different contexts, the added value of transnational projects could be increased. In the evaluation team's opinion, factors such as cultural and language differences, differences in deadlines and periods for the performance of the national work programmes of the relevant partners and the lack of complementarity of the transnational partners' projects **have influenced results to a great extent.**

The contribution of transnationality to the national project depends on the affinity of interests, objectives and approaches between the different DPs, and the degree of involvement and commitment to the Transnational Cooperation Agreement. In this context, there are projects in which the greater experience of the transnational partner in a certain area has been essential to advance in the proposed objectives of the national working plan. In some cases, as a result of the TCA certain tools have been jointly developed which are among the main achievements of the project

It is essential for the content of the transnational partners' projects to be complementary in order to obtain a richer experience. Likewise, the willingness, intention and capacity of the national partners have also contributed to getting maximum use out of the experience.

As a general rule, there have not been enough mechanisms and language resources to allow participation by all partners.

A **close cooperation with transnational partners is valued as an excellent source of innovation** for the national project. In the evaluation team's opinion, DPs are not as ambitious as they should be as regards seeking the benefits associated with transnational cooperation.

4.2.5 Products developed as a result of the start-up of the national and transnational work programme

Please find below some examples of products created within each thematic area (p*romotional and dissemination elements created by the projects within the context of Action 2 are analysed in detail in the section on mainstreaming*):

In *thematic area 1.1 (access):*
- Publications including methodologies developed (access plans, networking).
- Manuals and guides to help technical personnel to direct and advise different groups.
- Guides to implement quality management systems.
- Mapping of existing resources intended to increase co-ordination and complementarity of resources.
- Studies and analyses of the labour market situation in different contexts, drafted by employment observatories.
- Electronic platforms and networks for the co-ordination of the different organisations; exchange of tools and methodologies and promotion of online work.
- CD Roms and DVDs including materials and training tools on equal opportunities between men and women.
- Employment Clubs as an information resource, development of training, information and direct support actions to beneficiaries.
- Employment databases to facilitate a connection between employment demand and supply.
- Awards and acknowledgements to businesses for their participation in the access process.

In *thematic area 1.2 (combating racism):*
- Methodological guides including personalised access plans
- Websites.
- Virtual platforms
- Long distance and part-attendance training.
- Methodological guides to make target groups more dynamic, in particular, immigrant women.
- Practical guides targeted at the business community on hiring immigrant employees.
- Studies on the situation of immigrants and/or their contribution to economic growth.

In *thematic area 2.1 (business creation):*
- Integrated service centres for integral training and follow-up of entrepreneurs. These centres use new technologies and offer services through on-line instruments, thus sometimes providing opportunities for technological mainstreaming.
- Training manuals drafted in cooperation with universities or local development stakeholders or research centres.
- International Internet portals offering training and advisory resources for the potential entrepreneur.
- Best practices manuals on business creation.

- Young entrepreneur clubs, women entrepreneur clubs, rural women's clubs, etc., where the entrepreneur "socialises" with the rest and which provide a reference and a link to the administration and between entrepreneurs.
- Financial incentives or support funds for entrepreneurs.

In *thematic area 3.1 (adaptability):*
- In-depth diagnosis on the situation of entrepreneurial fabric in an industry or territory.
- Guides for the incorporation of the Equal Opportunities principle in businesses.
- Creation of cooperation networks to access foreign markets or to manage waste.
- CD-ROM or website applications for the self-evaluation of employees and businesses, in varied aspects such as professional skills, quality, prevention of labour risks.
- Novel training methodologies in certain areas, and creation of occupational profiles which did not exist previously in the territory, or in the industry, such as PRL technicians specialised in the agriculture and livestock industry or technicians responsible for communicating ICT to vulnerable groups as concerns adaptability.

In *thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation):*
- CD-ROM manuals with elements suitable for mainstreaming, such as, for example, tutoring models.
- Best Practices Manuals which compile information on incorporation of the gender perspective into careers advice.
- Self-diagnosis manual for Business Self-Diagnosis.
- Human Resources Optimisation Guide for SMEs.

In *thematic area 4.2 (reducing the gender gap):*
- Best environmental practices manual.
- Methodological tools such as General Evaluation System (GES) (4 guides to evaluate needs, design, implementation and products and impacts), Equal Opportunities Diagnosis (as a complement to the GES, on IT media), and Benchmarking or comparative evaluation (to analyse access, involvement and sustainability of access processes).
- Manuals on the use of non-sexist language in the Administration
- Within the framework of a transnational project, a Trade Union delegate and manager manual on Equal Opportunities and shared family responsibility was drafted in order to approach collective bargaining from a gender perspective.

In *thematic area 5 (asylum seekers):*
- Dissemination materials
- Organisers
- Website of the national project and another for the transnational project
- Database used for management, to guarantee complementarity and to prevent duplication of services.
- Transnational tool to evaluate the impact of Occupational Training among asylum seekers.

4.2.6 Financing

From a general standpoint, there are no major difficulties as regards the volume of financing, but certain difficulties do exist in the financial management of Round One projects selected as case studies.

The volume of financing of an EQUAL project as such is usually not a problem, as DPs deliver depending on the existing budget. There are **problems**, however, **with the liquidity for project management**. The "financial buffer" offered by strong partners such as, for example, the Public Administrations (especially Departments or General Directorates of Autonomous Regions or organisations depending on regional governments, such as Regional Development Agencies) allows projects to operate with financial solvency, thanks to financial advances provided. If they lack such partners, DPs have to use financial instruments, such as credit facilities, to get sufficient cash flow to implement the project and this is very costly. **The non-eligibility of these financial expenses is perceived by DPs with lower financial backing as a problem for the operation of EQUAL**.

However, a negative aspect observed is that DPs have had problems in practice as a result of complying with the regulations and the hiring and justification procedures of these regional administrations, which has hindered project implementation and certification processes, sometimes delaying payments.

Projects have noted that there are usually no particular problems in certifying any questions arisen concerning the eligibility of certain expenses before the Managing Authority. These are resolved satisfactorily by the Support Unit.

In practice, it has been observed that the partners' **financial contribution has not been a determining factor of the weight of the partners in decision-making processes.** As explained in the section concerning organisation and composition of DPs, this is precisely one of the most valued aspects by participants in EQUAL, in which smaller or more modest partners are in the same situation or at the same level as other larger partners in decision-making processes. In this regard, DPs seem to show an evolution towards a greater acknowledgement of experience and knowledge as a key factor in decision-making for the implementation of the work programmes.

As regards financing, however, please note that the most critical cases of distortion or interpretative deviation (such as considering EQUAL as just another source of financing to perform a project without assuming the principles of the Initiative), have only occurred in isolated cases.

Finally, please note the actual and intrinsic difficulty experienced by partners without much experience in this type of projects is in understanding terms and procedures. Such partners may have needed complementary training by those responsible for the support structure. The evaluation team observes, through the case studies, a clear correlation between this lack of prior experience in European projects and difficulties experienced in administration and management processes.

Conclusions

DPs have not had problems with the volume of financing, but instead, the main difficulties have arisen by the **requirement of justifying payment of expenses to implement actions,** especially for DPs with less financial capacity**.** DP partners are obliged to advance financial resources to make such payments and thus to justify expenses, and request reimbursement thereof from the ESF Unit. This has been a problem for many DPs, as this system has caused problems to the partners and, especially, those with less liquidity, additionally to the obvious delays caused by lack of sufficient funds to start up the projects.

4.2.7 Monitoring and evaluation of actions

As concerns the processes and mechanisms used for **monitoring work performed and evaluation results**, the projects use a variety of tools. The survey shows that DPs have used a variety of mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the projects, with especial importance given to **the drafting of regular reports**, **collection of information on beneficiaries** by partners executing the actions and **regular accounting for financial performance.**

Through the information collected from the case studies, the evaluators have observed the predominance of DPs that have made an **effort to establish useful procedures and mechanisms to perform continuous monitoring and evaluation of the project's actions and results**. One of the partners interviewed said, in this regard, "*we would not have been able to work without an evaluation: we experimented and evaluated the experiment, thus providing feedback for subsequent actions from what we learnt from the evaluation*". However it is common for the **main worry for partners is recognition of project management and that the implementation of the actions is** on schedule, rather than monitoring and evaluation of results, which has adversely influenced the role of evaluation, as shown below.

Many analysed **evaluation reports do not reflect the level of information collected during the monitoring process of the projects.** Most of them do not show the results of the evaluation process on an aggregate level based on the indicators provided for such purposes.

It has been observed that in most cases the actual internal evaluations do not seem to have had an important role in the implementation of the project. It is common for evaluations, although they are in some cases complete and include many good recommendations, to have been unable to be included in the project through lack of time. This proves that in many cases the evaluation is more a requirement than a necessary tool for improvement, for learning lessons and for correcting errors.

As concerns the results of the projects, most of the interviewed DPs point to the **absence of monitoring of beneficiaries of the DP,** relating to, for example, survival of businesses created or actual access into the labour market of beneficiaries trained within the framework of the projects. This is an obstacle to evaluation the impact of the Initiative. This is particularly important in areas such as 1.1 (access), where the nature of the target population and the problems faced thereby, as a result of the limited duration of the action, may result in an improvement of their employability, and of their

ability to find and keep a job, making them "**readier to work", but** without achieving full integration upon completion of the project.

The technical structure of the project or a working committees created for such purposes are usually in charge of evaluation and monitoring. Please note also the participation of the partners in such monitoring, including partners representing beneficiary groups. Information gathered is usually registered in databases created for such purpose, and is analysed in accordance with indicators provided for each action. As well as quantitative information, the study has gathered beneficiary views through a satisfaction survey, and the evaluation of the technicians of the partners participating in the project actions.

> Please note, as an example of the involvement of beneficiaries in the continuing monitoring and evaluation process, DP 595 MEDIATION FOR EQUALITY (thematic area 4.2 (reducing the gender gap)). Participation of final beneficiaries was further channelled through **Thematic Discussion Groups and Chat-Cafés** with discussions concerning women's needs and equal opportunities between men and women. Contributions from beneficiaries to the Thematic Discussion Groups and Chat-Cafés were forwarded to the Technical Work Groups, which took them into account in order to influence future DP actions. This not only promoted the empowerment of final beneficiaries through the Thematic Discussion Groups and Chat-Cafés, but also dissemination of the project actions in the relevant locations, and, in particular, the degree of awareness of beneficiaries concerning Equal Opportunities. This experience generated a major impact in the local social fabric.

In general, the evaluators appreciate that monitoring ends up being routine, and that **reflection and evaluation should be more far-reaching**. Sometimes self-evaluations by the projects are too similar to final performance reports, very descriptive but lacking analysis and reflection. The best examples of evaluations have been found in DPs which use external organisations. In these instances true reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the experience may be found.

Furthermore, please note that there seems to be a **correlation between effectiveness in the control of actions** (and especially mechanisms to evaluate results) and **prior experience in the management of European projects** or projects generated on the basis of Operating Programmes financed by European Union Structural Funds. The culture of evaluation encouraged by the EC cohesion policy, which is an added value of such policy, is further underscored by the fact that managers exercise their evaluation duties better than organisations lacking such prior experience, and which see evaluation as a procedural requirement of the Community Initiative.

Conclusions

It is observed that monitoring usually concentrates on aspects linked to implementation of actions, and to a lesser extent on aspects concerning **the internal operation of the DP.**

As concerns **monitoring of fulfilment of the basic and horizontal principles of the Initiative**, these are often analysed exclusively in order to draft the justifying documentation attached to each certification or annual report.

In general, the evaluators appreciate that monitoring tends to end up being a routine procedure, and that **an exercise in reflection and evaluation should back the performance and management of the project and contribute to the validation of best practice.** Sometimes project evaluations are too much like final implementation reports, very descriptive but lacking analysis and reflection. The best examples of evaluations have been found in DPs which commissioned use external organisations. In such cases external evaluation provided a different and more thoughtful perspective as an added value.

4.3 SUPPORT PROVIDED TO DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS BY SUPPORT STRUCTURES

This section analyses the work performed by the EQUAL Support Unit (SU), in its technical support duties, in managing the Initiative in Spain as regards implementation of Action 2 (excluding dissemination and mainstreaming of Action 2). It focuses on an **analysis of activities ensuring the provision of technical advice, support and monitoring of the DPs in their implementation of their national and transnational work programmes**.

Activities entrusted to the SU are listed in different documents of the EQUAL CIP (Guide for Presentation of Projects, Management and Control Guide for EAUL Projects, and annual reports drafted by the Managing Authority (MA)). The evaluation team has analysed this information and compared it with the views of the Managing Authority and Support Unit, and of the DPs, and has drafted a series of conclusions and recommendations in this regard[9].

4.3.1 Organisation of the support structure to provide projects with the necessary technical support

An examination of the SU's internal organisation serves to analyse how it has been provided with the necessary capacity to assist DPs in the performance of their programmes.

As well undertaking a **distribution of projects between all technical personnel** within the framework of the SU, in order to be able to provide monitoring and individualised support to each project, different **working groups** were created on an SU internal level (Information and Evaluation Group, EQUAL Forum Magazine Group, Transnationality Group and Mainstreaming Group). These working groups have been created **at the request of the technicians**, and **participation** is **voluntary**, which shows the importance of voluntary work and the involvement of personnel in the internal working of the group.

There are **SU co-ordination meetings**, but these are **organisational or activity preparation meetings**, and therefore **do not focus on content as much as would be desirable**. This hinders the technicians from having an overall view of the whole programme, as a result of which the evaluation team perceives the **need to act following a greater overall strategy**. This may have caused a **failure**

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[9] The activity of the SU analysed in the present section does not include activities relating to Action 1 Round One, as they are not subject to the present evaluation, nor dissemination and mainstreaming activities, nor SU activities relating to Round Two of the EQUAL CI, which shall be examined in the relevant sections hereof. The SU's mainstreaming and action 3 activities shall be examined in the relevant chapters.

to optimise the SU's potential, as synergy possibilities are lost, which a co-ordinated action of the Structure could provide the programme.

Exchange of information between technical personnel on project content and criteria for implementation guidelines is not institutionalised, according to the same personnel, and therefore takes place on an **informal** basis**.** This means, once again, that the level of information exchange is directly related to the personal exchanges between technicians. A negative consequence of the lack of institutional exchanges has been the **absence of unified criteria** on different issues at times, according to the technicians.

The evaluation team notes that, besides the National Thematic Groups (NTGs), there is no channel, medium or form of institutionalised co-ordination whereby each technician may share matters relating to DPs, and thus encouraging meetings between them. It is the SU's opinion that the chance of establishing contact between projects and that they may work together is better in EQUAL than for other Community Initiatives. This lack of internal co-ordination, already noted in the preceding mid-term evaluation, has been to the detriment of SU members' awareness of EQUAL as a whole.

Please find below an analysis of the SU's activity in respect of projects during implementation of Action 2. Please note that the SU's support to projects varies over their lifetime, sometimes focusing more on monitoring and others on problem solving, such as, issues concerning processing of certifications.

4.3.2. Assistance to the projects

In the first place, the SU has had as its main mission, during implementation of Action 2 in Round One, **to assist projects by providing advice and support** both on technical issues relating to contents and on management and organisational issues.

From the analysis of the Round One DP survey, the evaluation team has observed that personal assistance provided by SU to the projects has been very positive. However, this data contrasts with the less positive assessment given by DPs to the quality of the information, which is a sign of how, in spite of the good intentions of the personnel at all times, the need for better internal organisation may have influenced the performance of their duties.

The SU underscores two items which have affected its dedication to a great extent: on the one hand, the time spent solving queries on the operation of the computer Monitoring System and its management; and on the other hand, solving queries on eligibility of expenses.

The generalised trend observed seems to be that most DPs consider the SU to be more an administrative than a technical assistance entity, with the result that sometimes the assistance which the projects could request and the SU could offer is not optimised. At the same time, it was noted that in many cases the DPs who were dissatisfied with the support provided by the SU had not sought such support, or had only used the SU's assistance to solve administrative issues.

The evaluation team's conclusion is that the DPs' perception of the SU's performance varies depending on the assistance requested from it, which in its turn varies depending on the experience and autonomy of the DPs.

4.3.3. Monitoring and evaluation

Among the SU's responsibilities is project **monitoring.** Each DP has an allocated SU technician, who undertakes continuing and individualised monitoring of its projects, making on-site visits. These visits have received very positive assessment by the SU members, who have seen them as a way to find out in greater depth about the projects they are responsible for. The *EQUAL Projects Methodological Management Guide* provides, among all monitoring and evaluation activities (apart from those mentioned above) the obligation to draft regular reports on all approved projects, including both national and transnational information on their implementation; drafting of general reports; drafting of reports for the Management Committee; publications including information on the projects; and active participation in transnational activities. Likewise, a working group was created to perform evaluations within the SU.

Assessment of such visits by the DPs and the evaluation team's analysis has led the latter to consider the need of ensuring that both the form, content and purpose of the visits be clear and uniform, but at the same time take into account the particular needs of each DP, as they have been observed to depend on different factors, such as the composition of the DP or the specific problems faced (within each thematic area), which would lead to a different evaluation of the visit. In this regard please note some DPs' suggestions that it would be very useful to undertake work sessions dealing with different basic aspects of the project in greater depth, and thus to improve the DPs' adjustment to the CI's philosophy. In the evaluation team's opinion, the monitoring visits constitute an essential element to reinforce personalised attention by the SU technical team. As a service deemed essential both by the SU and by the projects themselves; and an opportunity to exchange information the following would be improvements; greater co-ordination on issues to be dealt with, frequency of the visits, maybe their articulation around the different principles of the Initiative and their implementation by the projects, and other aspects relating to project management or the particular needs of the DP.

A problem has been observed in accounting for beneficiaries, caused by a failure to properly instruct the DPs: the SU did not provide precise instructions to account for beneficiaries of activities constituting an itinerary as beneficiary of one activity (the itinerary) or of several (each of the activities comprising the itinerary) and this has resulted in double or triple accounting in several cases. Furthermore, when entering information into the Monitoring System, no distinction was made between direct and indirect personal beneficiaries (such as beneficiaries of dissemination and advertising activities). Lastly, monitoring of the beneficiaries of the projects is not mandatory, and therefore the Monitoring System does not contain complete information on the effects of the Initiative on different groups of people.

4.3.4. Transnational Activity

Another of the SU's responsibilities is to provide continual support and undertake monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the DPs' transnational programmes, co-operating in the dissemination of the Initiative on a national and transnational level.

The role of the SU in the implementation of transnational work programmes, although positive, has been valued generally by the DPs as not very active (although there are exceptions).

Conclusions

The evaluation team has noted that, in spite of the goodwill and good intentions of the SU personnel as regards co-ordination, there is a lack of institutionalised co-ordination facilitating the work and duties of the SU. This fact has also resulted in the absence of unified criteria in the SU.

The SU's assistance to projects has received a very positive assessment from them, although not so the quality of the information provided. Furthermore, due to administrative burdens (eligibility and certification of expenses) delegated by the Managing Authority on the SU, and the fact that many of the DPs queries related to administrative issues, the SU has spent more efforts on administrative issues than on technical issues.

Monitoring of the projects by the SU's technical personnel has been complete. However, and in the same trend as the aforementioned conclusion concerning absence of institutionalised co-ordination on the SU's part, certain deficiencies have been observed, such as, for example the absence of clear instructions to the DPs on certain issues (accounting for beneficiaries) and a somewhat reactive attitude to assisting the projects.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF TOOLS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR WORK PROGRAMMES

The SU has made certain efforts to design and make available to the DPs different tools to facilitate an understanding of the particular features of the EQUAL Initiative and to help with the performance of the different management obligations and application of the principles derived from implementation of an EQUAL project. Both tasks are very complex.

The nature of the EQUAL Initiative has contributed to the fact that the large majority of DPs consider its terminology to be extremely complex. In this regard, some DPs have pointed out that a lot of translation work has been necessary for partners or participants to understand its meaning.

Please find below an assessment of the main tools made available to the projects:

- **EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)**.

The EMS was created for the purpose of unifying items required by the Mainstream ESF Monitoring System in Spain (SSU) and by the EQUAL Common Database (ECDB). Operation of this system during implementation of the work programmes for projects in Round One has encountered many **difficulties**, which has not helped in their follow-up.

An initial problem, already solved, was that the Module had to be **installed on a DP computer** and the data requested from the DPs was to be entered into that same computer which, after completion of the relevant forms, sent them to the SU, which transferred them to the General Module and the ECDB.

In the second place, all DPs surveyed in Round One say that the EMS is **a complex and difficult to operate tool**. Furthermore, the SU itself has observed that an important number of queries by the projects referred to matters relating to the EMS, which has been to the detriment of time spent on other aspects relating to content.

Please note that, in spite of the multiple data and breakdowns required by the EMS, during implementation of Action 2 Round One **certain aspects have remained incomplete, which required individualised entries in the Module:**

- The **breakdown of beneficiaries** does not distinguish between beneficiaries of information and advertising actions and beneficiaries or users of certain services. This leads to confusion in accounting for the beneficiary population;
- DPs which conducted their activities within **thematic area 3.1** (theme 3) found **difficulties in "fitting in" their actions within the different options** offered by the application.
- **It would have been useful to have a breakdown of beneficiaries by origin,** as the immigrant population faces very different problems depending on their place of origin.
- **The EMS does not distinguish**, in its accounting for beneficiaries, between those who have **abandoned the actions before their completion** and those who have completed them.

Lastly, another aspect of the EMS requiring improvement and which has been noted by the evaluation team, is that the **module does not allow the aggregation information** of any kind, whether at DP level (for example, adding different entries concerning different kinds of beneficiaries) or at thematic area, theme or programme level.

In spite of the expectations generated at the time of design and start-up of the EMS, it has not met expectations as to functionality during the performance of Round One. Thus, please note that the estimations of the mid-term evaluation have not been met, which estimations were as follows *"(...) we must underscore the quality of the tool as concerns the extension of variables and the information which it can consequently provide"* and *"the list of available indicators is very extensive, and the possibilities of aggregating and breaking down data are also very broad (...), (at least from a formal standpoint)"[10]*. The EMS was the tool valued as the least useful by DPs.

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[10] Mid-term report, page 133.

- **User guide of the IT application**.

The purpose of this guide is to enable the EMS user, i.e., the projects, to use the tool. It explains in detail the installation and use of the Monitoring Module for Round One, distinguishing between data to be introduced during Action 1 and Action 2.

The guide has been a **good starting point** although, because of when it was drafted, it follows a **theoretical approach** which, at times, has not served to solve problems that have arisen in the use of the IT application.

- **Methodological Internal Evaluation Guide**.

This guide, following the recommendations of the European Commission, was drafted for the purpose of defining key issues in internal evaluation and to propose tools and mechanisms which allow the projects to have general guidelines as reference. The guide is structured in different chapters, introducing guidelines which enable the DPs to reflect individually on their project, thus allowing each evaluator to choose the most suitable method for each case.

Although this guide has been considered a complex tool by some projects,, **as a general rule it has received a positive assessment**, and, in the evaluation team's opinion, the lists of questions included in the guide are neither comprehensive nor closed, but an introduction of essential aspects to be examined, and therefore the guide may be considered a flexible and adaptable work tool, organised by thematic areas.

- **Management and Control Guide for projects in the EQUAL CI**

This guide provides general information concerning the EQUAL CI in Spain. It is the basic guide for information on the articulation of the EQUAL programme in Spain in Round One.

The SU co-operates in the drafting and updating of this guide, providing minimum organisation, management and monitoring elements common to the forms of organisation chosen to perform the projects. In this regard, the project representatives have required continuing advice on its implementation.

The DPs' assessment of this tool is generally positive, with the exception of theme 4, where the majority of DPs considers it a complex tool. On the other hand, it is observed that the guide is maybe **not be sufficiently suited to the content and type characteristics of the theme 2 projects**, which differ from the projects in other thematic areas.

- **EQUAL Internet website in Spain: www.mtas.es/uafse/EQUAL**.

Though this website users may have access to information concerning the EQUAL CI in Spain. Thus, the user may access the EQUAL prospectus, the resolutions adopted by the MA relating to the Initiative, the user guide, the project directory, documentation relating to the programme, the magazine EQUAL Forum, etc.

In the evaluation team's opinion, the information included in the Internet website is **useful and suitable**.

- **Other:**

    ⇨ Guide for the Integration of Gender Perspective.

DPs surveyed in the five themes **show a very positive assessment of this Guide** and are of the opinion that the Guide for the Integration of Gender Perspective has been very useful for EQUAL projects on Access. In this regard, although the guide refers only to projects in area 1.1, it is very useful, as it uses **very clear and precise language**, with **examples of "bad practice" or common mistakes** made by projects when giving substance to the Equal Opportunities Principle between men and women.

The evaluation team notes positively the contribution and perspective provided by the projects and the expert which took part in its drafting.

    ⇨ EQUAL Forum Magazine

The EQUAL magazine is **valued positively by the evaluator,** as a result of its usefulness in approaching projects, the fact that it is easy to read,, the variety of its contents and its usefulness as an information vehicle for the latest advances in the Initiative.

By allowing the DPs to express their opinions in the magazine, it becomes a forum for reflection and exchange, which contributes to achieve the Initiative's objectives.

The list of events and publications informs readers of the most interesting events for stakeholders within the scope of the Initiative.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF MAINSTREAMING

This chapter analyses mainstreaming undertaken within the framework of the Initiative in Spain. It covers the Mainstreaming Plan developed by the Managing Authority (MA) and the Monitoring Committee, operation of the National Thematic Groups (NTG), and their relationship with the European Thematic Groups (ETGs). Below is an analysis of the mainstreaming activities undertaken by the Development Partnerships (DPs), within the framework of both Action 2 and Action 3 and the support received by the Support Unit (SU) in its design and implementation.

This section is closely related to chapter 9 (see below) which deals with the interpretation of the mainstreaming principle and how it has been understood by the DPs. Furthermore, it is also very closely related to Section 5, in particular with chapters 11, 12 and 13. Chapter 11 analyses the intermediate impact of the Initiative, i.e., the results of its mainstreaming into policies, structures and systems. Chapters 12 and 13 analyse the Initiative's contribution to the European Strategy for Employment and National Plans of Action for Social Inclusion.

It is important to clarify, from the start, the meaning given in the present chapter to the following concepts:

- **Horizontal mainstreaming (basic)**: mainstreaming undertaken by the DP partners themselves to themselves, i.e., maintaining the service, best practices, methodologies, etc, developed through the EQUAL project, upon its completion.
- **Horizontal mainstreaming (enlarged)**: mainstreaming at the same level as the DP, to other stakeholders who are not DP members or are from another area but operating at the same level (for example, for a locally-based DP, mainstreaming to other stakeholders within the location or to other towns).
- **Vertical mainstreaming** (usually bottom-up): mainstreaming undertaken to other levels of performance and decision (usually from a local, to a regional, to a national and/or to a European level).

Mainstreaming implemented in DPs operating within a certain area with a partner belonging to a higher level (usually the representative partner), with mainstreaming to the level of this sole partner is considered **vertical mainstreaming**.

5.1 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY

This section analyses and evaluates the plan for the *Mainstreaming into Policies and Spread of Good Practices for the EQUAL Initiative in Spain*, approved in May 2003 by the EQUAL Monitoring Committee[11]. Similarly, it evaluates the appropriateness of the structures taking part in the implementation of the plan and the activity performed thereby.

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[11] Launching and selection of proposals for Action 3 is examined in section 5.3.

5.1.1 Analysis of the mainstreaming plan

Correct formulation

The evaluation team's review of the Mainstreaming Plan, and consultations with different stakeholders involved in its drafting and/or implementation, reflect a series of assessments:

The Mainstreaming Plan contains a **very appropriate drafting of objectives** in line with the spirit of the EQUAL Initiative, whose ultimate goal is the mainstreaming into policies and practices with proven successful results. Also appropriate is the definition of actions to be performed at the level of stakeholders involved in the management of the Community Initiative Programme (CIP) during the different stages of implementation of the Initiative with regard to mainstreaming. However, certain **aspects of the Plan or its articulation could be improved** as are outlined below.

Adequate but general objectives

The evaluation team estimates that the **objectives of the Mainstreaming Plan are in line with the objectives of the Initiative**, and are **adequate** to articulate the Mainstreaming Plan. However, an **absence of specific objectives** is observed. Articulation of particular objectives could take place within a mainstreaming strategy (or several mainstreaming strategies or descriptions of objectives by the different bodies involved). However, these have not been determined specifically in any other document.

As concerns the actions to be performed at the different stages of the Initiative described in the Plan, the evaluation team considers them very relevant to success in achieving such mainstreaming[12].

Failure to allocate functions and responsibilities

The evaluation team has noted that the Mainstreaming Plan shows a **remarkable failure to allocate responsibilities** between the organisations responsible for the design, management and implementation of mainstreaming (as well as the mainstreaming attributable to the projects). This makes members of the different structures (Managing Authority, Support Unit, Monitoring Committee and National Thematic Groups) share the perception that *"the others ought to have done it"* or make statements such as *"mainstreaming does not take place"*, without it being very clear who represents *"the others"*.

It is important to note that the evaluation team has also observed, although with certain exceptions, a predominant **lack of interest by policy-making stakeholders.** Although they sometimes participate in dissemination actions or activities aimed at mainstreaming, they show no evidence of subsequently adopting the practices, methodologies or services to be transferred. Their participation is essentially formal. Local authorities follow the opposite trend, there is a high degree of involvement but a lack of

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[12] Analysis of the performance of actions to be undertaken during Action 1 is not within the scope of this evaluation; however, as concerns the repercussion of their failure to be performed in the performance of the remaining stages of the programme, some allusions thereto may be made.

capacity to adopt services and activities developed by EQUAL after completion of the project, as a result of a lack of financial capacity and political jurisdiction.

These obstacles to the successful mainstreaming of methods, practices and/or services have at times been bridged by information actions on what mainstreaming involves. One may conclude from statements such as "*many presentations have been made concerning mainstreaming throughout the country, to raise awareness of its importance*", that there is more emphasis on dissemination than on creating opportunities to make the mainstreaming of methods, practices and/or services developed through the EQUAL projects into policies and practices more attractive.

The mainstreaming process is too dependent on DPs

The Mainstreaming Plan mentions a bottom-up and a top-down approach to mainstreaming. The latter, which the evaluation team deems essential to achieve a multiplier effect in the impact of the Initiative, is not sufficiently articulated. This could be resolved by establishing a work programme with defined objectives and clearly allocated responsibilities.

Furthermore, in the evaluation team's opinion, members of organisations involved in designing and promoting mainstreaming seem to give too much weight to DPs' responsibilities in obtaining results on mainstreaming issues. Thus, the Support Unit (SU)'s and the NTGs' mainstreaming activities are to a great extent focused on the DPs' mainstreaming activities. The SU focuses much of its activities in assistance in drafting proposals for Action 3 projects for the DPs and in their selection (see section 5.3 below), while the NTGs' activities focus on work performed by authors of best practices manuals (see following section).

The Managing Authority considers that it must facilitate mainstreaming (by advising, co-financing, organising seminars), but not perform it itself. In the evaluation team's opinion, this statement must be redefined, as the MA could take advantage of a great many possibilities to intervene in the mainstreaming process.

Support Unit activities to promote mainstreaming

The review of the SU's mainstreaming activities found the following:

The SU has **frequently taken part in dissemination activities organised by the DPs**, indicating its support, which is positively valued by the evaluation team. However, please note that such support could have been greater on many occasions, by actively contributing to facilitate or advise on the activities undertaken by the DPs. Promoting the creation of links between DPs performing similar activities would also have been useful.

The evaluation team has also noted that **the SU has made an important contribution to identifying and selecting best practices developed by the DPs**. This activity, positively valued by the evaluation team, refers, as a general rule, to the scope of implementation of the DPs' work programmes, selecting best practices from actions with proven good results, and promoting the drafting of a mainstreaming

and dissemination project for Action 3 on such a basis[13]. However, the evaluators have not found similar activity in selecting **best practice in relation to the implementation of basic principles, or achieving the objectives of a thematic area** by the DPs. Likewise, there has been no **encouragement to mainstream the results of transnational activities** which, again, would have been considered useful by the evaluation team.

The possibility suggested in the Mainstreaming Plan to draft a **Guide for Dissemination and Mainstreaming** has not been put into practice. As noted in chapter 9, analysing compliance with the basic principles of the Initiative (see below), a series of deficiencies in the implementation of the mainstreaming principle, and in its articulation by the DPs, were detected, leading to the conclusion that it would have been useful to publish a guide for this.

Lack of evidence of results of mainstreaming.

Lastly, it has been observed that, although there are some activities, there are no **mechanisms for the systematic collection of mainstreaming results**, raising doubts on the part of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Initiative on the results of the efforts made, which, depending on the organisation or person interviewed, can be more or less optimistic, sometimes based exclusively on personal views.

The positive **exception** to the above is within the National Thematic Group 1 (NTG-1), which published a *report on conclusions concerning best practices mainstreamed to general policies within the framework of National Thematic Group 1's activities,* collecting many examples of mainstreamed actions. Some Autonomous Regions have also announced taking steps in this regard, without, to-date, the evaluation team having been able to examine the results.

Conclusions

The evaluation team has noted that the Mainstreaming Plan approved in May 2003 by the Monitoring Committee contains a very appropriate formulation of objectives for the mainstreaming to be undertaken from EQUAL to potential target stakeholders of the Initiative. However, as it has not been subsequently developed, establishing specific objectives, and as no mainstreaming strategy articulating the aforementioned Plan has been designed, such objectives are frequently hard to apply.

Furthermore, it has been observed that there is no allocation of responsibilities among the key stakeholders (MA, SU, Monitoring Committee and NTGs), as concerns which of them is empowered to mainstream and is liable for the failure to perform mainstreaming, and therefore there is doubt as to who is responsible for what actions, starting with setting strategic objectives and allocating responsibilities. On the other hand, it has also been noted that there is no clear and obvious interest on the part of the policy-maker stakeholders to accept the commitment of incorporating best practices, methods or services developed through EQUAL into their practices or programmes.

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[13] This process is analysed in detail in section 5.3, see below.

This failure to define top-down mainstreaming has prevented taking advantage of opportunities to reach a very large audience. Also, it is observed that the mainstreaming activities of all organisations involved are too dependent on mainstreaming performed by the DPs. This failure to articulate mainstreaming influences, in the evaluation team's opinion, limits the results of the mainstreaming undertaken.

The Managing Authority could become more involved in mainstreaming, participating more intensely in the process. The SU could have provided greater technical assistance in the design and implementation of the dissemination and mainstreaming activities undertaken by the DPs.

The selection of best practices developed by the DPs has been mostly based on actions which have shown good results, but no selection of best practices on fulfilment of the basic principles of the Initiative has been undertaken, or concerning transnational activities.

Although there are certain examples to the contrary, no mechanisms to systematically gather mainstreaming results have been established (i.e. the EQUAL legacy).

5.1.2 Analysis of the activities of national and European thematic groups

NTG Objectives

The evaluation team has analysed, in the first place, the **definition of the duties of the NTGs** in the Mainstreaming Plan. The Plan provides a description of activities to be performed, but no **SMART Objectives** (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound). In the evaluation team's opinion, there is no link between the general objectives of the Mainstreaming Plan and how they will be achieved by the activities to be undertaken by the NTGs.

The review of documents produced by the NTGs and the interviews undertaken have likewise shown that **there is no common strategy for NTGs, nor an individual strategy for each of them**. Only NTG 3 (Equal Opportunities) has drafted a base document, "Terms of Reference" which has not been made available to the evaluation team, so cannot therefore be assessed. The evaluation team also lacks a description of the framework for relations between NTGs and other organisations involved in mainstreaming in any way.

Composition of NTGs

The NTGs' activities were articulated in the Mainstreaming Plan around a pilot group consisting of SU and Monitoring Committee members. As well as this pilot group, **DPs and other Monitoring Committee representatives could form part of NTGs**. All three NTGs have organised themselves by forming different **thematic subgroups**.

In accordance with the observations of the different NTGs members, a **lack of involvement by the Monitoring Committee members**, in their turn forming part of the NTGs, (i.e., Autonomous Regions

and policy-maker stakeholders and other key stakeholders), has had a detrimental effect in developing the mainstreaming potential of the groups.

The selection of a number of DPs as NTG members has sometimes resulted in the discontent of other DPs, which consider that less attention is given to other projects developed by other DPs, which may inform an activity within the framework of the Groups.

Operation of the NTGs

The main activity of the NTGs has been undertaken on a thematic subgroup level, organising seminars dealing with different issues of interest for the thematic areas covered by such subgroups, and the mainstreaming potential of the issues discussed.

These subgroups have mainly included the participation of the DPs selected as NTG members and the SU, with **plenary sessions being left for more formal meetings** held less frequently and without involving many mainstreaming activities. A **certain lack of motivation in certain NTG members in taking part in the subgroups** has been observed. Thus, participation of certain NTG members, as well as the SU and the DPs, has on several occasions been limited to attending plenary sessions.

The issues around which the working subgroups have been organised have been, as a general rule, of great interest and, **a considerable effort has been made to involve the different organisations to which results could be mainstreamed** in the subgroup's activities for the dissemination and mainstreaming of its results. Although the results and impact of such efforts shall be examined in greater detail in section 5 (see below), the evaluation team considers that the method to involve the different organisations capable of incorporating the lessons learned from EQUAL into their policies and practices has not been as successful as expected, mainly as a result of the lack of motivation of such organisations.

In practice, the evaluation team has noted that it is **mainly organisations participating in such subgroups, and DPs operating in the same thematic area** that have attended **dissemination activities** of the work done within the framework of the subgroups, so that **only in a few instances has mainstreaming exceeded the scope of the Initiative.**

Interviews with different members of the EQUAL structure undertaken by the evaluation team have shown that, within the actual EQUAL structures (NTGs, SU, Monitoring Committee), there is a **lack of awareness or knowledge of the existence of materials, guides and even dissemination and mainstreaming activities such as regional project networks or contents**. This therefore shows that, **in spite of the efforts made,** the NTGs have not always correctly articulated their actions to form real thematic networks encouraging communication, exchange and joint working, showing a certain **failure to co-ordinate information**.

The DP NTG members have in certain cases offered the assessment that their participation in NTGs has not been particularly useful, but rather has been an activity requiring considerable dedication which has not had results. This is why the evaluation team considers that the NTG should assume a more practical contribution in assisting in the mainstreaming of best practice developed by

the DPs. A way to do so would be by focusing work more on identifying potential "demand" for best practice developed by a DP.

The evaluation team considers that **better results could have been obtained** from the NTGs' activities **if the creation of dissemination and mainstreaming materials could have been considered as a starting point** (compilation of best practice, studies relating to analyses in the behaviour of certain industries, guides to applying certain perspectives or to incorporate recommendations, etc.)**.** It is observed that, in presenting the results for a work subgroup or a mainstreaming activity, having edited a publication or undertaken dissemination activity on the suitability for mainstreaming this is considered to be the achievement of the objective. In the evaluation team's opinion, it would be better to continue with efforts to mainstream on a further level.

After examining documents relating to activities undertaken by the NTGs and interviewing members of the different groups, the evaluation team considers that the NTGs could contribute more to achieving the mainstreaming objectives if they focused their mainstreaming activities in aspects of mainstreaming not covered by the DPs. Thus, the evaluation team considers that, although basic horizontal mainstreaming (self-mainstreaming) can be conducted very well by the DPs with an individual Action 3 project, **enlarged horizontal mainstreaming and vertical mainstreaming cannot normally be performed by DPs without assistance from other stakeholders**. As regards vertical mainstreaming to be performed by the DPs, the evaluation team considers that **too much responsibility has been given to DPs, making them responsible for conducting vertical mainstreaming, and expecting them to influence employment policies on a regional, national or European level from a local level**. NTGs should assume certain responsibilities for vertical mainstreaming.

European Thematic Groups

The SU has taken part in the European Thematic Groups **(**ETGs), in the European Work Group in charge of drafting the Transnationality Guide, and in the European Seminar on Transnationality in Barcelona.

The evaluation team has observed that ETGs have influenced NTGs, especially as regards their organisation, as the latter have been created based on the former. However, it has noted that there has not been much flow of information between them. The NTGs have been inspired by the ETGs, and Spain actively participates in the ETGs, but there have not been any visible results of such efforts.

Conclusions

The evaluation team has noted the **absence of a mainstreaming strategy with specific objectives in the NTGs**, both as a whole and for each of the three NTGs created in Spain. This absence of a strategy also affects the lack of a link between the Mainstreaming Plan objectives and the definition of the duties of the NTGs, and it is not clear how the NTGs are to contribute to achieving the Plan's objectives. The duties of the NTGs described in the Plan cannot by themselves be considered a mainstreaming strategy for the NTGs, as their implementation would not in itself be enough to achieve results in respect of the mainstreaming objectives.

Thus greater consistency is required between the objectives set forth in the Mainstreaming Plan and the NTGs' contribution to their achievement. Furthermore, **there needs to be a structuring to co-ordinate between NTGs and between them and the remaining organisations involved in mainstreaming** in order to achieve the objectives set. This absence of exchange and co-ordination of activities and information is also observed between work subgroups within NTGs, and between the NTGs themselves.

The composition of NTGs has been affected by the lack of involvement of the remaining members, other than the SU and the DPs. Furthermore, the fact that only a few DPs form part of the NTGs as members has given the impression that less attention than necessary was given to projects developed by other DPs. As a general rule, NTGs have not been considered particularly useful by the DPs.

The organisation of NTGs into thematic subgroups to organise seminars has allowed the treatment of different issues of interest to the thematic areas covered by such groups, having made considerable efforts to involve different organisations which would benefit from mainstreaming of the results. However, the evaluation team has noted that, as a general rule, mainstreaming has exceeded the scope of the Initiative in only a few cases.

Dissemination and mainstreaming materials created within the framework of the NTGs have been considered a result of dissemination and mainstreaming efforts, instead of being used as tools to systematically organise efforts.

NTGs should focus their actions on such aspects of mainstreaming and dissemination that are not easily covered by the DPs without external assistance.

In spite of Spain's participation in ETGs, no results have been observed.

5.2 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DISSEMINATION AND MAINSTREAMING IN ACTION 2

Although there is a separate action (Action 3) for creating thematic networks and best practice dissemination networks to facilitate mainstreaming, projects are expected to perform dissemination and mainstreaming activities also during Action 2. Thus, this section presents an analysis of the implementation of mainstreaming actions performed within the framework of Action 2, developed by Round One projects[14]. Such analysis results from an examination of the implementation and results of dissemination and mainstreaming in Action 2 for each thematic area, around which the EQUAL Initiative is articulated in Spain.

This analysis has examined the financial allocations of projects for this type of actions, the participation of the DP partners in the mainstreaming process, the strategies and mechanisms to implement mainstreaming and mainstreaming activities during Action 2 of Round One projects.

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[14] The results and impact of such mainstreaming are analysed in section 5.2 (see below), while this section focuses on the implementation of mainstreaming activities in Action 2. .

The starting point for this section's analysis is the main conclusion on the interpretation of the Mainstreaming Principle and its degree of compliance by the DPs (see below, chapter 9). Thus, the assessment of the implementation of the mainstreaming process and its results during Action 2 is based on the conclusion that there is a general confusion between dissemination and mainstreaming in most DPs (thematic areas 1.1 (access)), 1.2 (combating racism), 4.1 (reconciliation) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap)) and a correct interpretation but limited implementation of the mainstreaming principle in thematic areas 3.1 (adaptability) and 2.1 (business creation).

Budget allocated to awareness and dissemination actions

Throughout Action 2 an important effort has been made to raise awareness on the issues dealt with by the projects and to communicate actions to improve the situation. The budget spent on dissemination and awareness actions accounts for 8.3% of total Action 2 expenses for 2003 and 2004. In line with the breakdown into themes and thematic areas of the financial programming, the highest expense volumes for dissemination and awareness activities are in thematic areas 1.1 (access), accounting for 29% of total expenses for all thematic areas in these activities; followed by thematic areas in Theme 4 (equal opportunities) accounting for 19.46% and 16.63% of total expenses during 2003 and 2004 in thematic areas 4.1 (reconciliation) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap), respectively. There is a concentration of resources on Objective 1 regions compared to non-Objective 1 regions as concerns distribution of expenses. Thus, around 70% of expenses for dissemination and awareness actions has been located in Objective 1 regions, while little more than 29% was located in non-Objective 1 regions.

It is, however, more difficult to estimate the budget allocated to vertical and horizontal mainstreaming activities of the results of the project. In any event, please note in this regard that the mainstreaming process during Action 2 has been focused more on dissemination and awareness activities than on activities tending to ensure mainstreaming, particularly vertical mainstreaming, as evidenced by this analysis.

Participation of the DP partners in the mainstreaming process for Action 2

Mainstreaming actions have usually been led by policy-making partners **in the Development Partnerships**, especially if, as well as forming part of the partnership, they have taken an active part in the implementation of the project. In the absence of policy-maker partners, or in the event of lack of involvement on their part, the role of mainstreaming catalyst within the partnership is undertaken by partners **who have easier access to policy-maker stakeholders, as a result of their usual activities,** outside the EQUAL project.

As a general rule, **mainstreaming management in Round One has to a great extent been concentrated on the representative entity, although other partners have also actively participated in actual dissemination and awareness actions**. Participation of such (non-representative) partners has been varied, although it is usually focused on particular dissemination activities relating to actions in the project in which they have taken part, as a result of the distribution of activities between DP partners and the pressure to deliver the work programme.

In practice, the projects have assumed that, to a great extent, where there is an organisations with effective powers in the design of active employment policies and human resources development within the DP as sufficient guarantee that mainstreaming shall take place. This constitutes a weakness, as the evaluation team has noted **that the presence of policy maker organisations on employment issues does not guarantee effective mainstreaming if such organisations are not sufficiently committed to the implementation of the project** (for example, by actively participating in technical committees). Furthermore, sometimes the Regional Administration is present in the DP, but is represented by a department (ministry, general directorate or similar) which lacks **the necessary powers within the sphere of activity that the project purports to influence.**

This was also the case in one DP in thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation), which considered that the presence of two General Directors of the Regional Government guaranteed mainstreaming, dissemination and incorporation of the results of the project to regional employment policies. Participation of the organisations at regional level in the partnership and implementation of the project in Action 2 was minimal. In spite of the fact that the policy-maker stakeholder at regional level was a DP partner, the project did not achieve its objectives in Action 2. Lack of financial resources to guarantee sustainability of results prevented mainstreaming at local level.

This weakness has been evidenced by the results of the DP survey, which has noted as main difficulties encountered by the projects in mainstreaming actions during Action 2 the lack of internal commitment (option selected by 27.6%), difficulties resulting from the nature of the innovation (27.6%) and political lack of interest or receptiveness (25%).

Types of activities to facilitate mainstreaming

Activities undertaken by the DPs to facilitate mainstreaming have focused more on dissemination and awareness than on directly involving policy-maker stakeholders. Only in isolated cases have actions been undertaken to create negotiation and dialogue channels with political partners. Below are a series of examples:

- A project in **thematic area 3.1 (adaptability)** which did not participate in Action 3 developed an interesting lobbying strategy to communicate the results of the project to policy-maker stakeholders.
- Within the framework of **thematic area 2.1 (business creation)**, some projects have set up cooperation agreements or arrangements with the administration and competent bodies to extend practical improvement within the sphere of the relevant Autonomous Region.

Thus, the existing confusion in the interpretation of the mainstreaming principle has resulted in the varied types of activities initiated by Round One projects during Action 2 to facilitate mainstreaming. Within this context, please note the lack of clear information and guidelines on the meaning of mainstreaming and how to perform the mainstreaming process during Action 2 provided by the Support Unit (SU) at the start of the implementation of the projects. The consequence of this has been

that, as a general rule, mainstreaming has not been a priority during Action 2 for most projects, and is concentrated in Action 3 (in such cases wherein such Action was performed).

In spite of the projects' efforts to increase visibility of their actions and results, the evaluation notes as a weakness the **generalised absence of a plan or mainstreaming strategy in most projects in all thematic areas**. In general, during Action 2, DPs have not launched plans of action to obtain political commitment and involvement on the part of organisations and persons with political responsibilities within the sphere of the project, which include dissemination as another element of the mainstreaming process.

Although some activities undertaken in Action 2 to favour dissemination and mainstreaming of the project results are not very innovative, they are of very high quality, have been undertaken professionally and have had acceptable ratings. Thus, the tools used by the projects are varied, and include: public general broadcasting actions (courses, seminars, congresses for all persons and organisations involved in promoting employment in the territory); actions focused on more specialised issues or particular actions of the project (forums, discussion round tables); advertising and publicity in the written press, radio and television and through the Internet, electronic forums, promotional buses and audio-visual materials (CD-ROMs, DVDs, videos, publications); drafting of information bulletins, magazines, awareness actions directed to associations and businesses; distribution of promotional materials (T-shirts, folders, posters).

As an example of innovative approaches used by DPs for mainstreaming purposes during Action 2, it is necessary to mention a particular experience in creating new structures in thematic area 3.1 (adaptability) within the framework of mainstreaming in Action 2: **an inter-institutional conciliation committee** was created. This arose as a result of the diagnosis on reconciliation given by DP 276 EQUALCAN, in order to give effect to the political commitment of all members of the Cantabria regional government (whether or not they belonged to the EQUAL project partnership hosting the initiative), with powers in areas relating to reconciliation.

Likewise in thematic area 4.2 (reducing the gender gap), **DP 244 SABINA**, which developed a mechanism which contributed decisively to the dissemination of the project experiences to the policy-maker stakeholders and to their awareness: **Focal Groups.** These were created to perform a study of requirements to eliminate the gender gap between men and women in the labour market. These groups comprised key policy-maker stakeholders at several levels on employment, training and equal opportunities issues, which contributed to raising awareness on the barriers faced by persons suffering discrimination. These focal groups have been assimilated into the mainstream as a common working tool by the transnational partners of project SARA, in which DP 244 SABINA participated.

Please note in this regard that the SU's involvement in **dissemination and mainstreaming activities** undertaken during implementation of the projects has mainly consisted of participating in dissemination activities programmed by the DPs, to which it has been invited.

Type of mainstreaming performed

As noted above, activities addressed to mainstreaming practices into policies, structures and systems have not been abundant. Below is an analysis of the degree to which it has taken place.

Assessment of the results of the dissemination and mainstreaming processes undertaken in Action 2 is more positive **on a horizontal level** (dissemination and mainstreaming to partners of the DP, focused on the adoption of lessons learnt and experiences tried out within the framework of the projects) and **on an enlarged horizontal level** (to other socio-economic stakeholders within the scope of the relevant project's development), than on **a vertical level** (dissemination and mainstreaming of the information and awareness of policy maker persons/organisations on employment and human resources issues at higher or lower levels).

Horizontal mainstreaming has been more frequent in all thematic areas, towards industries similar to the relevant project, for sectoral projects, or towards adjacent or close territories to those in the project actions. A constant in mainstreaming processes in Action 2 for all thematic areas is that partnerships without members who are part of the regional administration usually obtain greater success in horizontal mainstreaming actions to other local bodies or other organisations operating in the territory. Thus, in accordance with the survey results, the main effects of horizontal mainstreaming are a greater awareness of the problems dealt with by the projects (option selected by 81% of DPs) and the possibility of creating and applying new methods and services (67.1% of DPs), and of improving existing services and beginning to co-operate with local political organisations (64.5 %).

An analysis of Round One projects shows a variety of examples evidencing mainstreaming of elements in the project mainly by the DP partners.

Below are some examples of Round One projects achieving clear successes in horizontal mainstreaming:

- The Town Council of Avilés, partner in **DP 292 CORREDOR SIDERÚRGICO** within thematic area 1.1 (access) adapted and transferred information from the DP database to its IT work system (guides) for employment and social services.

- Online working by one of the projects in thematic area 1.1 (access) developed by **DP 24 CORUÑA SOLIDARIA** gave rise to a relationship which facilitated the creation of new networks in other areas, encouraged by the local entity, also a DP partner.

- Training materials developed by **DP 130 FILOXENIA** area 1.2 (combating racism) are being used at the university, in official subjects with credits.

- One of the projects in thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation), **DP 254 CONCILIA** contributed to a greater awareness of the socio-economic community and the policy-maker stakeholders at a local level: "*As a result of this project, one detects the political need to provide services to articulate professional [and family] life. The project has had a lot of influence at local level, particularly in departments with functions in this area, for example, in the Education Departments, as it has facilitated opening schools in the evenings and at night, financing new opening hours for day-care centres (also in the evenings)*".

- In thematic area 4.2 (reducing the gender gap), the project performed by **DP 444 DIDO** "*indirectly favoured the modification of 28 collective bargaining agreements to include the principle of Equal Opportunities. A section on Equal Opportunities has also been included in public examinations for civil service positions in the Town Council*". Within this thematic area, the project implemented by DP 244 SABINA gave rise to the Women Entrepreneur Associations (of insular scope, who were DP members)' agreeing to create the "Canary Islands Federation of Women Entrepreneurs and Professionals" for the whole archipelago.

On a vertical level, however, **activities undertaken by Round One projects have not been fully effective in facilitating mainstreaming**, especially to political players with powers within the sphere f the projects on a regional and national level. This was due to the inappropriateness of the mechanisms and channels established to implement such mainstreaming which, as noted above, were not directed to achieve a political commitment and the involvement of policy-maker stakeholders, including the case where the entity taking political decisions formed part of the DP.

The evaluation team considers that, **for a mainstreaming strategy to be successful, it is necessary for the players responsible for the performance of the mainstreaming process to be suitable and to guarantee results**. In this regard, therefore, it does not seem effective to vest responsibility to perform vertical mainstreaming on local DPs, applying a "bottom-up" approach. In any event, DPs may inform, disseminate and demonstrate the effectiveness of the practice tested in regional and/or national organisations. However, in the evaluation team's opinion, it is not feasible to require organisations which are in an inferior hierarchical position to effectively perform mainstreaming of the project results to higher levels with political decision powers. Thus, **vertical mainstreaming processes require a "top-down" approach and a clear commitment to projects by policy makers** on employment issues, especially where they form part of the project partnerships.

As regards vertical mainstreaming during Action 2, the results obtained have not been as clear as for horizontal mainstreaming by Round One projects. Thus, the projects have met their objectives as concerns dissemination of activities and innovative practices tested by such projects. However, no effective mainstreaming has taken place as required on a vertical level and, consequently, such practices have not been incorporated into general employment policies in most projects, in all thematic areas.

However, as an example, please note some of the clearest results of vertical mainstreaming by Round One projects:

- In thematic area 3.1 (adaptability) certain achievements have been made throughout Action 2, such as the creation or amendment of regional administration orders to incorporate certain elements which have been successfully tested by the project; and the incorporation by different administrations of applications and work methods drafted within the project, such as self-diagnosis IT tools for businesses and employees, or procedures to foster cooperation between businesses in aspects such as internationalisation.

- The project developed during Round One for thematic area 5.1 has contributed, among other factors, to accelerate a change in legislation which will greatly facilitate asylum seekers' access to employment: "*the asylum seeker shall be authorised to work in Spain after six months of submitting an application for asylum*".

Thus, excluding the exceptions mentioned above, the start-up process together with the innovation generation process of First Round projects, which have to be mainstreamed up to policy-maker stakeholders if effective, have been abruptly interrupted during the vertical mainstreaming process.

> Some DPs interviewed have illustrated the conclusions of the evaluation team by requesting the adoption of formal channels obliging policy maker stakeholders on employment and human resources issues to achieve the effective mainstreaming and integration into general policies of practices tried out by the projects. Thus, they have pointed out that both regional and national policy makers on employment policy issues "*should be obliged to meet with all projects developed within the sphere of their actions and evaluate each and every practice tried out by the DPs, thus guaranteeing a greater impact of the projects.*"

Conclusions

We note that the general confusion between dissemination and mainstreaming has had practical consequences in the implementation of Action 2 in projects relating to the majority of thematic areas in the Initiative. Thus, **mainstreaming activities have focused on dissemination and awareness actions, rather than on activities geared towards obtaining political commitments and the involvement of policy-maker stakeholders** for the purpose of integrating best practice tested by the projects into general employment policies. Also in general generalised there was a **lack of a mainstreaming plan or strategy during Action 2** directed towards actively involving policy-maker stakeholders.

In terms of the results of actual mainstreaming in Action 2, the effectiveness of mainstreaming processes is more apparent at a **horizontal level** (to DP partners) and on an **enlarged horizontal level** (at the same level), than on a **vertical level** (to persons/organisations with political decision powers on employment and human resources issues at other levels). The evaluation team considers that **resources allocated for the development of the EQUAL Round One projects could have been optimised if there had existed certain formal channels to mainstream results of the projects** to policy-maker stakeholders and implementation of the practices in general policies.

One of the main objectives of the EQUAL Initiative is to serve as a laboratory for innovative solutions to combat inequalities in the labour market, in order to mainstream best practice into general employment policies in other territories and/or other instances of discrimination. In the evaluation team's opinion, **involvement of political officers and operators in this area should not depend only on goodwill or personal commitment, but should to a certain extent constitute an obligation.** This is because administrations or public institutions are benefiting from a European financial instrument whose strategy and intention is precisely to mainstream best practices from the projects to their own structures.

Thus, the evaluation team considers that **the mainstreaming process should be effectively shared out between the DPs and key stakeholders responsible for employment policies in the relevant area**. DPs should be able to demonstrate evidence of the launching of mainstreaming processes directed to involving key players directly, in particular **within their area of activity at their same**

level and within the project's geographical reach. However, in the evaluation team's opinion, it is not feasible to require organisations at lower levels to effectively conduct "bottom-up" mainstreaming. It is the responsibility of public organisations with powers in the area of the projects, in particular those participating in the DP structures at regional or national level to foster vertical mainstreaming processes of the projects both as regards "top-down" and "bottom-up" mainstreaming.

5.3 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DISSEMINATION AND MAINSTREAMING IN ACTION 3 PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

This section comprises an analysis of the results of dissemination and mainstreaming of Action 3 projects undertaken by Round One Development Partnerships (DPs). The three main aspects dealt with in this analysis are as follows:

In the first place, we analyse the launching and selection of proposals for Action 3, evaluation the process and the tools described in the Mainstreaming Plan for its implementation. It is particularly important to assess the role of the Support Unit (SU) in the process. Subsequently, we have examined Action 3 projects, and sought to establish conclusions on the types of projects, size, profile of the DPs and types of activities undertaken. This examination has been carried out separately for each thematic area, aggregating patterns observed to be common to them all, and pointing out features exclusive to each area, where available. Lastly, we have analysed in detail a particular type of Action 3 project: the creation of regional networks of EQUAL projects.

5.3.1   Selection of Action 3 proposals

After examining the evidence the evaluation team has noted the **leading role played by the SU in the information and promotion process** to submit Action 3 proposals **and in their selection**. As a result of the SU's technical personnel's knowledge of the projects, they have been able to give precise directions on the consideration of certain activities as suitable for mainstreaming and dissemination, and on the formulation of the actual Action 3 proposal.

The information analysed by the evaluation team shows that **the Action 3 proposal selection process** has been as follows: the DPs submitted their initial Action 3 idea to the SU to obtain the advice and orientation in order to formulate their proposal. The purpose of this informal consultation process, according to the SU, is that the proposals finally submitted "*should show a certain consistency and be more or less viable*". After outlining the content of the Action 3 proposals, they were formally submitted, and assessed by two SU technicians, different from the one who had informally overseen the initial proposals, one of which would be a member of the National Thematic Group for the activity subject to the proposal.

After their evaluation in accordance with the assessment criteria provided in the Mainstreaming Plan, the Managing Authority (MA) would make a selection proposal, forwarded to the Mainstreaming Working Group in the Monitoring Committee, which finally accepted or rejected the proposal.

This process has meant that very few proposals have been rejected by the SU, as potential proposals not deemed appropriate or sufficiently solid were discouraged from being officially submitted. The evaluation team has noted the **dedication and willingness of SU personnel** to performing this activity. However, it has also noted the **lack of an official framework establishing the SU's contribution**. As it was not circumscribed to advice concerning methodology for the selection of best practice to be mainstreamed, or to proceed to their mainstreaming, this has involved running the risk of exceeding mere orientation, and at times the SU has provided a real contribution.

The period to submit proposals began with the confirmation of the Mainstreaming Plan in May 2003, and ended on September 30, 2004, with the deadline for the performance of activities approved within the framework of Action 3 being December 31, 2004. **All proposals officially submitted have been approved**: a total of 98 applications for a contribution by the European Social Fund (ESF) amounting to 9,573,319.21 million Euro.

The projects have valued the support received from the SU positively, although interviews show that sometimes the projects have found that the SU lacks flexibility as concerns activities to be performed, and the information provided has not always been clear. Also significant is the high number of projects which do "not agree very strongly" with the assistance and support provided by the NTG. Similarly, many projects are of the opinion that the period to submit proposals was insufficient.

Conclusions

The SU technical personnel have made **huge efforts in advising potential Action 3 proposals from DPs.** In the evaluation team's opinion, the **SU technicians have played a central role in identifying Best Practice and providing advice for projects**.

However, failure to establish limits to guidance by the Support Unit technical personnel in advising the projects, has led to an **intense involvement of the latter in** the informal proposal drafting process**, which may influence** the content of the actual project.

In practice, **this process has been very costly as regards time spent** by SU personnel. Although advice and guidance to projects is necessary and advisable during the selection process, and has rendered the proposal submission process more dynamic, the intense involvement of the technicians in the process from the beginning, prior to submitting the proposal is, in the evaluation team's opinion, not advisable, as it may influence the whole process.

The short time between the performance of an activity by a project and its selection as an example of best practice has on occasion led to an absence of objective evidence of such an activity constituting best practice. Absence of an evaluation of the results of the implementation of the best practice has also been an obstacle to providing the SU with the necessary objective data to assess its potential as an activity capable of being mainstreamed.

The role or composition of the Mainstreaming Working Group should be clearly defined, in order to prevent a conflict of interest in members of the Working Group who form part of a DP which submits an Action 3 proposal.

5.3.2   Analysis of the development of Action 3

DPs which have submitted proposals have correctly understood the objective of these actions, as they all coincide in pointing out as **main reason for Action 3 the dissemination and mainstreaming of best practices created during Action 2, as a complement to dissemination and mainstreaming activities undertaken in Action 2.**

Out of the 98 Action 3 proposals approved, eight of them have been drafted under a common agreement of several DPs which had developed similar practices and decided to have them complement each other and join in their mainstreaming efforts. **Such practice must be highlighted as a result of the co-ordination of information and activities involved therein.**

As concerns **partner participation in Action 3,** we observe a varied involvement, depending on their interests and prior level of participation. There is a considerable number of DPs where management of mainstreaming has been concentrated on the representative entity (32%). The second most selected option has been that all or the majority of partners who have taken part in Action 2 have actively participated in Action 3 (28%). However, it is significant that 22% of DPs surveyed have not replied or are unaware of the allocation of responsibilities. A comparison of the percentage of replies obtained by this option and the percentage of this option given for other questions gives rise to the conclusion that **the distribution of responsibilities for the implementation of Action 3 was not always clearly defined.**

Activities undertaken by the projects to enable mainstreaming have mainly been, **holding seminars and courses** (62.3%) and **dissemination activities and validation of best practice (61%). Activities directly addressed to policy maker stakeholders have not been among the main actions performed by DPs in Action 3, (replies in this respect have varied between 28% and 37%).**

As a general rule, Action 3 projects have been limited to a particular thematic area (the same as the main project, from which the practice constituting the subject-matter of Action 3 was extracted). Thus a special mention must be given to the case of an Action 3 project promoted by a DP which mainstreamed best practice in an IT and communication application to all EQUAL projects, irrespective of thematic area or territory.

Please note the following examples of Action 3 projects that have started actions addressed to seeking commitment and involvement of policy-maker stakeholders (vertical mainstreaming):

DP 41 ACCORD **(thematic area 1.1 (access)):** Among the approaches adopted are so-called Inter-sector Discussion Tables, wherein they met with political officers and which were complemented by systematic, personalised and direct contacts with persons responsible for policy design, in which they made particular proposals. These contacts materialised into meetings between town councillors responsible for employment in the 4 Town Councils participating in the DP, the member responsible for European and employment policies in the provincial government of Castellón, the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, the General Director for Immigration and contacts with the General Director for Employment. The DP has also participated in the creation of a trans-regional network with projects

Argos, Cresol and Eurocentros del Mar-Ivadis, which has led them to submit common proposals at regional level.

DP 205 MEVEL EL CONDADO **(thematic area 4.2 (segregation)):** In order to influence the drafting of the Self-Employed Workers' Statute so that it would consider the concept of "invisible women entrepreneurs", a meeting was organised within the Economic and Social Committee in which 20 experts in legal and labour issues, top trade union leaders, the Director General of the European Social Fund, university professors, judges, etc. all took part. A proposal was submitted, with possible alternatives, to include the concept of "invisible women entrepreneurs" to key players participating in the amendment of the Self-Employed Workers' Statute.

As concerns financing, **DPs, which have participated in Action 3, do not mention any problems in co-financing** of Action 3. However, lack of financing was selected by DPs which replied to the survey as one of the most common reasons why they did not participate in Action 3 (18%), only exceeded by lack of time (38%). The evaluation team feels that the fact that DPs had **to develop their Action 3 activities at the same time as delivering Action 2** has not been ideal, as it does not allow projects to choose best practice based on evidence (due to the short time elapsed from their implementation and lack of time to perform an evaluation thereof).

In evaluation **results** we encounter a difficulty caused by absence of monitoring and evaluation of Action 3 by the projects. Notwithstanding this the main difficulty is, as the projects all state, that **mainstreaming requires time** to prove its impact, as illustrated by the following examples:

In DP 205 MEVEL EL CONDADO **(thematic area 4.2 (segregation))** we have been unable to prove the effective regularisation and implementation of the practices in the Statute, although a commitment was achieved that the most relevant aspects of the investigation would be taken into account in the amendment of the Self-Employed Workers' Statute, where a discussion group is continuing throughout 2005.

DP 51 I.OR. METAL **(thematic area 4.2 (segregation))**: Guidelines developed by the project on training women to work in the metalwork sector (Empowerment Guidelines, Leadership Manuals, etc.) were submitted to Congress, in the presence of the Women's' Commission and ESF Unit representatives. All materials relating to the project and the Guidelines were distributed among Members of Congress. In spite of these mechanisms, we have been unable to ascertain effective mainstreaming. A certain influence in key persons has been noted, but mainstreaming to policy-maker stakeholders on a regional and national level still rests in the *"desire that best practices be introduced into political agendas"*.

This is also the case for the Portable Virtual Classroom developed by DP 538 **(thematic area 3.1 (adaptability)),** which must wait until 2006 to verify whether the positive reception of its best practice leads to their incorporation into the new programme of the Tripartite Foundation for Employment Training (formerly FORCEM).

Action 3 **has mainly reached the same types of stakeholders as those who have promoted the project.** We have thus observed a certain positive result in awakening the interest of Town Councils close to the territory of the project whenever it was led by local bodies, employer associations in sectors facing similar issues to the production sector on which a project was focused, etc.

Whenever Regional Government Departments or General Directorates have played a major role in the partnership, their equivalents in other Autonomous Regions have been more easily accessed than when the sponsors were local bodies.

DPs, particularly more local ones, which have developed projects led by Town Councils, local consortiums or associations have thus been **successful in horizontal mainstreaming to other local bodies**.

Pursuant to the foregoing, the evaluation team notes that Action 3 projects developed by DPs can have achieved their principal successes in the delivery of so-called enlarged horizontal mainstreaming activities[15].

The Town Council of La Coruña, representative entity of DP 24 (thematic area 1.1 (access)) has assumed the system and methodology of the Personalised Plans of Social-Employment Integration (PISEI) in a project of its own for the Department of Employment called *"Puesto a Puesto"* (Job to Job). They have assumed an intervention strategy and established online channels generated by the project.

V**ertical mainstreaming** has made many DPs encounter **greater resistance,** as a lot of them consider themselves incapable of reaching policy-maker stakeholders, and, when they do manage it, they do not obtain - in most cases - the necessary commitment to undertake effective mainstreaming. In this regard the DPs state that they have got as far as they could alone, **but that effective mainstreaming into general policy depends on the will of the politicians**.

The little vertical mainstreaming there is usually concentrated on Autonomous Regional policies, with successes in mainstreaming into national policy being even scarcer[16]. The results of Action 3 activities in respect of policies are therefore limited, as a general rule, to an awareness of policy-maker stakeholders and a certain influence on them and their political agendas[17].

Especially noteworthy is an Action 3 project whose main objective was to mainstream the concept of *Equal Opportunities Agents* in order to consolidate it as an occupational profile and to get it financed by regional public administrations (similarly to Local Development Agents). Although it achieved an opening of cooperation channels with the competent administration, the intended objectives of vertical mainstreaming at regional level were not achieved. However, this project achieved important mainstreaming connections, such as, for example:

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[15] It is defined at the beginning of the chapter.

[16] Responsibility for the management of active employment policies rests with the Autonomous Regions, while legislative responsibility is not delegated, and therefore mainstreaming at both levels makes sense.

[17] The effective impact of mainstreaming activities is examined in detail in Chapter 11 Intermediate impact (see below), and this chapter's analysis is focused manly in assessing the types of activities undertaken and the difficulties encountered in their implementation.

- The project co-operated with the Institute of Professional Qualifications (*Instituto de Cualificaciones Profesionales*), which included the concept of Equal Opportunities Agents in the categorisation they were currently drafting.

- A mainstreaming connection has been opened with the Women's Institute (*Instituto de la Mujer*) concerning the search for new forms of financing.

- A Professional Association of Equal Opportunities Agents has been created for the region, in order to lobby regional government.

The SU's support during the implementation phase of Action 3 projects was less active than during the proposal preparation and selection phase. DPs, as a general rule, have missed receiving more advice on articulating dissemination and mainstreaming activities and identifying demand by policy-maker stakeholders.

Conclusions

The evaluation team considers that the development of Action 3 projects has been similar for different thematic areas, and shows no differences depending on their area of operation.

It has identified an **absence of a common approach and co-ordination by DP partners**. Implementation of Action 3 has in many cases remained concentrated in the hands of certain partners. This has prevented projects from making a better use of resources and of potential of resources available to their particular DP, which may have curtailed the mainstreaming capabilities of certain projects.

In general, Action 3 projects **are presented as a series of dissemination or mainstreaming activities** (seminars, courses, etc.) but not as a **mainstreaming strategy for Action 3,** i.e., as a plan of action including a prior analysis of the situation, an objective and a series of activities, geared towards obtaining political involvement and commitment on the part of policy maker stakeholders.

The parallel operation of Action 3 and Action 2 has had a negative effect, due to the lack of perspective in which to obtain evidence on the relevant best practices, and as a result of concentrating efforts on Action 2. Furthermore, a lack of time has prevented more Action 3 proposals.

The evaluation team understands that simple horizontal mainstreaming activities or self-mainstreaming, (i.e. mainstreaming to the activities and structures of the actual DP so that they may keep such activities and structures after completion of the EQUAL project) must take place within the framework of dissemination and mainstreaming obligations to be performed during Action 2. Enlarged horizontal mainstreaming would be the ideal activity to be undertaken within the framework of the implementation of Action 3 projects by the DPs. Furthermore, the evidence that a certain practice is considered best practice suitable for implementation in other organisations similar to the DP partners would be provided by the fact that the same DP partners keep up such practices after completion of the project (or should try to keep such practices active, if this depends on the decision of other instances). Furthermore, the evaluation team considers that vertical mainstreaming activities and dissemination activities at national level escape the scope of a DP which, as a general rule, has a local base, and

therefore should be performed within the framework of National Thematic Groups (NTGs). Thus, the evaluation team concludes that the **ideal area for the focus of Action 3 projects submitted by the DPs is the performance of enlarged horizontal mainstreaming activities** (i.e. mainstreaming to players who do not form part of the DP but which operate in the same level or sector)**.**

The evaluation team considers that **the SU has had a weak role in the assistance and orientation of the implementation of Action 3 projects.**

5.3.3 Creation of thematic networks

Within the framework of **Action 3 and for the purpose of analysing, detecting and disseminating best practices detected during the development of the projects, in order to influence policy design at regional level, three regional networks have been created,** promoted by the Autonomous Regions of Andalusia, Comunidad Valenciana and Extremadura. These networks include all DPs in the relevant regions grouped around a **certain priority,** in the case of Valencia and Extremadura, equal opportunities; and in Andalusia, business creation.

As a result of the interest afforded by this type of action within Action 3, the evaluation team has wished to pay it special attention in studying its methods, in order to evaluate the possibility of repeating it in Round Two in other Autonomous Regions. Taking as an example the cases of Valencia and Andalusia, we observe that operation of these networks has been as follows:

In Comunidad Valenciana, the Department of Economy, Finance and Employment promoted the project *EQUAL Equal Opportunities Network for Comunidad Valenciana*, comprising fourteen projects within the territory, with Equal Opportunities between men and women as its horizontal theme.

Actions developed have been geared to the **study of the relevant situation in the Autonomous Regions, selection of best practices in respect of the network theme**, and issuing publications to communicate activities undertaken within the Network, holding meetings, conferences and debates and also starting up an Internet portal serving as internal opinion forum.

> Work performed in the Comunidad Valenciana's regional network gave rise to the final selection of 29 best practices extracted from a total of 698 actions developed by the projects, included in a publication and subsequently presented in dissemination seminars.

In the case of Andalusia, the Department of Employment promoted the creation of a NETWORK FOR BUSINESS CREATION, which has included projects undertaken in Andalusia in different thematic areas. Work undertaken by the network has included a diagnosis of the market focused on the network's scope of action, and in collecting information on existing policies, in order to draft a strategy for the improvement of public intervention in the EQUAL environment, identifying best practices and, lastly, seeking their mainstreaming.

> Requirements for the selection of actions suitable for mainstreaming have been to submit evidence of its being an innovation, and a proposal of what to mainstream and to whom, backed by a legal analysis providing the key aspects of its implementation, and at the same time, an analysis comparing it to other Autonomous Regions.

According to the Andalusia Regional Government (*Junta de Andalucía*), they are currently finalising the incorporation of certain experiences to general employment policies.

In both cases the networks purported to be inclusive, comprising not only projects in which both organisations participated, but also all projects acting within their territorial scope and which could contribute to the proposed themes. Both have been regarded as institutional projects assumed in one case by the Valencia Regional Government (*Generalitat Valenciana*) and the other by the Andalusia Regional Government (*Junta de Andalucía*), which provided their financing.

Conclusions

Creation of regional networks, which has proved a very positive experience, has rested to a great extent on **the willingness of the governments of the Autonomous Regions** to promote them.

Both experiences in Valencia and Andalusia have been very positive, as they have permitted **the identification of best practice by providing an evidence base** (use of self-evaluations, legal analyses, etc.). And at the same time have **increased the visibility and dissemination of such practices by a joint effort, co-ordinated by a policy-maker stakeholder.** This has undoubtedly raised awareness among other public administrators of equal opportunities and entrepreneurship. This mechanism is particularly appropriate in the Spanish political context, as a result of the weight carried by regional bodies in the formulation of policies.

SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF ROUND TWO OF THE PROGRAMME

Section 3 analyses Round Two programming, as concerns the appropriateness of the selection and definition of thematic areas and the process of launching and selection of projects. Furthermore, we analyse the effects derived from the simplification of the Renewed Action 1, studying, among other aspects, differences in respect of Round One in the implementation of Development Partnership Cooperation Agreements (DPA) and Transnational Cooperation Agreements (TCA), and correction of weaknesses and deficiencies of the work programmes mentioned for the previous round by the Mid-Term Evaluation Report.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE SELECTION OF THEMATIC AREAS AND THEIR DEFINITION AFTER THE MID-TERM EVALUATION

This chapter analyses programming for Round Two, taking as its baseline the conclusions and recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation Report. Below is an analysis of the appropriateness of the selection of thematic areas and their definition in the Second Version dated March 2004 of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) and the Programme Complement (PC).

6.1 APPROPRIATENESS OF THE SELECTION OF THEMATIC AREAS AND THEIR FINANCIAL WEIGHTING

Selection of thematic areas and structuring by themes and measures of the Community Initiative Programme (CIP)

A documentary analysis of the CIP and the Programme Complement (PC), shows **close parallels between thematic areas** in the Community Initiative for Round One and Round Two. In the present round it has been decided to keep the **same seven** thematic areas out of the nine devised on a European level, once again excluding from the Programme the thematic areas consisting of "reinforcing the social economy" (within theme 2 concerning promoting entrepreneurship) and "permanent training" (within theme 3 on adaptability).

The description of the labour market included in the CIP and the PC reflects a situation which, including a logical evolution, still presents **the persistence of the same causes of social and labour exclusion** noted in the diagnosis provided in the first version of the CIP. There are, for the most part, **structural elements in the Spanish labour market which make the selection of the same thematic areas four years later still appropriate and correct**. Thus, elements such as the high rate of temporary work, low workforce productivity rates, and low rates of self-employment, among others, continue as structural weaknesses of the Spanish labour market, which have been present throughout the period of the current European Social Fund (ESF) programming. At the same time, the incidence of these factors in particular groups (young people, women, immigrants, people with disabilities, etc.) reinforces the desirability of replicating the structure of the thematic areas selected for this round.

Chapter 3 of this report ("Context of the Initiative"), presents a succinct description of the main characteristics of the Spanish labour market, showing how the different thematic areas of the EQUAL Community Initiative (CI) propose experimental approaches to solve the main weaknesses of such a market. The content of this chapter includes discussion to verify the consistency of the thematic areas chosen. In this regard, an unemployment rate of 10.4% in 2004 seems to justify the weight given to theme 1 (access). A proportion of 6% of foreign nationals in registrations with the Social Security in the same year (double those registered in 2000) justifies the presence of thematic area 1.2 (combating racism). A low percentage, 18.4%, of self-employed persons and the existence of just 5.5% entrepreneurs make the existence of area 2.1 seem reasonable. 10.4% of part-time work and a low 32.6% of companies featuring an Intranet make the existence of the adaptability theme seem sensible. The high exit rate from the labour market for family reasons among women and the rates of salary inequality between men a women are sufficient arguments to defend the presence of thematic areas in theme 4 (equal opportunities). The existence of asylum seekers (5,553 in 2004), supports the maintenance of a small specific theme (5 - asylum seekers) to deal with this issue.

The main change in the contents of these thematic areas can be seen in the **explicit** incorporation **of elements of the rejected thematic area concerning the social economy** to the definition of actions eligible for the creation of projects in thematic area 2.1 (business creation), which indicates that integrated advisory and follow-up services to entrepreneurial initiatives must take advantage of "the possibilities offered by social economics formulas, such as co-operatives, […]". Less obvious is the evidence – in the CIP and in the PC - of incorporation within the area of adaptability of measures of the same kind tending to solve the issues affecting social economy businesses. However, the evaluation team has observed a greater presence among projects approved in Round Two for thematic area 3.1 (adaptability) of actions addressed to favouring adaptability to changes in the environment of workforces and businesses based on the social economy.

This seems to have provided an answer to the recommendation of the Mid-Term Evaluation to consider the incorporation of the whole of the potential of this thematic area (social economy) into the current programming, without the need for a separate thematic area on the issue, which could pose problems concerning complementarity with measures undertaken by the Community Support Frameworks (CSF) mentioned in the Mid-Term Evaluation.

Similarly the evaluation team considers **appropriate the decision to continue not to contemplate in the Spanish CIP the promotion of permanent training as thematic area**, as it already has a major role in CSFs and it would therefore hinder compliance with the complementarity principle in this context. We therefore deem correct the mention made in the PC that, in the thematic area on adaptability, continuing training actions "must exclusively refer to the adaptation of employees to new forms of work organisation, […] to the promotion of new occupational profiles and to the development of multi-tasking […]".

Financial distribution by thematic areas

As regards the Programme's **financial structure** by thematic areas, please note that this aspect also observes **a clear line of continuity** in respect of Round One. Thematic area 1.1 (access) still holds a

lot of weight, accumulating 29.6% of the programmed cost; remaining areas continue to maintain financial weightings between 13% and 18% of total programmed cost, except for thematic area 1.2 (combating racism) which takes up 5.4% of the programmed cost and area 5.1 (asylum seekers) which only covers 1.3%.

The additional allocation via indexation was mainly incorporated to theme 1, as this area had the most projects in Round One. The evaluation team considers this decision to be appropriate, as in the current round the two thematic areas in the theme once again constitute the largest group of projects in the Spanish EQUAL CIP, as this theme receives the most applications, due to the fact that it has a higher economic allocation.

Thematic area 5.1 (asylum seekers) constitutes a special case, as it does not participate in bidding rounds and has only one DP which receives the grant. Furthermore, the grant has been set at the beginning of the period for its whole duration. Readjustments in financial allocations of the CIP as a result of the recommendations formulated in the Mid-Term Evaluation entailed a sharp reduction in the financial allocation of theme 5. The Mid-Term Evaluation recommendation, which motivated the readjustment resulted from a physical performance far below expectations, which in its turn was due to the sharp reduction in the population subject to assistance under this theme.

Objective 1 Regions and Non-Objective 1 regions

Although the perspective from which this evaluation is addressed is thematic and not territorial, we must note that the greater financial weight on Objective 1 regions, which results in a project distribution in a proportion of 2 to 1 in favour of such regions compared to non-objective 1 regions. This is justified by existing differences in the labour market between the different Autonomous Regions and constitutes an approach which, although slanted and which may result in frictions, adjusts to reality and, thus, at Programme level, seems appropriate to the evaluation team.

In this regard, the evaluation team finds the budgetary distribution between areas appropriate and considers that the experimental and non-palliative nature of the CI recommends testing formulas to approach realities from different contexts in order to achieve the ultimate purpose of obtaining results suitable for mainstreaming into general employment policies. Notwithstanding the fact that co-financing for projects inside Objective 1 is far greater, this constitutes an additional advantage for such projects compared to those outside Objective 1 regions, which may result in a greater number of projects approved in such regions. This could lead to the problem of selecting projects of lower quality, which however meet the requirement of belonging to an Objective 1 region (see chapter 7).

Conclusions

Following the above remarks, we must conclude that **the evaluation team continues to find appropriate this budgetary distribution between different thematic areas of the initiative** in order to approach from an experimental standpoint the issues characterising the Spanish labour market. This selection of thematic areas entails acting in certain sections of employment policy which, although they can no longer be considered "emerging" as they were at the time of drafting the Mid-Term

Evaluation, must still give priority to experimentation of new approaches, due to the importance of these persisting issues in the Spanish labour market.

6.2 APPROPRIATENESS OF CONTENT DEFINITION OF THEMATIC AREAS

In the evaluation team's opinion, the second version of the Spanish EQUAL CIP, dated March 2004, provides **a more agile and better summary of the content** of each thematic area than the CI corresponding to the first CIP.

Socio-economic information provided as context of each thematic area sometimes reproduced, as in area 1.1 (access), the content of the preceding CIP, updating the figures offered, and on other occasions, such as area 1.2 (combating racism), contents have been extended and strengthened.

The description also seeks to integrate **actions for each area into EC and national employment policies** such as European Employment Strategy, the National Plan of Action for Employment (*Plan Nacional de Acción para el Empleo*) (PNAE) or the Inclusion Plan (*Plan de Inclusión*) which, as indicated in the Mid-Term Evaluation, ensures political consistency and complementarity in the definition of each thematic area.

As a novelty, instead of relating each thematic area with previous community initiatives, it introduces a brief **description of the characteristic elements of the projects in each theme in Round One**, and includes reflections from the Mid-Term Evaluation concerning the different thematic areas. In this regard, please note the express mention of the good integration of Theme 1 actions addressed to the gypsy population with other interventions co-financed by the ESF as a clear example of internalisation of one of the recommendations of such evaluation in re-drafting the CIP.

In its turn, the second version of the Programme Complement **presents the contents of the thematic areas in much greater depth** than the first version, introducing information on the characteristics of actions performed within each theme. The definition of eligible actions – an element which greatly facilitates comprehension of the contents and limits of each area- **extends and qualifies the information corresponding to each thematic area**, incorporating comments which respond to the lessons learnt during Round One and to suggestions made in the Mid-Term Evaluation. This is seen clearly in the expansion of relevant information, for example, concerning thematic area 3.1 (adaptability) between the first and second version of the Programme Complement.

In any event, please note that, in the evaluation team's opinion, the **content of the thematic areas are as a result of the descriptions of the discrimination issues noted** in the CIP's diagnosis, and that the selection of these thematic areas and the priorities established within each one of them responds to an approach which seeks to safeguard the principle of complementarity with current policies, as set out in the Mid-Term Evaluation.

As regards the **accuracy of the thematic areas,** we must make the following qualifications. In general, **no major modifications are appreciated** compared to the existing situation in the previous round. 81% of DPs surveyed consider the delimitation of thematic areas within the Programme to be

sufficiently clear. However, the qualitative information obtained as a result of the case studies and documentary review leads us to make the following clarifications:

- The Mid-Term Evaluation recommended **"redefining more accurately the scope of action of the areas access and return to the labour market and combating racism and xenophobia"**, indicating that the scope of the latter must be concentrated on social awareness and attitudes, rather than on access to the labour market, to prevent overlap between thematic areas. However, the evaluation team understands that, due to the thematic approach required by EQUAL, it is not possible to make advances in combating racism by hindering access to the labour market. We thus deem the **definitions and clarifications between both thematic areas in theme 1** to be appropriate. However, area 1.1 (access) suffers from a certain *generality* in its definition, which at times results in a more reduced definition of objectives and scope of action of projects within it. This fact has not been noted in the survey on DPs in the area, where 78% of replies say it is clearly defined, but the information collected within the case studies confirms this impression noted by the evaluation team.

- Thematic areas 2.1 (business creation) and 3.1 (adaptability) show a better and greater **clarification** of the limits of their respective thematic areas. This undoubtedly facilitates the work of the projects in setting objectives and defining actions.

- **Delimitation of thematic areas becomes less accurate in theme 4 (equal opportunities between men and women)**, due to its horizontal nature and that of the equal opportunities principle. The evaluation team found difficulties in defining more accurately the particular thematic area in which a project in this theme must be included, having noted the existence of cases in which the selection of the area was done "by process of elimination": if the project was not a specific reconciliation project (thematic area 4.1) the it would be included in area 4.2 (reducing the gender gap). Although it is understandable that there maybe a certain convergence between thematic areas within the same theme, it is also true that the adjustment of the project objectives to the selected thematic area, i.e., the project's consistency, should be a basic criterion, not just for project formulation but also for project selection. This lack of definition in the projects is therefore surprising and may cause problems during implementation.

- The specific nature of the group to which **theme 5** is addressed (asylum seekers) and the characteristics of the project in which it has materialised render an analysis of the accuracy of the definition of the theme superfluous.

Conclusions:

Round Two of the EQUAL CI in Spain **has not experienced any changes in its structure by thematic areas**, although there are certain improvements in the definition and scope of the latter.

The presence of the chosen thematic areas is still appropriate. In the evaluation team's opinion the social economics theme is contemplated indirectly and failure to select the area relating to permanent training is appropriate, due to its weight in other programmes. However, this correct decision is not sufficiently explained in the CIP, which may lead to a misunderstanding of the reasons that motivated the decision.

Financial structuring by themes and thematic areas is also appropriate. It basically maintains the relative weights between areas, which characterised the previous round, and this distribution has proved to respond to the intervention priorities analysed in the CIP diagnosis.

The team responsible for the present Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation considers that the conclusion of the last Mid-Term Evaluation still applies, deeming disproportionate the financial weighting allocated to theme 5, as the target population has continued to fall in the past years, as reflected by Interior Ministry data (approximately 8,405 persons in 1999 compared to 1,408 applications admitted as of December 2004).

CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS OF THE LAUNCH PHASE AND SELECTION PROCESS OF THE ROUND TWO PROJECTS

This chapter analyses the development of the Launch Phase and the selection process of the projects, with special reference to the call for project applications and the criteria used to perform the selection. Furthermore, we also analyse the role of the Support Unit (SU) in providing information and advice to applicants during the launch phase and its work in the proposal selection process.

7.1 CALLING AND LAUNCH PHASE

The Launch Phase for Round Two of the EQUAL Community Initiative (CI) in Spain began with **publication in the Official Gazette (BOE) dated** March 29, 2004 of the Resolution dated March 18 of the same year. This contained the relevant call for applications to obtain European Social Fund (ESF) grants by the ESF Unit (UAFSE).

The call for applications clearly mentioned the experimental nature of EQUAL, competition within each thematic area, the basic principles of the initiative, and an identification of aspects to be considered in the process of assessing the applications, which shall be analysed below in this chapter.

The launch period extended until the deadline for the submission of applications, which was June 18 the same year. In this interval organisations interested in participating in this Round Two of EQUAL had to draft and submit documentation relating to their proposal on projects for which they request co-financing from the ESF through the ESF Unit. This period coincided with the final phase of Round One projects, which would affect organisations involved in both rounds.

432 applications were received and submitted in an initial validation process consisting of checking for compliance with the formal requirements. This process led to the final acceptance of 418 applications. Of this group, 300 applications (71.8%) were submitted for Objective 1 regions, and 79 of them (18.9%) for non-Objective 1 regions. The remaining 39 correspond to multi-regional projects.

The greatest concentration of applications by thematic area (save for area 5.1 (asylum seekers) which was outside the public call) **was in area 1.1** (access to the labour market) with a total of 124, as this area has the highest economic allocation of funds, and as a result of the *general nature* of its definition. The least requested area was 1.2 (combating racism) with only 19 bids. This reduced number is perhaps due to the fact that organisations which work with such groups have experience in awareness actions, and therefore consider EQUAL to offer better opportunities to focus on job access and job creation issues, and have thus submitted applications in other areas.

As in Round One, this Launch Phase took place in close cooperation with regional governments through information sessions held in all Autonomous Regions**.**

The Autonomous Region with the most applications was Andalusia, with 19.86% of the total, followed by Castilla León (10.77%). The lowest number of applications was from Melilla and Ceuta, with 0.48% and 0.24%, respectively.

Organisation to participate in EQUAL

Having described this general information on applicants, the evaluation team has analysed the characteristics of the organisations in the process. Please note that this analysis is based only on information for approved applications, as the rest of the applicants are outside the scope of the work of the evaluation team, both for the survey and the case studies.

In the first place, please note **a large presence in Round Two of organisations with experience in the preceding EQUAL round**, either with the same or with different partners. The DP survey shows that only 5.7 % of partnerships did not include a member with prior experience in EQUAL. The greatest concentration of "new" DPs was in thematic area 1.2 (combating racism) (12.5% of total DPs consulted in the area) and in area 2.1 (business creation) (10.5%), while there are two thematic areas in which all surveyed DPs with approved projects had a member with experience in EQUAL: areas 3.1 (adaptability) and 4.1 (reconciliation). On an aggregate level, the most frequent situation is for several partners in the current partnership to have formed part of the same DP in the previous round (54%), followed by partnerships where several of its partners participated in Round One but as partners in different DPs (32%). This experience in EQUAL was confirmed by the case studies, which showed a **high level of sustainability in the partnerships**, as they observed that quite a high number of partners have kept up co-operation from Round One in the Second Round. This is considered a strength and is positively valued by the evaluation team, as it means that the **co-operation formula of working in partnership has run deep among participants** in EQUAL, thus creating links between organisations which, on several occasions, continue beyond the timeframe of the initial project.

This **prior experience in EQUAL of several partnerships was valued as being very useful** by 61% of DPs with prior experience in EQUAL, and as somewhat useful by 24%. Only 2% valued as irrelevant the importance of this experience. When one descends to particular thematic areas, there is only one assessment different from the average one in area 2.1 (business creation), where only 42% of DPs consider very useful the experience provided by having participated in a previous round. For the evaluation team **this experience is a relevant factor**, as the know-how acquired in Round One has allowed final beneficiaries of this round (DPs) to be more mature, which has permitted them to deal with the launch phase more easily. This results in a greater ability to contribute more advanced projects of better quality than in the previous round.

The importance of learning when working in partnership is reflected in the fact that the **origin of the DPs**, in 45% of cases, is in the existence of prior co-operation between the partners (not necessarily in the context of EQUAL), while in 37.4 % of cases it was the result key core project sponsors for and contacting key players. Contrary to the trend identified in Round One, the evaluation team has observed, through the case studies, that the priority in attracting partners has been the search for organisations with expertise and specialist knowledge. This analysis shows that DPs have sought to cover a broader spectrum of key stakeholders within the project's scope, including organisations with political influence to involve in the mainstreaming process. **We therefore note as a strength of**

Round Two projects the more selective nature of the search for partners in order to secure participation of key stakeholders at all levels and thus the success of the projects. The varied profile of partners forming part of the DPs contributes major added value to the projects and sets the basic conditions to fulfil the basic principles of the Initiative, such as the Thematic Approach or Institutional Cooperation.

The aforementioned **experiences in working in partnership and prior knowledge have** not only favoured creation of the partnerships, but have also **had a very positive influence in the formulation of the initial work programme** in this launch phase. In the previous round it was usual for lead applicants to have a very strong influence in drafting the working plan, while on this occasion the **formulation of the programme has been (without completely relinquishing the importance of the sponsors), more of a group effort, with the active participation of different organisations**, and a major presence of social organisations. In cases where there was no prior experience in the Initiative, the evaluation team has observed a less inclusive trend, with a more marked leadership on the part of the sponsor partner. These cases have also shown a greater participation of external consulting firms in the drafting of the proposal (all of it or leaving them in charge of certain sections, such as transnationality).

In 47% of cases, partners who wished were able to make contributions to the draft work programme written by the sponsor, while in a representative 33% of cases the programme was drafted by consensus between all partners. This aspect has received a very positive assessment by the evaluation team, which understands that this requires optimum institutional co-operation and empowerment principles from the first stages of participation in EQUAL.

It has been evidenced by the case studies that the period provided to submit proposals ran in parallel with the final implementation phases of Action 3 of Round One projects. This did not favour active participation in the drafting of the initial programme by organisations participating in Round One and applicants for Round Two.

Role of Regional Governments in Round Two

The role of Regional Governments in this Launch Phase, though variable, is still seen as important, as stakeholders providing financial, administrative and strategic support for the projects. 76 of the 229 finally approved projects (33%) have regional governments as representative organisations. Their presence is especially noteworthy in thematic areas 4.1 (reconciliation) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) (47% of representative organisations), followed by 1.1 (access) (44%). However, the evaluation team has also observed an evolution in this regard, as in Round One, in most cases, regional governments took the role of sponsors, especially for projects arisen from associations. This Round Two shows many of the projects being driven by different organisations backed by previous experience.

As in Round One certain regional governments have performed **regional calls for applications** for the purpose of selecting the most relevant projects to meet regional needs. In the evaluation team's opinion, these calls respond to the desire to guarantee complementarity and concentration of actions within the referenced territory, and to facilitate mainstreaming, but also evidence the intense control

sometimes exercised by regional governments in this phase of the Initiative. As noted by the Mid-Term Evaluation, "*this desire to administrate the CI from the region may entail the risk of the EQUAL objectives (or equivalent initiatives) being relegated to the background, being construed as additional resources for regional employment policies or in order to decentralise services and optimise resources.*"

Motivation of the participants

One of the aspects perceived by the evaluation team as showing greater maturity in Round Two projects, as a result of accumulated experience, is the **motivation of the partnerships to participate in EQUAL**. The motivation factor most selected by DPs surveyed is the possibility to **experiment** with new methods and innovative practices allowed by the CI (74%), followed by the opportunity to network with the main socio-economic stakeholders within the sphere of its activities (66%). Access to finance and resources is selected in only 28% of cases, which seems to indicate a reduction in the trend observed in the Mid-Term Evaluation showing EQUAL's frequent role "*as financial reinforcement of the actions undertaken by the organisations participating in the DPs and for the maintenance of their structures and activities*". The evaluation team considers that motivation to participate seems to have experienced an evolution as a result of the internalisation of the principles and assumptions of the Initiative towards motivations relating to the experimental nature of the Initiative, the opportunity to take risks, the thematic approach and the ability to work in partnership brought about by EQUAL.

Incorporation of recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation in the launch phase

The recommendation to **strengthen undertaking diagnostic work** – combining quantitative and qualitative data – seems to have been applied correctly, and to have had a positive impact. However, a high 43% of DPs surveyed acknowledge having used an existing diagnosis, which percentage is greater than those which indicate that they made and *ad hoc* diagnosis (33%). However, case studies show that these pre-existing diagnoses are on many occasions the result of members of the partnership having participated in the previous EQUAL. **Initial reports analysed show better quality in their diagnosis on average**, and a better link between weaknesses shown by the diagnosis and priority areas for the projects. We cannot categorically assure that this general strengthening of diagnoses is due to the greater insistence of the SU in this regard; although the effect has indeed taken place, it seems that experience accumulated in the previous round by the applicants has been the determining factor of this evolution in the elaboration of diagnoses.

In practice it has been observed that the recommendation to **render the participation of key social and institutional stakeholders more systematic** has been clearly incorporated into this Round, as already noted in the description of the drafting of the proposals, Once again, the organisations' experience has favoured the incorporation of said recommendation.

Any launching of an Initiative entails a learning process, both by the projects and by the actual management and support structures at programme level. It is therefore considered essential to **communicate lessons learned** systematically. 86 % of DPs have had access to lessons learned during Round One. In most cases this transfer has taken place as a result of the participating organisations

prior experience and, in the case of new projects, from having sought contact with organisations possessing such experience. Once again it seems that incorporation of this recommendation is more a result of the internal dynamics of the applicants, more experienced after having gone through Round One, than of the role played by the Support Unit.

Conclusions

Sustainability of total or partial co-operation established in Round One partnerships into Round Two is a very positive aspect of EQUAL. This has not only materialised in the value of prior knowledge acquired and lessons learned, which allow for a reduction in learning costs relating to the internalisation of the basic principles of the Initiative and adoption of co-operation habits, but **this form of working in partnership** has gone even further, creating links between organisations beyond the scope of the actual projects. The only risk derived from this is the danger of an excessive importance of the core organisations sharing prior experiences.

As regards the origin of the groups and weight given to the different organisations, the evaluation team considers that the **evolution towards more participative and egalitarian attitudes by the different partners** leads us once again to consider that EQUAL has indirectly contributed to training and motivating social players, reinforcing their ability to act collectively within the sphere of employment and training issues.

The evaluation team has identified as a **strength the process of incorporating DP partners** based on a more selective process, and a greater effort made to integrate a broader spectrum of key stakeholders within the scope of the projects.

There is still a **strong leadership exercised by regional governments among representatives of the EQUAL projects**, although their influence seems less than in the previous round. The existence of regional call for applications is a key element in the presence of Autonomous Regions during the launch phase. The importance of regional governments is undeniable in order to ensure complementarity and facilitate mainstreaming. However, in order to prevent the risk of these types of national initiatives being used as an additional resource for Autonomous Regions, greater co-ordination is necessary between the Regional and Central Administrations during all project rounds, to ensure a balance between the participation of key players and control over actions, and fulfilment of the principles of the initiatives.

Another major conclusion is the **proper use of the call for applications, correctly understood as an experimental system,** to start up new Initiatives, and not to favour continuity in the usual activity of the partnership members.

The most obvious impact of applying these recommendations is the **general reinforcement of the project diagnoses**, helping to overcome one of the weaknesses evidenced in the Mid-Term Evaluation. **Many recommendations** of the Mid-Term Evaluation relating to the launch phase **have been incorporated** into the process by the applicants, but rather **due to the accumulated experience and learning of the applicants** as a result of the previous round than to the SU's efforts, which have been more of a determining factor for partnerships with little or no experience in the Initiative.

7.2 ROLE OF THE SUPPORT STRUCTURE IN THE LAUNCH PHASE

Applicant organisations surveyed as case studies consider, for the most part (85% of cases), that **support and guidance provided by the Support Unit in the proposal formulation and drafting phase was sufficient**. This support consisted of **providing information and materials** on the characteristics of the Initiative, to facilitate completion of forms by the applicants. The evaluation team notes that **the availability of support materials via the EQUAL website in Spain has been valued, particularly** in order to understand the philosophy and ideals of the Initiative, and to provide contents for the working proposal included in the application, complementing the accurate but limited information included in the call for applications published in the BOE.

Among available documents is also the **information prospectus** presenting the EQUAL Round Two, drafted by the SU's Information and Communication Group, which, in the short space of 21 pages makes an adequate presentation of the general aspects of the Initiative.

Another important element is the **project presentation guide**, which provides information on how to correctly draft the application, once again providing more detail to the instructions provided in the call for applications published in the BOE. There is an interesting context where EQUAL is presented within the framework of the European Employment Strategy, Community Initiatives and the lessons learned from their performance. The **list of eligible actions by thematic areas, and of "key success factors for a proposal"** are also very useful. Furthermore, there is a presentation of project selection criteria, but once again the weighting given to the different elements of the assessment criteria is not provided, and neither are the project assessment and selection procedures.

Likewise available on the Internet is documentation concerning Round One and its results, which, together with the information provided by the NTGs, has been one of the channels whereby applicants could obtain information on lessons learned, especially organisations and partnerships without prior experience in the Initiative. Many case study DPs declared having used the summary of conclusions and recommendations provided in the Mid-Term Evaluation as a support document to give direction to the content of their application.

As concerns this documentation, please note that there are **certain comprehension difficulties, due to the use of very specific terminology** and the fact that its interpretation is not always obvious, especially for applicants less experienced in community initiatives. One improvement is the availability **of an electronic application IT form**, which makes the process more applicant-"friendly". However, and in the evaluation team's opinion, this form does not but should include a spreadsheet set up for easier completion of the budgetary elements of each application.

Information presentation sessions of the Initiative have played an important role in this round (already underscored in the Mid-Term Evaluation), and were performed by SU members in different Autonomous Regions. These sessions, held in cooperation with the regional authorities, seem particularly useful after analysing the case studies findings. They are a useful way to bring the call for

applications closer to all geographical areas, provide the option for presentations highlighting the main aspects of the initiative and provide the opportunity to answer questions raised by delegates.

Thirdly, but the most important, is the **individual support** provided by the Support Unit members to the organisations drafting proposals and working plans. In this way doubts have been solved concerning interpretation of principles and requirements of the Initiative, and advice has been given on how to adjust the initial ideas of the projects into the structure of each thematic area.

We have noted a **learning process by the SU** as an organisation, and of its technicians, as relates to these duties to advise and provide tailored information to applicants. It is obvious that technicians have increased their knowledge of all aspects relating to the call for applications, thus providing much more effective assistance. As a result, **individual support and diligence in providing information** and solving queries **have received a very positive assessment**.

The number of potential applicants in the call may have compromised the effectiveness of such personalised attention, with the need to increase the allocation of technical and human resources to perform this important task of the Support Unit. However, neither the survey nor the case study research noted this situation; indeed, **DPs interviewed** acknowledge that, **thanks to their experience in the previous round, they were able to solve most difficulties** encountered in the launch phase **by themselves**, and only addressing the SU if they could not find a solution themselves. In this case, the undeniable learning achieved by the SU is also helped by the better preparation of the applicants mentioned above as a key element to save the SU from a hypothetical collapse, which could have been caused by the large amount of potential applicants. **The DPs did not make many queries, but they knew they could count on the SU to solve any difficulty that could arise during this launch phase.** Please note also the technical assistance provided by some Autonomous Regions to applicants in their region, which has sometimes partially replaced the information and advisory duties of the SU.

Conclusions:

The evaluation team observes **a general satisfaction** with the information and advisory duties performed by the SU. The **SU's learning curve** has made these tasks more **flexible and effective**. **The experience accumulated by a high percentage of applicants,** after having learned lessons during the previous round, has also resulted in a **moderate use of this assistance**. DPs have not requested more individual advice because they considered they did not need it, although they are aware that they would have received assistance from the SU if they had requested it.

Please note also **the importance of the information sessions undertaken by the SU and regional governments** across Spain, as a way to raise awareness of the Initiative and to encourage key stakeholders in each territory to participate.

7.3 PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

With the assessment system, **the evaluation team has noted that there is no evidence that the recommendation provided in the Mid-Term Evaluation relating to giving more consideration - a**

50% weighting - to technical aspects such as internal consistency of the project or the quality of the diagnosis, instead of the predominance of fulfilment of the basic principles, has been taken into account during the selection process, as the latter have continued to obtain 65% of total marks. The evaluation team considers appropriate the recommendation made by the Mid-Term Evaluation to guarantee the technical solvency of sponsors.

The procedure begins with a technical evaluation performed by the Support Unit. This consists of the separate evaluation by two members of the Support Unit (SU), these marks are later averaged. However, if the marks differ by greater than five points between the first two another evaluation by a third technician is undertaken. The final selection is made by the Managing Authority and subsequently presented to the Monitoring Committee. In the evaluation team's opinion, as all technicians are SU personnel, **there is a lack of diversity in viewpoints in the evaluation, which could be helped by contributions of third party experts in employment and training policies external to the Support Unit,** even if they are Managing Authority (MA) or Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MTAS) personnel. This practice is used in EQUAL project selection processes in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, and the evaluation team believes that this may be a way to put into practice the correct recommendation of the Mid-Term Evaluation to externalise part of the SU's activities in the applicant advisory and proposal evaluation phases.

In the evaluation team's opinion there is also evidence for the establishment of procedures to improve internal communications of the SU during the evaluation phase, which would result in a greater unification of criteria.

After the strict technical assessment of the applicant's project proposals, they are cross referenced by applying two other criteria of the selection process: distribution of applications by thematic areas and distribution between Objective 1 regions and non-Objective 1 regions. These additional selection criteria mean that some applications, which have obtained good assessment scores, are not approved. While in thematic areas or regions where there is less competition, projects with lower technical assessments may be approved. Evidently, such criteria do not prevent a correlation between technical quality of proposals and their approval. However, if the objective is to implement projects by giving each thematic area a certain weight in accordance with the diagnosis and programming of the Community Initiative Programme (CIP), and allowing geographical contexts showing different characteristics to experiment with different methods to solve the causes of the main factors of social and labour discrimination, these *non-technical* criteria must be considered, in the evaluation team's opinion, as a "necessary evil". Indeed, they are essential to prevent overlapping and to ensure a balanced distribution of the intervention, as noted in the Mid-Term Evaluation, although in some cases they do involve rejecting good applications. All said, **setting a minimum threshold of technical quality for projects to pass to this second phase in the proceedings would prevent the approval of applications unlikely to contribute innovative solutions.**

In order to analyse perceptions on the **transparency of the process** we have only consulted applicants whose proposals were approved. It is thus logical that there is no major criticism of this aspect. In this regard, please note that 60% of DPs surveyed consider that **the information received relating to the project selection methods** and the scoring system to be **sufficient**, and there are no noteworthy differences in the different thematic areas.

However, many of the case studies have expressed the view that, after an initial technical assessment which is not subject to criticism, and which is identified with the role of the technical SU team, there is a second, "more political" evaluation (that which takes into account distribution of projects by thematic areas and Objective 1 regions and Non-Objective 1 regions). This second phase should have been better explained to the applicants, especially the role played by the Autonomous Regions[18] in the process. Applicants have not realised that Autonomous Regions do not formally participate in the selection of proposals, giving rise to a certain confusion on the process and the roles played by the different stakeholders. It is essential that the whole selection process is clearly understood by all participants. In the evaluation team's opinion, this is maybe one of the elements which may have most damaged the image of the selection process which, in principle, does not present many deficiencies.

Regarding the Mid-Term Evaluation's recommendation to increase the **selection period** so that the technical team may have the opportunity to consult in greater detail with project sponsors on possible doubts, there is no evidence of anything having been done in this respect. Furthermore, it is the evaluation team's impression that the SU technical personnel would have welcomed more time to complete the assessment process. The number of projects assessed in this round, 418, is very similar to the previous round, 422, which leads us to conclude that, although there have been no advances in this respect, neither is there evidence that the situation has worsened.

As concerns the recommendation to **redefine the criteria used in the selection scoring tables**, in order to select the best DPs, there is no evidence that any modifications have been made, nor of any new items added to the scoring table. However some of these aspects have been indirectly considered, such as maximum number of partners per DP. In any event, either as a result of developments in applicant profiles or of learning from the previous round, or of the greater experience of the SU technical team, the result is that selected projects (from the case study research) respond to the profile recommended in the Mid-Term Evaluation to a greater extent than in Round One.

Another weakness in the process is the low possibility **of taking advantage of the efforts made by applicants whose projects were not approved**. As they are unaware of the details of the particular reasons for their failure to obtain approval, apart from their scores, they cannot learn about the quality of their proposals. A protocol could be agreed which would allow such applicants to obtain, as well as information on the scores obtained by the proposal, a qualitative evaluation thereof by the SU technical team, pointing out weaknesses and strengths, as undertaken, for example, in the United Kingdom. This would allow such comments to be applied to other tenders or other spheres of activity.

Conclusions:

The case study research noted the positive assessment by DPs of the information received on the project selection process and the scoring tables. However, **partial ignorance by the applicants of certain details of the selection process, such as for example the role played by the Autonomous**

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[18] Please note in this regard the multitude of roles played by the Autonomous Regions in EQUAL, who participate in DPs as representative organisations, partners and outside them as members of the Monitoring Committee, NTG members etc…which may lead to questions as to the compatibility of certain roles.

Regions, adds certain confusion to a process, which technically does not present serious deficiencies.

In the evaluation team's opinion many of the correct recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation have not been incorporated in to the project evaluation and selection processes.

There is a risk that a good part of the unsuccessful **applicants' efforts are never put to good use,** as they are unaware of the particular weaknesses of their proposals, except for their scores and, or how to improve for future bids.

CHAPTER 8: ANALYSIS OF RENEWED ACTION 1

This chapter analyses Renewed Action 1 (Action 1 of Round Two, with new characteristics). For this purpose we have assessed the introduction of changes to correct the weaknesses and deficiencies shown in the work programmes of Round One projects. We have also analysed the effects form the simplification of Action 1, turning it into Renewed Action 1, and the differences in the implementation of the Development Partnership Agreements (DPA) and Transnational Cooperation Agreements (TCA) compared to Round One.

This analysis makes special reference to projects selected for Round Two which took part in an EQUAL project in Round One, in order to examine the evolution derived from learning obtained in participating in the previous round. In this regard please note that we have considered Development Partnerships (DP) participating in Round One to be all those who had the same representative organisation and maintained 75% of their previous partners[19].

8.1 ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF RENEWED ACTION 1

Changes in the original proposal

The documentary analysis resulting from the survey and case study research shows that most DPs in different thematic areas have focused their efforts in this phase on reformulating the original proposal after approval of EQUAL funding. **Changes relate to amendments in the project's national work programme** in particular, mostly **in order to adjust to the final budget** (aspect selected by 78% of DPs surveyed in all thematic areas). Consequently, the reformulation process has, as a general rule, consisted of readjusting the work packages and actions to the new budgetary framework, redistributing actions between partners in accordance with the distribution of approved funds and, if applicable, dropping one or several activities. In this regard, the evaluation team appreciates a greater methodological precision in the adjustment of working plans compared to the previous round. DPs have demonstrated their intention that the budgetary readjustment must not alter the nature of the spirit of the projects, thus leading to a more reflective and agreed attitude in making modifications to the programme.

Furthermore, the SU has requested changes to an important number of DPs (40.7% of those surveyed), as concerns particular aspects of their original work programmes. As a general rule, such modifications have referred mainly to **specifying and defining more precisely the mechanisms for the application of the fundamental principles of the Initiative, with special reference to Equal Opportunities between men and women and mainstreaming**, and/or one or several of the project's particular activities.

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[19] Notwithstanding the foregoing, this analysis has shown that there is a high percentage of DPs including partners with experience in Round One which do not necessarily meet the requirements established to define a DP as "Round One participant".

As a general rule **the composition of the DPs has not varied too much in this renewed action 1** (35.8% of replies to the survey). The case study work undertaken has also indicated that in most cases changes have been minor and have had no effect in the implementation of the work programmes. This shows not just the sustainability but also the level of consolidation of partnerships in Round Two, which undoubtedly has had a positive influence in the implementation of the Development Partnership Agreement (DPA).

Incorporation of Recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation.

As regards our analysis of recommendations made by the Mid-Term Evaluation, **the evaluation team has observed a positive effort made by the Support Unit to provide greater technical support to DPs in reformulating their work programmes**, and recommendations and suggestions received in this respect have been very positively valued. This positive trend is clearly reflected in the assessments made by the DPs in the survey, which are further confirmed in the DP case study interviews. Thus, 79.7% of DPs surveyed have received help from the Support Unit in this regard. The analysis by thematic area shows that in area 2.1 (business creation) the number of DPs which have received support from the SU (68.4%), although a majority, is much less than that revealed by surveys for other thematic areas (around 80%). The case study research may help explain this difference in percentages, as, according to most persons interviewed, as a result of the specific nature of the business creation theme, and the lessons learned in Round One projects (84.2% of DPs have had access to information n this Round, and up to 78% have had direct experience with EQUAL in Round One), the projects were less in need of technical support in this round of the Programme.

In this regard, the experience accumulated by the DP partners in Round One has resulted, as mentioned above, in a more considered exercise in reformulation, to prevent the budgetary readjustment from affecting the nature of the project.

On the other hand, **the evaluation team has noted that DPs have not heeded its recommendation to facilitate the consolidation, as quickly as possible, of the necessary technical structure to allow the DPs to implement the projects**, in order to prevent the deficiencies and delays noted by the Mid-Term Evaluation in respect of Action 1. This is explained in part by the flexibility as to deadlines introduced by Renewed Action 1, in an attempt to simplify processes compared to the previous Action 1, and the reticence of the projects to start hiring personnel until they have received formal acceptance of the documents evidencing compliance with the requirements of Renewed Action 1.

In the evaluation team's opinion, consolidation of the DPs' technical structure has been left to their discretion, on the basis of their internal organisation requirements and the periods and deadlines applicable to the partners. However, the absence of operational capacity observed in many projects at times where in principle they should have begun to implement their actions may lead to delays and disparities which were already criticised in the Mid-Term Evaluation in respect of Round One and which impacted on project performance. This leads us to consider the need to adopt a stricter attitude in future programmes in this regard.

The evaluation team has identified no evidence that the recommendation made in the Mid-Term Evaluation relating to providing more technical support to update diagnoses has been taken into

account in the development of Renewed Action 1. In this regard the fact taken from the survey of all DPs, where only one of the surveyed DPs confirms having made changes to its diagnosis during Renewed Action 1, speaks volumes. Although there is a general trend towards improvement of the quality of diagnoses submitted by DPs in this Round Two, the area analysis shows that it would have been convenient for the Support Unit to have emphasise the need to review and update diagnoses to guarantee that actions effectively adapt to the objective needs of the group, and should have provided more advice in this respect. The evaluation team deems it necessary to correct this weakness detected in Renewed Action 1 during implementation of the projects.

The recommendation made by the Mid-Term Evaluation that the SU should provide **more technical support to facilitate cooperation between the DP partners** by appointing a tutor or cooperation agent to advise the organisations in matters relating to organisation and group work has not materialised in Round Two. However, the evaluation team considers that this recommendation **is not appropriate,** as it is the responsibility of the DP itself to ensure fulfilment of the partnership principle, and the SU has fulfilled its duty to provide technical support where required.

Effect of the simplification of Renewed Action 1

The launching of a more flexible and simplified phase than the equivalent Action 1 of Round One has been valued positively by the DPs, in particular by DPs with prior experience in Round One. Thus, the results from the survey show that 48.8% of DPs surveyed, with prior experience in EQUAL consider that the changes introduced have been positive. Among the positive aspects of the simplification of this phase are greater flexibility of procedures and the ability to adapt to the needs of the DPs, facilitating processing and allowing project start up prior to the formal closing of deadlines.

Thus the projects are under the impression, shared by the evaluation team, that in Round Two **compliance with formal requirements to start the implementation phase for the programmes has been easier and more flexible than in the previous round** (formal incorporation of the DP, establishment or consolidation of the transnational relationship and review of the work programme and budget). The results of the survey confirm this trend, and the majority of DPs consider sufficient the period provided to consolidate the Development Partnership Agreement (DPA) (91.1% of DPs surveyed) and the Transnational Cooperation Agreement (TCA) (selected by 81.3%).

However, it seems that the **modifications have occurred mostly in making Renewed Action 1 more flexible, but the administrative framework of the Community Initiative is not perceived to have been simplified, apart from making periods and deadlines to begin implementation of the work programmes more flexible**. In the evaluation team's opinion, if Renewed Action 1 is understood to be simpler than Action 1 in Round One, this is not because more facilities have been provided than the aforementioned flexibility of deadlines, but because a learning process has taken place both in the Development Partnerships and in the Support Unit as a result of the experience obtained in Round One, which has allowed performance of the necessary actions with less difficulty.

The **effects of such learning seem to have had greater effect on the DPA**. The experience of working in partnership and the participation in Round Two of a high number of organisations with

experience in Round One of EQUAL have both contributed to the satisfactory closing of the DPAs without many difficulties within the prescribed periods[20].

On the contrary, the evaluation team has appreciated weaknesses in the consolidation of the TCAs. The difficulties to formally sanction the transnational cooperation relationship between Spanish DPs and their European counterparts appeared as a result of factors related to the changes in partners due to the failure to approve the relevant projects, the different deadlines applicable to each country and, especially, the delay in the introduction of information on the Spanish projects in the EQUAL Common Database by the Spanish ESF Unit.

This delay in data entries into the EQUAL Common Database has caused a **clear detriment to the Spanish projects,** which have found themselves ready to seek European partners to consolidate the TCAs when the latter had already completed such phase, and had thus not taken the Spanish DPs into account for their TCAs. Thus, the DPs **were unable to prioritise establishing cooperation with similar or complementary partners**, as many countries had already closed their tenders when information on the Spanish projects appeared. In the evaluation team's opinion, this circumstance may negatively affect the success and maximum use of transnational cooperation in Round Two projects.

Parallel to this, the evaluation team has noted that the formal requirement of written implementation in order to complete the process of incorporation of the TCA seems to be contrary to the purpose of ETCIM (EQUAL Transnational Cooperation Internet Module). This purports to use new technologies to accelerate the approval of TCAs, and constitutes another example of the simplification of Renewed Action 1 not having resulted in a simplification of administrative requirements and, in the evaluation team's opinion, constitutes a weakness in the process.

Another aspect which, in the evaluation team's opinion, negatively influences the process is the persistence in the mind of many DPs and organisations within them of the **consideration of transnational cooperation as being of secondary importance to the national programme**, as also shown by the case studies. Although it is perceived that the disinterest or alienation in respect of the transnational project is not as marked as identified in the Mid-Term Evaluation in examined Round One projects, this trend is still predominant in the perception of Round Two stakeholders. Thus, to all difficulties relating to the search for partners, the insufficient assistance of the Support Unit, differences in deadlines between the countries, etc., must be added the lack of motivation of DPs in respect of transnational projects as causes for the aforementioned difficulties to incorporate the TCA.

Having said that, although the Mid-Term Evaluation expected that making the Initiative more flexible – in order to adapt the passage of one stage to another to the pace of each DP - would entail some projects being launched before others, depending on the moment when they complied with the relevant formal and material requirements. The truth is that the analysed partnerships were all in similar stages of the management cycle of their respective projects, initiating at the time the first actions for dissemination to potential beneficiaries, in the best of cases. As a result, the process seems to have prevented the weakness of a "false closing" of formal requirements (DPA, TCA, etc.)

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[20] Although the number of DPs which had participated in Round One was not that high (57 DPs out of a total 229 DPs), there has been a very high participation of organisations which had formed part of DPs in Round One, as part of new DPs in Round Two (78% of DPs in Round Two include partners with direct experience in Round One of EQUAL).

evidenced in the Mid-Term Evaluation. However, it is not so clear whether it has promoted an earlier start-up of Action 2, as most of the projects have adjusted to the deadlines provided in Renewed Action 1.

Conclusions

Renewed Action 1 for Round Two presents a series of strengths compared to Action 1 in the previous round. In the first place, the process has been strengthened to the extent that it has produced better cooperation agreements between DPs; in the second place, the proposal reformulation process has also been strengthened, with a final result evidencing better technical quality than in Round One. However, these strengths are to a great extent, in the evaluation team's opinion, the result of experience accumulated by the stakeholders, of whom many already participated in the previous round in EQUAL, and not so much to changes in the administrative framework entailed by the replacement of Action 1 by Renewed Action 1. This change, in our opinion, has been a contributing factor, but its mere existence is not sufficient to justify this positive evolution compared to Round One.

Thus, among all **positive aspects** noted in the development of Renewed Action 1, the evaluation team highlights **the experience accumulated by all participating stakeholders in the Initiative** (not just the DPs and/or the organisations comprising them, but also the management structures, particularly the Support Unit), as determining factors for the establishment of cooperation and implementation of the DPA and the TCA. One of the principal lessons learned by the DPs and its partners in Round One has been the **internalisation of the principles of the Initiative, its spirit and a habits of cooperation, and to be familiarised with administrative and technical management processes.** All of this has contributed decisively to a more efficient and productive implementation of Renewed Action 1, further than the actual changes introduced for its simplification.

There is still an important **weakness in the process of consolidation of TCAs,** which does not allow this EQUAL dimension to achieve its full potential. Some Spanish DPs still encounter serious difficulties in entering into a satisfactory transnational partnership, once again giving rise to situations where there is formal compliance with the requirements of the Community Initiative which may not lead to a materialisation of the real conditions for the creation of a framework generating synergies and innovation.

However, some DPs which suffered from this weakness in Round One have demonstrated good capacity for reflection and learning and have done all they could to prevent creating TCAs which are empty of content, although certain factors outside the DPs' control – such as the different deadlines and schedules of the different Member States- have at times rendered these additional efforts unsuccessful.

As regards taking into account the recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation, the evaluation team has observed as a strength the efforts of the Support Unit to provide technical support to DPs in the reformulation of work programmes, as advised by the Mid-Term Evaluation report. This contrasts with the incorporation of recommendations relating to technical support by the Support Unit in reinforcing diagnoses and facilitating early consolidation of the DPs' technical structure in Renewed Action 1. The lack of consideration of both recommendations in the initial phases of the projects

requires the adoption of suitable measures to review and update diagnoses during implementation of the actions, in order to guarantee their suitability for the needs of the target population, and a greater supervision by the Support Unit as concerns the establishment and capacity of the DPs' technical structure, especially for those with no prior experience in EQUAL.

8.2. ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS BY THE SUPPORT STRUCTURE IN RENEWED ACTION 1

In Renewed Action 1, selected DPs have benefited from **useful and satisfactory technical support provided by the SU for the reformulation of initial proposals.** Although some of the DPs interviewed have disagreed with the Support Unit's comments and requests for changes (other than those necessary as a result of the reduction in the approved budget) this has not prevented them from giving a positive assessment of the support and advice provided. Undoubtedly the experience accumulated by the Support Unit has contributed positively to improving the assistance provided and the information made available to DPs in this regard.

Meetings and contacts with the Support Unit have been essential, in particular for organisations without prior experience in EQUAL. However, there is always room for improvement.

Although one of the strengths observed has been the prior experience of many organisations participating in this Round Two, it is also true that, even in such cases, the evaluation team has observed the persistence of certain problems, which tend to become more serious during implementation, mentioned throughout our report, and which, therefore, require a more active supervision by the SU.

The **weak link** in the assistance provided by the Support Structure is to a great extent derived from **lack of resources and excessive workload of the SU's technical team**. The increase in the number of projects in this Round Two has led to an increase in the workload of the SU technicians, which has coincided in time with the closing of Round One projects. This, together with the persistence in considering the SU more as an administrative assistance body than as a technical one, results in the lack of optimisation of the assistance which the projects could request form the SU.

In this Renewed Action 1, the main weaknesses of the support provided by the SU derive especially from the consolidation of the TCA. Thus, 22.8% of DPs surveyed have not considered that the Support Unit has taken a more active tutorial role as concerns the search for partners and the formulation of the TCA, against 26.8% of DPs which have done so. Thus transnational cooperation assistance shows much room for improvement for the Support Unit.

On the other hand, we must emphasise the efforts made by the SU to make use of the EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS) simpler and less costly for DPs in Round Two. In this Round Two, access to the EMS by the DPs is made through the Internet. Each DP holds a password to access information concerning its DP, in order to thus enter and/or modify data whenever necessary. Similarly, the SU has access to these files through the Internet, and thus both are able to establish communication in real time.

The evaluation team has noted that the EMS designed for Round Two seems easier to use, although we shall have to wait until the effective start-up of the projects to assess this in due course.

Some of the changes introduced in the EMS for Round Two are aimed at solving problems which arose during the first part of the EQUAL CI. Thus, for example, problems found in classifying certain actions in theme 3.1 in the EMS seem to have been solved. However, it is necessary to wait for the start-up of the projects to give an opinion.

However, the evaluation team has noted that certain deficiencies of the EMS in Round One seem to persist in Round Two, such as for example:

- The **breakdown of beneficiaries** does not distinguish between beneficiaries of information and advertising actions or users of certain services, which may once again lead to confusion in the accounting of beneficiaries.

- The updated EMS has no **breakdown of beneficiaries by origin**.

- The EMS does not allow, in accounting for beneficiaries, to distinguish between those who have completed the action and those which have abandoned it.

- The EMS does not allow to aggregate data provided by each DP.

Lastly, there seems to be no obligation to follow up on project beneficiaries, or for the SU to have given a clear guideline in this regard, and therefore the Monitoring System shall not contain full information on the effects of the Initiative on such persons.

As the majority of projects have not begun operating at the time of this evaluation, it has not been possible to assess the improvements of this software tool.

Conclusions

Support provided to DPs from the SU has been useful to finalise formal aspects, which allow the correct start-up of the projects. However, it may be improved by the SU's adopting a more active attitude, allowing a better use of its internal learning experience on the programme in general and on more specific project management aspects and implementation of principles in particular. Furthermore, it would be suitable to take into account the different levels of experience of the different participating organisations, not just as concerns EQUAL but also in other European programmes.

The experience analysed, as concerns deficiencies found in the support and advice services and the excessive workload of the technicians shows that there is a need to reinforce the Support Unit from a technical and administrative standpoint for the implementation phase and, in general, for future interventions co-financed by the European Social Fund.

SECTION 4: FULFILMENT OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE INITIATIVE: EVOLUTION

This report analyses and evaluates Development Partnerships (DPs) and their compliance with each basic principle of the EQUAL Community Initiative (CI), assessing their performance, implementation and the results of such implementation.

CHAPTER 9: ANALYSIS OF FULFILMENT OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE INITIATIVE

This section contains an analysis based on an in-depth examination of Development Partnership (DP) compliance with each of the EQUAL principles and European Social Fund (ESF) horizontal priorities, for the internal organisation of the DP as well as its EQUAL project development and implementation.

Each principle has been examined to ensure its correct understanding and application, in addition to the added value of that principle being applied to actions within the EQUAL Community Initiative (CI), and the differences compared to other actions in Operative Programmes (OPs) or other national or regional job creation programmes.

Individual analysis of each thematic area was followed by aggregation of the factors found to be common to the programme as a whole, emphasising differences in each thematic area. The analysis is presented for each round, first analysing fulfilment of the principles in Round One, followed by analysis of the Round Two. In respect of the latter, please note that the evaluation team analysed the latter based on project design, as the projects were still in an early implementation phase when assessed.

Please note that, in spite of this analysis by thematic area, the evaluation team has noted that patterns identified in the performance of the Programme cannot always be grouped by thematic areas, but instead certain patterns arise resulting from aspects such as types of representative body, or the geographical coverage of the DPs. This chapter indicates several of these patterns, always taking into account that the main approach used is analysis by thematic area[21].

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[21] The regional administration has most frequently assumed the role of representative body for DPs. The conduct of the regional administration can have an important influence in the DP's behaviour. However, the analysis requested for this report does not purport to study different behaviours by region, but by thematic area, and therefore the evaluation team has not used this criterion to classify DP behaviour.

9.1 PRINCIPLE OF INSTITUTIONAL CO-OPERATION (PARTNERSHIP) AND EMPOWERMENT

The EQUAL CI requires a specific project management mechanism, by providing that projects must be the result of co-ordinated effort by different partners. Application of the principle of empowerment aims to ensure that all DP partners participating in the start-up of the actions play an equal role in decision making.

Analysis of this principle has been performed by studying the composition of the DPs, examining how they have tried to involve the beneficiary groups in the design and management of the project and, lastly, evaluating the sustainability of the partnerships created. In order to avoid duplication of the analyses performed, the section containing analysis of mechanisms in Action 2 (chapter 4) studies the degree of effective participation by all DP partners and operation of the co-ordination and decision making mechanisms provided.

ROUND ONE

Composition of the Development Partnerships

The first positive aspect noted in analysis of this principle, and one that is common to all the thematic areas, is that, on many occasions, **for the first time, EQUAL has allowed all the relevant social and economic partners to work together to overcome barriers they were trying to combat within a specific region or industry**. The joint contribution by these "key stakeholders" has been very positive in providing the correct approach to the projects and also in fulfilling their set objectives, thus amounting to a satisfactory fulfilment of the principle.

Along with this strength in the fulfilment of the principle, the evaluation team identified a series of factors worth emphasising due to their positive or negative contribution to implementation of the principle concerned:

In practice, although institutional co-operation has been most positively articulated through the DPs, except in the case of the thematic areas 2.1 (business creation) and 3.1 (adaptability), **a need for greater involvement by employers' associations** has been observed. This would allow for a greater awareness of the sectors the project purports to affect, to adjust supply and demand and, especially, to raise awareness by eliminating barriers and stereotypes, which has a very direct effect on sustainability of the actions.

In general terms, the evaluation team has noted that the composition of the DPs has revealed **recognition of the need to include social organisations in the partnership (non-governmental organisations, associations) which have a better knowledge of the issues and have greater access to the target populations.** Inclusion of these partners, while widespread at programme level, has become especially relevant in the thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market), 1.2 (combating racism), 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 5.1 (asylum seekers) the activity by these partners and social organisations is more energetic and deeply rooted within their scopes of

action. Thus, the evaluation team considers that EQUAL has contributed indirectly to training and motivation of the social partners, reinforcing their capacity for collective action within the area of employment and training.

In relation to the **possible positive influence of participation in the DP by policy-maker partners,** this has been noted to depend on the attitudes and behaviours of those partners, as their participation in the DP alone does not guarantee success, for example, of Mainstreaming. One must generally distinguish between participation by the policy-maker partner (Autonomous Regions) and of by the (local) partner implementing such decisions, the latter being characterised by a very active involvement in the project. Participation by the former, however, may have a negative effect on the project by generating excessive confidence that mainstreaming is guaranteed by having a political partner in the DP. The evaluation team considers this may be due to the fact that characteristics of projects in this area have made it easier to achieve mainstreaming.

A weakness is the **existence of partners within the partnership who only provide support of a financial nature** (these are normally organisations in the public administration), without actively participating in the project. This fails to take advantage of mainstreaming capacity and potential. Evidence of this trait does not differ between thematic areas, but rather, differences are due to varying levels of involvement by co-financing public bodies in the EQUAL projects that receive their financial support.

A strength identified by the evaluation team in application of the partnership principle is the widespread practice of seeking to include organisations that represent the beneficiary groups in the partnership. In general, the DPs recognise **the importance of active participation by the beneficiaries** and the groups that represent them. This is not only as a result of the possibility of direct contact with beneficiary groups that are hard to access, but also of the creative approaches they contribute to the DP, the design and content of the actions. The majority of the DPs have had beneficiary representative organisations among their partners and representatives or, failing that, have co-operated with associations or NGOs who dealt with the group they sought to reach out to.

On some occasions, they have even sought direct participation by the final beneficiaries in designing actions by the DP. This effort has had limited results in the **thematic areas 1.2 (combating racism) and 5.1 (asylum seekers)** due, according to the partners of the DPs who operated in those areas, to the nature of those groups, who often seek anonymity, through fear or ignorance. Having said this, in cases with direct participation, this factor had a most positive effect on the overall target population.

In general terms, project beneficiaries were allowed indirect participation in all thematic areas, through **beneficiary satisfaction surveys**, normally provided at the end of each action. The **results** of these surveys could be **taken into account by the competent bodies within the DPs in order to adapt the expected actions to the needs of the beneficiaries and the reality of the region concerned** which is positively valued by the evaluation team to achieve the added value sought with the implementation of the principle**.** However, on several occasions, it has been noted that, in spite of having the surveys designed and completed, the **information was not subsequently used** by the DPs, so such surveys did not influence their work, which the evaluation team considers detracts from the effort to integrate the beneficiaries in designing the actions.

According to the results of the survey on the DPs in Round One, **93% of DPs consulted have tried to involve groups of final beneficiaries of their actions directly or indirectly**. Most of them (69%) have done so through the **presence in the DP of organisations representing them**. The second mechanism established (18%) was **participation in consultation by such organisations** and 5% of the DPs consulted has **directly involved the final beneficiaries**. **Analysis by thematic area shows some differences** that are worth emphasising: in thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market), 1.2 (combating racism), 3.1 (adaptability) and 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) the survey shows 0% of situations in which the final beneficiaries have not been consulted, either directly or indirectly. However, in areas 2.1 (business creation), 5.1 (asylum seekers) and, surprisingly, area 4.2 (supporting desegregation) there are occasions in which the final beneficiaries have not been directly or indirectly consulted. The evaluation team considers this to be a **weakness that must be avoided and which may be due to a lack of understanding** by the partners of the DP, that beneficiary interests or issues are sufficiently taken into account without having to include an entity specifically representing the group, or the beneficiaries directly.

Sustainability of the Development Partnerships

Analysis of the programme has shown the existence of a **high sustainability index of partnerships,** with 76.3% of DPs that remain unaltered in their composition during implementation of the project. Such stability is more obvious in thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market), with 88.9% stability, followed by area 3.1 (adaptability) with 83.3%, 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) (80%), and 4.2 (supporting desegregation) with 75.9%. The greatest difference is in area 2.1 (business creation) in which only 57.1% of DP composition was found unaltered.

An aspect also observed in the case studies is that the **definition of partnership seems to have evolved over** time. The DPs are clearly defined, having a formal number of partners, although in some cases, in practice, DPs were found to have a series of **informal partners or "co-operating organisations"** to start-up actions. In this respect, it seems that while partnerships seem stable at first sight, **they have also evolved organically over time.**

For example, in DP 444 DIDO (thematic area 4.2), with a small number of partners, a good ratio was achieved between effective internal management and a composition that is representative of the area, through participation mechanisms aimed at other non-partners, like co-operation agreements with NGOs from the city.

As to the sustainability of the partnerships created, once the EQUAL project finished, it was noted that, in a fairly high number of cases, total or partial co-operation was maintained in a more or less formal manner. In general terms, informal co-operation has been maintained, except in the cases of participation in Round Two in EQUAL by DPs which had acquired their own legal status, with a greater vocation of continuity in co-operation of the formal type. In **thematic area 1.1. (employability)**, co-operation through EQUAL is observed to have gone beyond the actual Initiative to create co-operation in other areas of action. In most instances in **thematic area 2.1 (business creation)** it has been noted that the different organisations participating in the projects will continue to

work together, perhaps not with the same intensity as in EQUAL, but they are attempting to create integrated solutions in training and advising potential entrepreneurs.

ROUND TWO

In the first place, the evaluation team notes, from a general point of view, that DPs in Round Two have shown greater maturity in understanding and applying the principle of Institutional Co-operation (Partnership) and Empowerment, which has contributed to foster the strengths and correct the weaknesses identified in the projects, in all thematic areas, in the previous round, as to the composition of the DPs and sustainability of partnerships.

Composition of the Development Partnerships

The experience accumulated by the DPs in Round One has definitively favoured a correct interpretation and fulfilment of this principle, which the Mid-Term Evaluation described as critical, thus minimising the weaknesses identified in the projects in Round One. Likewise, access to information concerning the experiences in Round One, in particular as to lessons learned and best practices of the projects in working in partnership, has contributed decisively to a better application and assimilation of the principle by the DPs, including those without prior experience.

Thus, one of the strengths detected by the evaluation team was **the effort made by the DPs to develop participation and decision-making models that allow equal participation by all the partners,** at least on paper. The survey showed that 87.8% of the DPs have provided specific structures to facilitate participation and 91.5% have organised a division of functions and responsibilities among all the partners of the DPs.

In this regard, the evaluation team has detected as a strength that the criticisms identified in the Mid-Term Evaluation concerning absence of a decision making system on the basis of "one partner one vote", or the relative weighting of the partners, or an imbalance of power within the DPs according to financial contribution by the partners, has only been observed in isolated cases. Thus, **on paper, the DPs have set up government, management and technical and operative co-ordination bodies which,** in early operative stages, **theoretically fulfil the conditions to respect the aims of the principle of Institutional Co-operation and Empowerment of the partners.** In this regard, it is necessary to emphasise that, **in practice; these organisational models may suffer deviations,** for example, due to excessive predominance of a core of partners with experience in co-operation in projects in Round One.

In spite of all this, please note that the set of factors which are decisive to the success of working in partnership is only verified once the technical structures of the DPs are set up and the mechanisms provided for decision making and management of the DP have been implemented, as shown with regard to Round One. This is why the **analysis of application of the Institutional Co-operation principle with regard to Round Two may be undertaken from that state of early implementation of the projects, based only on the organisation models described in the initial reports of the projects and not on their implementation.**

As a result of a better and more intense assimilation of this basic principle of the EQUAL Initiative compared to Round One, **in general all the thematic areas show as a strength that partnerships in Round Two by bring together the widest possible range of social partners and key institutions within these in keeping with the strategies developed by the projects,** in order to affect the inequality issues in the labour market in the specific area or industry. Partners have been sought and selected based on their characteristics, so they may have an effect on the issues and beneficiaries of the project actions. This is an important strength to be underscored, as the composition of the DPs, *a priori* and without considering involvement by partners and co-operation relations in implementing the projects, will contribute to proper development of co-operation and, ultimately, to effective fulfilment of the principles of Thematic Approach, Complementarity and Innovation.

In the opinion of the evaluation team**, such a positive trend has occurred spontaneously without requiring too much backing from the Support Unit**. Considering the evaluations of the DPs given in the survey, one may conclude that the DPs have not required advice and/or recommendations from the SU (34.1% of the DPs surveyed affirm they have received some or a little advice concerning the inclusion of social partners and/or key institutions in the DP) to a great extent due to prior experience in the Initiative.

The consistency and highly representative nature of the Round Two partnerships show **another strength in the fulfilment of the principle, which confirms a trend towards continuity with regard to involvement of the beneficiaries and their representatives detected in Round One.** Inclusion of organisations representing the beneficiaries of the actions in 57.7% of the DPs in Round Two, as shown by the survey, is a strength to be emphasised. As to the DPs that have introduced mechanisms for consulting participation by organisations representing the beneficiaries, as well as DPs that intend to involve the beneficiaries directly, the survey shows that these mechanisms have been taken into account in 8.1% in both cases. In that regard, however, please note that there have been specific difficulties in thematic areas 1.2 (combating racism) and 5.1 (asylum seekers) to direct participation by the final beneficiaries, as a result of the profile and specific features of the groups of beneficiaries in both areas. Measures such as the use of translators, mediators and facilitators from the actual group of immigrants, with highly positive results, must be taken into account in the future.

This all leads us to affirm the positive influence the EQUAL Initiative has had in encouraging co-operation-related attitudes. The evaluation team notes that empowerment in all its forms, in particular relating to collective empowerment within employment issues and promotion of individual empowerment, have constituted two of the key factors that must exploited in future intervention initiatives.

As a continuation of the trend identified in Round One, **a continuing strength is the presence of employer organisations in the partnerships in thematic areas 2.1 (business creation) and 3.1 (adaptability).** On the other hand, in other thematic areas, such as 4.1 (reconciliation) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation) there has been an effort to encourage greater involvement of employers' associations, although with varied success depending on the case, during start-up and Renewed Action 1 stages. It is thus essential (both for the success of the actions and for their sustainability upon

completion of the projects), to articulate innovative, flexible formulas that facilitate participation and involvement by financial partners in project implementation.

The Round Two projects analysed in depth, especially in area 4.1 (adaptability) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation) also show **a trend towards intensifying the presence and participation of policy-maker partners within DPs.** Continuing with the strength detected with regard to Round One, their presence has been consolidated in thematic areas 2.1 (business creation) and 3.1 (adaptability). In the opinion of the evaluation team, this leads to certain expectations being created on the greater relevance of the Public Administrations in the mainstreaming of results of projects and effective performance of mainstreaming, especially vertical mainstreaming, emphasised as a critical point in relation to Round One.

Sustainability of the Development Partnerships

A high degree of continuation has been noted in these co-operation relations established between different partnership members in all thematic areas, which have often materialised through joint participation in the previous round of EQUAL. As shown in the results of the DP survey in Round Two, 53.7% of the DPs have several partners who were members of the same DP in Round One, followed by 32.5% of DPs formed by organisations that had participated as members of DPs. In a minority of cases (3.3% of the DPs) only the representative partner and/or co-ordinator had experience, and only 5.7% of the DPs had no experience of EQUAL projects. The evaluation team considers that **the high degree of continuity shows the networking dynamics between the key stakeholders in a sector or territory, shown as an innovation in the Spanish context of Round One, seems to have to have taken root among member concerns that had participated in EQUAL**, representing a strength that deserves attention in future interventions to be carried out by these partners.

In addition to maintaining partnerships from a formal point of view, the strong presence of partners from Round One in the DPs involved in Round Two has also contributed to maintaining an informal co-operation, thus confirming the trend identified with regard to Round One in expanding partnerships. This trend is more evident with regard to thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market), 1.2 (combating racism) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation), where we observe an intention to facilitate participation of other non-partners in the DP as "co-operating organisations".

Conclusions

In many cases, articulation of projects around a partnership formed by the key stakeholders in an area or sector in order to fulfil the principle of institutional co-operation and empowerment has been a novel way of working, positively valued by the DP partners. The evaluation team notes how, by including this principle, the EQUAL Programme acts as a vehicle to implement a way of working that, although more deeply rooted in some European countries, represents a novelty in Spain. The evaluation team considers that the **application of this principle is thus a very positive contribution by EQUAL in introducing new working methods to Spain, based on participation by the major stakeholders responsible for, or aware of, reality in a specific region or sector, allowing a better approach to the objectives, contents and mechanisms of the project.**

In the opinion of the evaluation team, **correct application of this principle has proved a key aspect for the correct implementation of other EQUAL principles, such as the principle of complementarity, principle of innovation and principle of mainstreaming**. Without an adequate knowledge of the reality in which it aims to operate, it is difficult to articulate projects to complement existing ones. Likewise, the nature of the partnership allows inclusion of innovation factors in the project and to articulate a mainstreaming strategy intended, in many cases, for the actual partners of the DP. In Round Two, internalisation of the principle by the DPs and as a result of improvements with regard to its correct application shows, in the opinion of the evaluation team, that the innovative networking dynamics have taken root among key stakeholders in a sector or region. It is thus a major strength with regard to future interventions by these partners that must be encouraged.

The composition of partnerships has generally been adequate in Round One, integrating main key stakeholders and representing project beneficiary groups. In this regard please note the **intensification of that strength in partnerships in Round Two**. Thus, these partnerships feature the gathering of a wide range of social and institutional partners, in keeping with the project strategies developed to concentrate on the inequality issues identified in the sector or region. *A priori*, the composition of the DPs and the organisation models favour fulfilment of the principle, although it will be in implementation of the projects where co-operation relations will confirm whether successful factors of working in partnership and effective fulfilment of the EQUAL principles take place or not.

As to involvement of social stakeholders, the evaluation team concludes that **involvement by NGOs and associations has been sufficient, but it will be necessary to reinforce representation of employers' associations** in all thematic areas, except in 2.1 (business creation) and 3.1 (adaptability). **In Round Two**, however, **a greater effort has been observed to** encourage a greater involvement of employers' associations in the initial phases of the projects, especially in thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation) with varied success.

Involvement of policy-maker partners at local level has been very active in general terms, and has had positive consequences for the success of the projects in Round One. The involvement of policy-maker partners at regional level has been very varied, being positive on some occasions, but negative in others, due to excessive confidence in mainstreaming success, caused solely by these partners being included in the DP, or by their merely formal involvement in the projects, or solely with a co-financing role. On the contrary, the trend of encouraging the presence and participation of policy-maker partners within partnerships in Round Two detected by the evaluation team, in particular in thematic areas 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation), in which weaknesses had been detected, generates a series of expectations over greater general relevance of Public Administrations in mainstreaming project results and in horizontal and vertical mainstreaming.

The implementation of the first phase of the Initiative, in general terms, has shown an understanding of the importance of involving final beneficiaries of the project, either directly or indirectly. **Including beneficiary representatives or the actual beneficiaries in the partnership has been emphasised as one of the strong points that are key to success in EQUAL**. However, the evaluation team has noted that, along with this general trend, **on occasion, there are still beneficiary groups not represented**

in the partnerships, either directly or indirectly. On several occasions it was also observed that beneficiaries were consulted by filling in satisfaction questionnaires, but the data gathered was not used to inform DP actions.

The evaluation team has noted that this positive trend in involvement of groups of final beneficiaries has been confirmed in Round Two, showing continuity in the involvement of beneficiaries and organisations representing them through their inclusion in the DPs. The evaluation team considers that the small amount of mechanisms for participation by final beneficiaries in the projects may be due to the early stage of implementation of the projects and, in many cases, to the definition of specific tools to be used in monitoring.

In general terms, highly stable partnerships have been observed during implementation of the EQUAL projects, as well as an organic evolution in them, as the projects were implemented and the networking advanced. As to sustainability of partnerships created during Round One, once the projects had been completed, **these co-operation relations were observed to continue in Round Two**, which materialised in the joint participation during the previous round of EQUAL. The great majority of the projects in Round Two have partners that already participated in Round One, which shows the positive influence of encouraging attitudes of co-operation among the organisations that have contributed to the EQUAL Initiative. In some cases, even a formal co-operation has been maintained, although at a lower level, beyond the scope of the actual Initiative. Moreover, major continuity is perceived in the co-operation habits between organisations participating in Round One through the continuity of informal co-operation.

The effective, real involvement by the different local stakeholders, who know the reality and issues that affect the environment in which they operate, has allowed the ESF to approach the existing reality in an especially intense manner. This provides added value to the actions financed by such fund through the EQUAL CI, with regard to actions financed within the framework of other programmes.

9.2 PRINCIPLE OF COMPLEMENTARITY

The principle of complementarity aims to guarantee that the projects really have an effect on scopes of action not covered by the general employment policies or by the general programming of the European Social Fund.

Using the analysis performed in application of this principle, the evaluation team has sought to **study whether the actions implemented by the EQUAL projects arise in areas of activity not covered by general employment policies or ESF programming**, avoiding duplication and showing the added value of EQUAL. It has also studied whether the DPs are aware of active labour market policies, and **through which mechanisms they ensure the complementarity** of the project with those policies, as well as other services operating within the same scope. Ultimately, it has sought **co-ordination and complementarity between the actual EQUAL projects** .

ROUND ONE

Fulfilment of the principle

In general terms, the evaluation team noted no **interpretational changes in** the meaning of the principle by the projects **in any of the thematic areas**. Moreover, the analysis performed shows the intention to fulfil the principle by avoiding overlapping of actions performed within the framework of EQUAL with the services provided by other bodies and seeking to offer complementary, innovative services.

However, a **weakness** is noted **in the integration of the EQUAL project in strategic action plans or programmes** in the sector or territory, whether or not these are financed by the ESF.

In general, the evaluation team noted that the more EQUAL is conceived as a test lab for new methods to combat social exclusion relating to access to the labour market and, subsequently, to mainstream successful innovation into policies and plans, the better the principle of Complementarity is fulfilled. A **lower level of complementarity** has arisen when EQUAL is interpreted as a resource, or as yet another source of financing to be used to finance actions which have not been possible by other means, without the partners of the DP really having assimilated the objects and philosophy of the Initiative.

Mechanisms to favour complementarity:

In general terms, project complementarity with other programmes and/or projects implemented within the territory has been articulated through key stakeholders participating within the DP in other programmes or forms of intervention. The results of the survey on all DPs **show a comprehensive knowledge of the programmes and policies that affect the scope of action of the project**, which reveals a strength in the fulfilment of the principle. Thus, 92.1% of responses received indicate that the main mechanism to ensure complementarity was "*integration in the DP of the main public bodies and associations that work in the area dealing with the same issues*". This option has been followed by "*articulation of mechanisms to observe and monitor relevant policies on the labour market and existing practices in order to detect modifications and adjust the work programme to ensure complementarity*" (51.3%) "*Search for possible articulation and complementarity with the regional and multi-regional OPs*" (51.3% of the responses) and "*Management of networks with other sectoral/geographic initiatives on discrimination and combating inequality*" (44.7%). The percentage variations detected in the analysis by thematic area are minor, so the evaluation team does not consider it necessary to present a breakdown.

The existence of **continuous, direct communication between the organisations,** within as well as outside the actual DP is considered a **fundamental aspect** to avoid and, in other cases, **solve possible conflicts of "competences"** that may arise during implementation of the project. To avoid these, a trend has been observed, to a greater or lesser extent, toward formalisation of co-operation with organisations that do not belong to the DP, which is considered highly positive by the evaluation team.

A greater risk of duplicating effort arises when implementing training actions, given the broad offer that usually exists. However, the methodologies and accompanying measures applied, as well as the groups they address, mostly ensure that the principle of Complementarity is preserved.

The evaluation team has observed **some cases in which there is failure to fulfil the principle of Complementarity** during implementation of the project, when this is established by the group attended by the project, **with a *de facto* expansion of the profile of beneficiaries**. This may happen due to overlapping of the objective by providing a complementary service to the existing offer, in order to obtain positive publicity and dissemination of the actions performed within the framework of the project, aiming to encompass a wider public than that for which the original action was intended.

> In DP **444 DIDO**, in **area 4.2 (supporting desegregation),** there was close co-ordination of the occupational training actions of the project through the regional public employment services, avoiding duplication of resources and limiting the number of female beneficiaries by ages, to ensure their access to a service that was not provided by another entity within the region.

Complementarity with other EQUAL projects

Although complementarity with other EQUAL projects has been achieved through actions performed within the framework of the EQUAL Mainstreaming Plan (see chapter 5 above), the evaluation team has considered that this is also a way to try to seek complementarity in actions, and therefore approached the matter within its analysis of the fulfilment of the complementarity principle[22].

The evaluation team has noted that, **in many cases, there have been actions tending to seek complementarity or to take advantage of the synergies of different EQUAL projects** operating in the same geographic area or sector. However, in **other cases**, in which similar projects did not share partners, or did not operate in similar geographic areas, **chances to exploit knowledge and experiences between projects dealing with very similar issues or types of actions have been lost.** In general terms, the evaluation team has noted that this complementarity normally arises between DPs that operate in the same territory and, to a much lesser extent, between DPs that operate in different territories, but with very similar actions, which amounts to a weakness in complementarity between projects.

Some examples that illustrate this complementarity were as follows:

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[22] Mainstreaming, strictly speaking, should be considered as that performed within the EQUAL projects, aimed at actions performed outside the framework of the Initiative, and therefore the exchange, or the search for complementarity between projects would not encroach on such an interpretation of mainstreaming. The evaluation team, however, has used a broader definition of the concept of mainstreaming, interpreting, in line with the documentation and actions performed within the framework of the EQUAL initiative, that these actions of exchange between EQUAL projects may be encouraged through mainstreaming activities. This is not essential to consider this exchange as a form of complementarity and, thus, this aspect has been dealt with within the analysis of fulfilment of the principle of complementarity. The interconnection between the different principles of the EQUAL CI has become clear in that debate.

Co-operation by DP 160 (Provincial Network of integral services to access the labour market,) belonging to **thematic area 1.1 (access)** and operating in the Province of Teruel, with DP 291 (EX AEQUO), multi-regional and belonging to **thematic area 1.2**. **(combating racism).** The aim of such co-operation was to complement actions through a co-operation agreement to act jointly to recruit, train, move and transfer rural immigrants families (target population of DP 291) to under populated rural areas of Teruel, a process that included seeking a home and employment for both the husband and the wife.

A close co-operation existed between DP 130, Filoxenia **thematic area 1.2 (combating racism)**, and DP 125 EQUITAS **area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life),** both operating in the same region (Balearic Isles). Such co-operation sought to integrate the knowledge of the different partners participating in each DP, emphasising, for example, consultations by DP Filoxenia to the *Institut de la Dona* (Women's Institute), a member of the DP EQUITAS.

There have been some cases in **area 3.1 (adaptability)** of potential overlapping between the different EQUAL projects within the region, but these were usually resolved favourably, safeguarding the principle, although **a greater risk was detected in the complementarity analysis between EQUAL projects than with regard to other types of actions.**

Please note the implementation of co-operation and synergies generated between some projects within **thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life)** with other EQUAL projects dealing with the same issues, within the same territory as well as outside it, encouraging exchange of experiences, resource sharing and joint actions.

During implementation of the work programmes, there have been **synergies between projects within thematic area 4.2 (supporting desegregation) with other EQUAL projects** within the same territory or which deal with similar issues, generating a series of common actions and co-ordinating the actions inherent to each project. This is the case, for example, of DP **595 MEDIATION FOR EQUALITY**, that has provided specific training in Equal Opportunities and gender-related issues in modules within training actions on the project DP 590 RED LABORIS.

ROUND TWO

Fulfilment of the principle

Analysis of the projects in Round Two shows **correct understanding of the principle of Complementarity**, thus most of the projects are aware of programming and policies within the region concerned and relating to the actions covered by the projects. Furthermore, **the prior experience of the DPs and partners that also participated in Round Two has led them to identify existing "gaps" in the provision of services.** In such cases, there is also a remarkable qualitative awareness of regional and local employment policies. However, this positive evolution is more evident in thematic areas where a clear improvement in the quality of diagnoses has been observed, such as in thematic areas 1.1 (access), 1.2 (combating racism) and 2.1 (business creation). As in Round One, in general,

there is still a weakness in *active* integration of the projects in such strategic action plans or programmes within the sector or territory, whether or not they are financed by the ESF, with remarkable exceptions detected in thematic areas 2.1 (business creation), 3.1 (adaptability) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation). There are no clear mechanisms by which the projects may be integrated in these plans, or for experiences to be transmitted and exchanged.

A highly illustrative example of effective fulfilment of the principle of Complementarity is found in a project in thematic area 4.2 (supporting desegregation): DP **270 KIDEITU**. The idea of that gender targeted *mainstreaming* project (integration of all policies and actions) arose at a meeting of the Evaluation Work Group, within the framework of interventions performed on the Objective 3 Operative Programme (OP) of the Basque Country. The actual project established a mechanism to safeguard effective, horizontal application of the principle of Equal Opportunities throughout the Objective 3 OP, as it aims to analyse the application of the principle in the structures and systems in matters of employment, as well as the design, implementation and evaluation of the employment policies.

Mechanisms to favour Complementarity

More than in the *ad hoc* devices established for such purposes, as recommended in the Mid-Term Evaluation, **complementarity** of projects in Round Two, as in the previous round, **continues to be closely linked to a broad and correct composition of the partnerships, integrating the key stakeholders within them**. The presence of the political and key socio-economic stakeholders in a sector or region aims to guarantee in-depth knowledge of existing policies and programmes, while minimising duplication of efforts and resources and possible overlapping with other interventions or public initiatives. This general trend is confirmed with the results of the survey of the DPs, as 94.3% of the respondent DPs reported "*involvement by key stakeholders with the DPs*" as a key mechanism they use, or intend to use, to ensure continuing complementarity, followed by "*mechanisms to observe and monitor relevant policies in the labour market*" in 48.8% of replies to the survey.

In relation to thematic areas 1.2 (combating racism), 2.1 (business creation), 3.1 (adaptability) and 5.1 (asylum seekers) one appreciates greater consideration of the Mid-Term Evaluation recommendations in preparing resource maps to favour fulfilment of the principle. Although the use of resource maps is only mentioned in 26.8% of the survey replies, **analysis of the projects in these thematic areas shows spontaneous use of these resource maps, with different degrees of formalisation, by the members of the DPs**, which have often used Observatories that prepare or normally use these maps, as well as other mechanisms for observation and monitoring of the relevant policies. However, **there is a lack of evidence concerning the requirement or insistence by the Support Unit on the use of such resources as a tool to safeguard the principle of Complementarity**.

As mentioned in the Mid-Term Evaluation with regard to Round One, the lack of *ad hoc* mechanisms in other thematic areas to articulate the complementarity of the projects with other interventions does not evidence critical trends that threaten fulfilment of the principle. In general, one appreciates that **in many of the projects it was not deemed necessary to develop such ad hoc mechanisms, in view of co-operation within the DP, or even the actual definition of the project, involving articulation based on current employment plans and policies**. Please note the potential offered by the

networking and synergies created within the partnerships, as emphasised in the Mid-Term Evaluation, which has allowed optimisation and co-ordination of existing resources in Round One. This is particularly important in relation to projects that are noticeably local in nature.

Complementarity with other EQUAL projects

Without it being one of the most outstanding aspects of fulfilment of the principle of Complementarity, however, **there has been progress in this respect, which amounts to a strength.** Access to information on best practices in Round One projects and more or less formal contacts with other DPs that operate in the territory, or in the same thematic area, seem to have improved the situation described in Round One. The high participation in Round Two partnerships of organisations involved in the previous round seems to indicate that the flows of relations established and co-operation synergies created will allow a greater exchange of information and lessons learned in Round Two projects, allowing fulfilment of the principle of Complementarity to be reinforced.

Conclusions

The principle of Complementarity has been correctly interpreted and internalised by the majority of DPs in all thematic areas in both rounds.

The main means of articulating fulfilment of this principle, in Round One as well as in Round Two, **has been through participation within the DPs of the key stakeholders in the implementation of other programmes or forms of intervention**. The evaluation team has thus noted that **complementarity is a principle that is closely linked to the principle of Empowerment and Partnership** and that it has been fulfilled without requiring an extraordinary research effort by the DPs. However, **a greater effort might have been made to integrate the projects in the current employment plans and programmes within the scope of action of the project and, especially, in establishing specific mechanisms to articulate complementarity**, especially in Round One projects. On the other hand, in Round Two, integration of sectoral and/or territorial planning of the EQUAL projects in other thematic areas has been strengthened. Likewise, the new round shows a positive trend in some thematic areas concerning more operative articulation of the principle within the framework of strategic plans of action and the use of resource maps to favour fulfilment of the principle.

Due to the particular nature of EQUAL and the requirements that must be fulfilled by the projects within it (although the motivation of some partners of the DPs in Round One has been to obtain complementary financing through EQUAL to execute certain activities) this has not been to the detriment of the application of the principle of complementarity, which has evolved toward adapting the original project to the philosophy and principles of EQUAL. However, when the partners have not internalised such philosophy, there is frequent overlap. **These critical trends have not come to light in the analysis of Round Two projects, which confirms a positive evolution in the assimilation of the EQUAL by the projects.**

In some cases in Round One, fulfilment of the principle has been made more flexible during implementation of the programme in order to obtain positive publicity within its scope of action, not leaving any possibility of unsatisfied citizens who have not been able to benefit from it.

In general, there have been synergies between EQUAL projects in Round One. However, experiences could have been further exploited by establishing formal exchange mechanisms at programme level. In this regard, there has been **a trend toward strengthening complementarity with other EQUAL projects in Round Two, based on experience accumulated by the DPs and the maintenance of co-operation relations of a formal and informal nature with partners.** It is thus necessary to maintain such spirit and to maximise the potential offered in this Round Two, in the synergies generated by the DPs, by visualising co-operation opportunities offered by the projects.

The principle of Complementarity is fundamental to guarantee the experimental nature of the projects, separating them from usual measures and intervention practices in the territory or sector. Its fulfilment is a stimulus to implementing innovative measures suitable for mainstreaming. Likewise, the principle of Innovation becomes a guarantee for fulfilment of Complementarity. Logically, complementarity contributes to reinforce and facilitate mainstreaming, as if projects tested to ensure they complement the existing services prove effective, they shall be maintained once the EQUAL project has been completed.

9.3 PRINCIPLE OF INNOVATION

Innovation is one of the basic elements of all initiatives related to contribution by the projects to the usual practices and resources of general policies within the scope of training and employment, of new solutions, or of different solutions from existing ones in the region or sector subject to action.

The evaluation team has analysed such contribution by the projects, of new solutions in the relevant region or sector. The team has also studied the type and level of innovations performed, the mechanisms articulated to ensure the innovative component has remained in existence throughout the whole life of the projects and, lastly, it has studied the added value provided by this principle to the EQUAL projects.

ROUND ONE

It is necessary, before proceeding to state the results of the analysis of the principle of innovation, to note an aspect that has arisen in the study of this principle. Although the DPs know and accept that **working in partnership cannot be considered an innovation for the purposes of fulfilment of this principle**, as it is a mandatory working methodology inherent to EQUAL, this does not prevent that, in many cases and **thanks to the project, all the relevant social and economic partners are working together on specific issues for the first time[23]**.

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[23] This factor is of major interest when comparing the results of implementation of the initiative in Spain with the results at European level, because it implies that the Spanish projects require a double effort, compared with projects in other countries of the European Union: firstly as they act according to a new working method which is working within a network, and secondly, implementing a project requiring innovation in existing actions.

In identifying the innovative component of the projects, there has been frequent reference to **innovation in relation to context.** Thus, the novelty of strategy and actions aimed at a **specific target population** within a region, in which there were no interventions catering to needs, as the DPs have done, the basis of innovation has frequently been driven to a great extent by DPs interviewed. As to the **level of innovation**, this has essentially been **local** (37% of the innovation in the projects amounted to local innovation, compared with 28% regional, 18% national and 17% transnational). Among the **innovation factors** of the projects, the DPs have emphasised, first of all, the "work programme" (23%), followed by the "methodology used" (21%), including the "operation of the organisational structures and partnership" in third place (20%).

On occasion, **the DPs have had the feeling that the innovation factors included in its work programmes are more innovative than they have really proven to be as, when the nature of their novel contributions is analysed in detail, they must always be taken in their relative context and admitted as an innovation only within their territorial or sectoral scope** and not as ground-breaking innovations, as they are sometimes described in the documentation generated by the actual projects. This is partially due to the need of the DPs to demonstrate the novel nature of their projects. **However efforts to ensure the utility of the innovation seem less evident**.

The aforementioned information may lead to the conclusion that, in general terms, the projects have mainly shown **relative innovation**, consisting of a practice that already existed outside the area being implemented **within the context** in which they operate (mainly local) and, only **to a lesser extent, an absolute innovation**. However**, the team considers that many projects develop aspects throughout their life that amount to absolute innovation, but they often do not identify these as such, or such innovation had not been developed upon designing the innovative approach of the project at the beginning of the work, creating a pool of "concealed innovation" that is difficult to identify.**

In many cases, transnational co-operation was considered a source of innovation by the projects, with mainstreaming being the ultimate goal sought by DPs for successful cases, and therefore the evaluation team deems it important to emphasise such **relationship between the principle of innovation and the principles of transnational co-operation and mainstreaming**. Likewise, the principle of innovation is closely linked to that of complementarity, as innovative talent is required not to repeat formulas already in operation. Lastly, this principle is also linked to that of partnership, as it is convenient to emphasise that the **degree of co-operation and involvement by the partners** within the core of the DP and the **active participation by the beneficiaries** have contributed to **deepening the level of innovation** achieved by the projects.

The **added value** provided by the principle of innovation to actions performed within the framework of EQUAL is linked to the very essence of the Initiative. The ultimate objective of EQUAL as a "best practices laboratory" is achieved through correct articulation of this principle, although subsequently, it must also be accompanied by establishment of proper channels to implement effective mainstreaming of project-generated innovative practices.

In **area 1.2 (combating racism)** a large part of innovation refers to the **process,** as cultural codes and the gender approach are being included, and the **methodologies** in awareness campaigns on "positive added value of immigration for the Spanish economy". In general terms, such interventions have been geared towards **completing already existing services and developing new tools and occupational profiles.**

In **area 2.1 (business creation)** a major contribution to this principle has been noted in achieving the objectives established by the projects, as the integrated nature of the service offered by these projects is defined as a true innovation in the regions concerned. Support services for entrepreneurs that existed up to the moment of the launch of the EQUAL projects were highly compartmentalised, without co-ordination between them and, thus, scarcely effective their use by reference groups in EQUAL.

In **area 3.1 (adaptability),** DPs have often been observed to declare *e-learning* platforms and other elements associated with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to be innovative products created within their project. However, in many cases, beneficiaries' reaction to them has been lukewarm. On occasion, it is strange for widespread activities in the region (such as creating profiles such as technicians on labour risk prevention) to be seen as an innovation. **In other cases, innovation is highly evident,** such as setting up **new methods through which measures for flexibility in the work place may be introduced** by companies in an Autonomous Region, **bringing advanced training methodologies to certain production sectors**, **setting up self-diagnosis tools that previously did not exist, creating new structures and occupational profiles,** etc.

In **area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life),** a trend has been observed in which the DPs selected as case study identified the very theme they were attempting to deal with as an innovative element: Reconciliation of family and professional life This was because, according to the DPs interviewed, there were previously no such actions. Thus, the majority of DPs interviewed have declared that the **innovation** provided by the projects referred to the **context** (considering the absence of interventions aimed at attending to groups of beneficiaries in the region concerned); the **objectives** (by attending to groups of beneficiaries who had no access to certain services, in particular women) and the **process** (by use of profiles such as Equal Opportunities Agents).

Although the main innovations stated for the projects selected as case studies in **area 4.2 (supporting desegregation)** refer to context and objectives, please note that other innovation factors have been emphasised, such as:
Innovation within the **target group** (for example, in DP **205 MEVEL EL CONDADO** that dealt with the problem of the absence of recognition of "invisible" women entrepreneurs). There has also been innovation in the **processes** of methodologies used for training, methodologies for continuous monitoring and evaluation of actions; innovation concerning **products** such as, for example, information points (virtual information banks); design of Positive Action Plans in the Public Administrations; and lastly, innovation concerning **means of dissemination and awareness** such as, for example: use of the media for dissemination of the project.

> **Area 5.1 (asylum)** concerns a group awaiting an administrative resolution to decide whether or not they may remain in Spain, which must be taken into account by any action to be undertaken from a labour perspective. Precisely as a result of such difficulty, the project implemented in this area amounts to an innovation in this group's environment, emphasising the establishment and development of **holistic plans** at local level.
>
> These types of plans are innovative, as their ultimate goal is access to the labour market for the group, which, during the period covered by the project, faces major legal impediments[24] that hinder their employability and motivation.

ROUND TWO

The principle of Innovation as an element to articulate the EQUAL Initiative is especially important in Round Two as the only principle for which previous experience of the DPs may act negatively. The evaluation team considers that the aforementioned continuity of partnerships in Round One must not be perceived in the new round as an "*extension of financing*". In this regard the Support Unit must play a vital role in the fulfilment of the Innovation principle throughout the projects.

Following the Mid-Term Evaluation recommendations, it has been observed that the **Support Unit has made a greater effort in this round to emphasise the relevance of the principle and clarify its content** based on analysis of the projects. This has been noted by 83.7% of the DPs interviewed. This general trend, however, is not evident in thematic areas 1.2 (combating racism), 2.1 (business creation) and 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life). On the other hand, the evaluation team feels that the recommendation by the Support Unit to many of interviewed DPs with prior experience (over the convenience of presenting the project in a different thematic area in this new round to justify the innovative nature of the project), is not suitable. The evaluation team considers that recommendation does not match the actual meaning of the principle, as it casts doubt on the very ability to innovate.

This greater effort by the Support Unit in visualising and explaining the principle has led, for some thematic areas, such as area 1.1 (access to the labour market), 3.1 (adaptability), 4.2 (supporting desegregation), and 5.1 (asylum seekers), to a **more specific DP orientation in ongoing innovation management and its validation upon completion of the project, based on internal evaluation factors,** as recommended in the Mid-Term Evaluation, to cure weaknesses detected in Round One. However, this positive trend is less intensely appreciated in the case of thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life). In this case, difficulties are still found in measuring innovation and ensuring it continues throughout the projects, which may ultimately hinder validation of results and thus the capacity to mainstream them.

In spite of everything, **compared with the previous round, projects in all thematic areas in Round Two seem to have gained maturity in their approach to fulfilling the Innovation principle**. They no longer seem to give priority to "novelty", that is, to include previously non-existent elements in their scope of action, an interpretation that is more focused on the final result, but rather, case studies have shown a greater vocation toward "experimental issues", an interpretation that focuses more on

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[24] Only after the sixth month of their stay in Spain may asylum-seekers file a job-seeker's application at an asylum office, a 3 month formality to obtain the permit, during which the asylum application may be refused.

the processes involved. **Thus, the in Round Two generally present a more obvious orientation toward experimentation,** which amounts to a positive evolution with regard to the situation analysed in the Mid-Term Evaluation. The experience accumulated by the majority of the partners of the DPs, thanks to their participation in Round One, and by the maintenance of co-operation relations of an "informal" nature between them, in the new round, is considered by the evaluation team to have strengthened the capacity of reflection of the DPs, as well as their tolerance of failure. Both aspects are indispensable to manage innovation aimed at mainstreaming practices into active employment policies.

Although evolution toward process rather than context-based innovation is noted, as mentioned in the Mid-Term Evaluation, there is still general reference to **innovation based on the context** in which the project is conducted, being relative and non-ground-breaking innovation. This has been appreciated in all thematic areas, except in 5.1 (asylum) due to its specific nature. A remarkable evolution compared with the previous round in all the thematic areas, arising from the aforementioned experience accumulated by the DPs is **that less emphasis is placed on actual working in partnership as one of the more novel aspects of the project**. Only 30.9% of the DPs stated this in the survey. According to the evaluations in the survey, the main innovation factors of projects are, in this order: the methodologies used (67.5%), the mechanisms implemented by the project (63.4%), the objectives of the project (62.6%) and the type of service offered (56.9%).

In general, one may thus affirm that the principle of Innovation in Round Two continues to be the "*reverse side of the coin*" of the principle of Complementarity, a key to mainstreaming, closely linked to the proper fulfilment of the principle of Institutional Co-operation and Empowerment, and an element of the project on which Transnationality may have a greater impact.

Conclusions

The effort by the DPs to include innovative components in the projects has generally been remarkable, especially bearing in mind the effort the actual DPs made in Round One to assimilate working in partnership, which amounted to a novelty, although not for the purpose of fulfilling the principle. The main innovation factors claimed by the DPs selected as case studies in Round One refer to **innovation relating to fundamentally local context and objectives.** Innovation generated by the projects was also appreciated in the design, implementation and processes of the projects and the means of dissemination and awareness used.

Although the evaluation team considers that **there has been a satisfactory fulfilment of the principle of innovation in the previous round in all thematic areas,** it also considers that the projects focus on relative innovation or context innovation and **no emphasis is placed on proving its usefulness, but rather only its existence.** Likewise, the evaluation team has identified **the existence of "concealed innovation" not identified by the actual DPs**, which is of great interest.

The experience accumulated by the DPs, plus the incorporation of the lessons learned in Round One and most of the recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation, **has strengthened the capacity of the DPs to better fulfil this principle in Round Two**. The projects consider innovation more as to

context and less as to work in partnership, placing greater emphasis on the methodologies used and the mechanisms set up by the project. **This emphasises the remarkably experimental nature of the projects in Round Two**, as well as a tendency toward better management of innovation processes and of validation of the innovation, especially through ongoing assessment of the projects. This shows greater capacity of analysis and reflection of the projects compared to Round One.

Fulfilment of the principle of innovation is closely linked to the remaining EQUAL principles (partnership, complementarity, thematic approach, transnational co-operation and mainstreaming), so it has a specific importance. **The evaluation team has noted scarce evidence in mainstreaming in Round One** of innovation factors by policy maker partners, in order to generalise such innovative practices within general employment policies at national and regional level. **The concurrence of factors of success in Round Two**, (such as greater commitment by policy-maker partners to the projects, greater orientation of the DPs to ongoing management of innovation and its validation through continuing assessment), **generates greater expectations concerning evidences of mainstreaming of the project results**.

9.4 PRINCIPLE OF THEMATIC APPROACH AND CONCENTRATION

The **principle of thematic approach** seeks to combat the main causes of discrimination present in a region or sector through solutions liable to be applied to many final recipients. The **principle of concentration,** on the other hand, involves actions concentrating more intensely on beneficiaries affected by discrimination and inequality in the labour market.

The assessment of the **thematic approach**, has been performed through examination of the effectiveness of the approaches, methods and activities applied by the projects, to **ensure the integral treatment of the common underlying factors of each** discrimination **issue** inherent to the thematic area surrounding these interventions. Analysis of **concentration** has been aimed at studying the **effect on people of these more unfavourable situations of discrimination and inequality on the labour market.**

ROUND ONE

Thematic approach

The evaluation team has detected, in the first place, that the guarantee of success in the mechanisms employed and the strategy developed for the proper fulfilment of the thematic approach has depended, to a great extent, on the **capacity of the DPs to mobilise existing resources and key stakeholders** within the territory or area concerned and to devise a common approach to deal with the issues of inequality identified. In this regard, analysis of the DPs selected for case studies shows that **co-ordination and the degree of cohesion within the DPs have also been decisive factors** in optimising resources and, ultimately, in ensuring the fulfilment of the principle. Thus, DPs which have proved fragmented, that tend toward vertical decision-making, or which evidence co-ordination and internal cohesion issues, show a weak fulfilment of the thematic approach. Likewise, the quality of the

initial diagnosis and action strategy of the project have been identified as factors that guarantee adequate fulfilment of the principle.

The difficulties encountered in the fulfilment of this principle, as well as evaluation its contribution to the fulfilment of the project objectives, have been different for each thematic area:

- In the projects in **thematic areas 1.1 (access), 1.2 (combating racism), 2.1 (business creation) and 5.1 (asylum seekers),** the **thematic approach principle is necessary** because, due to the nature of the issues they affect, their best treatment is the integral approach, as that is how best use of resources may be made.

- In **thematic area 3.1 (adaptability)**, on one hand, it is the way to reach more users on dealing with all causal factors, but also note that **covering so many aspects leads to a dispersion of the effects sought** due to lack of means and time to deal with so many causes at the same time. It is also **a problem when conveying the spirit of the project**, as it causes confusion by dealing with too many issues.

- **Thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation)** has given rise to a **problem in trying to deal with all the issues of discrimination that affect women** as this is too broad. Had it concentrated efforts on a more specific group, the impact of the projects would have been greater. This does not amount to distortion of the principle, but rather to an attempt to encompass a specific women's issue, and in many cases there has not been identification of more specific groups within this major group, which has detracted from the operational quality of the projects.

Concentration

The evaluation team has in practice observed a difficulty on the part of the DPs in concentrating their actions on "less privileged" groups. In the words of a respondent, this difficulty lies in "*drawing the line between what exclusion is and where the difficulty in finding employment lies*". However, the evaluation team considers that the **weakness in the application** of the principle is not limited to that cause, but rather, there are others, such as the will to **obtain good publicity for the project,** attracting the attention of all applicants, although they may not be included as EQUAL target beneficiaries, or the **lack of an alternative offering similar services to applicants who do not belong to the EQUAL groups.** Other causes of this weakness in the application of the principle of concentration have been observed in the **lack of response of EQUAL groups** due, according to our analysis, to a **lack of specific definition of the profiles of people** who are potentially beneficiaries of the project, as well as **an incorrect diagnosis of the needs of the beneficiary group,** or an **inadequate recruitment strategy.** Lastly, the evaluation team has detected how another factor that has led to insufficient concentration of the actions, **lack of control over the actions by partners, showing the need for a clear co-ordination and monitoring of the project.**

> One example of this is a multi-regional DP in which this principle has not been understood or taken into account whenever it advised an applicant. Thus, if a university graduate requested the follow-up service, it considered that *"a Local Government cannot refuse a citizen the service"*. Although it is true that large Local Governments with resources would have sent that person to the business centre, small Local Governments consider that the service "*that has to be given*", so sometimes these are allocated to the EQUAL project if there is no other service among those offered by the Local Government that may satisfy the applicant. The DP co-ordinators continually issue reminders to concentrate on less privileged groups.

Among the **main mechanisms** used by the DPs to ensure their projects contribute in an integral manner to combating the causes of discrimination and inequality in the labour market, please note the fact that in all thematic areas, there is a high percentage of use of mechanisms such as **diagnosis** (84.2%) or **formulation of a specific strategy with individualised treatments for different problems** (76.3%). However, reviews of diagnoses and strategies occur in much lower percentage (28.9% and 36.8% respectively). Likewise, please note that, as diagnosis is an essential tool in the projects, the fact that the response was 84.2% and not 100% indicates, in the opinion of the evaluation team, either that there are DPs which have not diagnosed the situation before, or during the first months of implementation of the project, or rather, more probably, have limited it to a theoretical exercise and have not used the diagnosis to design or implement the project strategy.

In addition to these causes, generally detected in all thematic areas, specific issues arise in some thematic areas that it is worth noting:

In **thematic area 1.2 (racism), more attention is paid to immigrant groups than to ethnic minorities.**

In **thematic area 2.1 (business creation)**, the principle of concentration suffers **negative evaluation due to the lack of real effort to concentrate on the less privileged population.** The area work carried out reveals that the services for entrepreneurs, although their first beneficiary group is excluded groups or those at risk of exclusion, will include beneficiaries among users who do not really belong to those groups.

In **thematic area 3.1 (adaptability), application of concentration has been more lax when the projects perform actions for people in work**. This is due to the fact that, in projects with an important presence of entrepreneurial organisations in the partnership, it becomes easy to know and gain access to companies with greater needs in matters of adaptation to changes in the environment. However, actions that concentrate on active workers in the companies where they work have more problems because, in this case, knowledge of the final beneficiaries by the project technical team is necessarily reduced (as to amount), with a much greater risk of excluding the more needy, or even admitting unemployed people who (apart from justified exceptions) should not be beneficiaries of the projects, and therefore fulfilment of the principle of concentration becomes much slacker in this respect.

Within this same area, in certain cases, priority is given to working on one of the pilot projects with businesses considered potentially more receptive to the project objectives, in order to achieve a **"demonstration effect"** by their example, to encourage companies less inclined to such changes. In many cases, working with more receptive companies seems to contradict concentrating efforts on the more vulnerable ones (as one of the causes of their weakness usually lie precisely in their lack of receptiveness to changes allowing them to adapt to changes in the environment).

In many cases, **thematic areas 4.1 (reconciliation)** and **4.2 (supporting desegregation)** are aimed at "*women in general*", so **concentration is somewhat weak**. It is surprising that area 4.2 (supporting desegregation) is the only one with DPs that have not used any criteria to select beneficiaries, with 6.3% of replies in this regard, compared with 0% in the remaining thematic areas.

In **thematic area 5.1 (asylum seekers),** application of the principle of concentration, has not given rise to any problems.

Channels of referral

The evaluation team has noted that, in cases in which a greater fulfilment of the principle of concentration is noted, there is also a formalisation, to a greater or lesser extent, of **channels of referral** of people not belonging to the target population, toward other organisations or services that may support them, and vice-versa, which the evaluation team considers to guarantee fulfilment of the principle of concentration.

In analysing **thematic areas 1.1 (access), 1.2 (combating racism), 3.1 (adaptability), 4.1 (reconciliation) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation),** there has been an **establishment of a two-way channels of referral with other existing organisations** and services, establishing co-operation relations based on using existing resources through referral and information on beneficiaries from other bodies or co-operating organisations, to the projects, and on the other hand, there is also referral of users who did not belong to the target groups of the project. This phenomenon was not observed in area 2.1 (business creation), in the opinion of the evaluation team, due to the lack of integrated services to support people who do not belong to the EQUAL groups and are interested in business creation.

In area **5.1 (asylum seekers),** in general terms, no channels of referral have been set up, as they have not been necessary due to the specific nature of the services provided which means, on many occasions, that they are not requested by other groups.

ROUND TWO

As to the trends observed with regard to Round One, it is necessary to emphasise that the evaluation team has analysed the fulfilment of the principle of Thematic Approach from a theoretical point of view, based on project design. As the projects are at an initial stage of implementation, it is only possible to evaluate the degree of fulfilment of the principle and the evolution of the trends identified in Round One in relation to the design of the co-operation model within the DPs, the quality of the

diagnosis performed and their eventual updating and actual strategies of action on the group of beneficiaries of the projects.

Thematic approach

The broad, representative composition of most DPs in Round Two, including the key stakeholders within the a limited scope of action in the territory concerned, allows fulfilment of the principle, as it ensures integral treatment of the causes of the issues identified by the projects in all thematic areas. In this regard, **please note the decisive played by the following factors concerning fulfilment of the principle in Round Two: capacity of the DPs to mobilise existing resources of key stakeholders in the region, degree of internal cohesion and effective co-ordination mechanisms.**

There is a **notorious absence of *ad hoc* mechanisms to reinforce the integral nature of the services provided, as recommended in the Mid-Term Evaluation**. The mechanisms for co-ordination and good communication between the partners and their technical staff within the DPs selected as a case study in all thematic areas have been considered by the DPs to be sufficient to guarantee the link between services and thus fulfil the principle. The evaluation team considers that this once again confirms that **effective fulfilment of the principle is closely linked to the concurrence of the success factors mentioned above with regard to the operation and internal cohesion of the DPs, to the extent that the technical structure is set up within the DPs and the actions foreseen during implementation of the projects.**

Please note also the formulation of a specific, individual strategy of action for the different issues detected as another element reinforcing the fulfilment of the principle in this Round Two. Thus, 82.9% of the DPs surveyed stated that they had formulated strategies of integral action to deal with the different causes that affect the group of target beneficiaries within a specific territory or sector.

Another component that reinforces fulfilment of the principle is a rigorous diagnosis of the issues to allow detecting the multitude of causes to be addressed by the projects. **In this regard, diagnoses have been reinforced in many thematic areas, although that trend is not so remarkable in thematic areas 4.1 (reconciliation) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation).** As in Round One, however, **only a small number of DPs expect to update the diagnoses to ensure integrity and concentration of actions on the projects.**

In general, the importance of the principle of Thematic Approach has been positively valued by the projects in all thematic areas. Only integral treatment of the causes of discrimination and inequality on the market may provide a response to the multitude of discriminating factors that affect the target populations of each thematic area. Analysis of evolution in fulfilling the principle since the previous round shows some specific aspects in the following thematic areas:

- As in Round One, projects of thematic area 3.1 (adaptability) continue to consider the principle as an added methodological difficulty that may cause projects to fail due to excessive ambition for a temporary project on a limited budget. As a result of accumulated learning, on the other hand, some the organisations of the DPs subject to case study admit that having a diverse range of subject areas

is not an obstacle to having an adequate communication strategy, which, correctly explains the nature of the project.

- There is an effort to deal with specific issues within the broad group of beneficiaries to whom the eligible actions are addressed: i.e. women, in thematic area 4.2 (supporting desegregation) and, to a lesser extent, thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation).

Concentration

Although there are still difficulties in concentrating the project actions on more vulnerable groups of beneficiaries, **the evaluation team reports a remarkable improvement in fulfilment of this principle compared to Round One**. The use of selection and participation mechanisms based on better-defined profiles of beneficiaries decisively contributes to this positive trend compared to Round One. This is shown in the results of the survey, as **91.9% of the DPs consider target population profile inclusion a key criteria in project beneficiary selection. Moreover, projects now generally aim to use recruitment and dissemination mechanisms that are more oriented at people who most need to be attended by the projects.**

Concerning the fulfilment of Concentration in Round Two, one must point out the trends detected in relation to the following thematic areas:

- As in Round One, **projects in thematic area 1.2** (combating racism) **have continued to concentrate on immigrants, with no activities targeting ethnic minorities.**
- Although there has been a considerable **improvement in thematic area 2.1** (business creation) on the basis of **better defined selection criteria,** Concentration continues to be interpreted more laxly in comparison with other principles.
- A continuing constant factor in thematic area 3.1 (adaptability) is resorting to companies that are particularly receptive or better prepared to integrate the small groups of beneficiaries that comprise these project pilot actions. Laxity in selecting beneficiaries is justified by the "exemplary effect" sought among companies in the area.
- As a result of persistent weaknesses detected in diagnosis, in particular, in some of the projects of the **thematic areas 4.1** (reconciliation) **and 4.2** (supporting desegregation), **it has become necessary to encourage monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to continually review diagnosis of needs and the action strategy to properly fulfil the principle**.

Channels of Referral

The evaluation team has observed a strength in the projects in all thematic areas in Round Two consisting of the generalisation, at least in theory, of two-way channels of referral – which are more or less informal – of users, from or to the EQUAL projects, to other organisations or services provided by the partners of the DPs. However, this is not applicable to beneficiaries of thematic area 5.1 (asylum seekers) due to its specific nature. The application of channels of referral aims to guarantee that services are provided to people belonging to the target population profile and also to limit possible deviations in implementation of the projects. Factors that will condition the proper operation of

referral channels provided during implementation of the project are the degree of internal cohesion within DPs, the effectiveness of their co-operation relations, fluid communication between the partners, and technical capacity within the technical structure of the DPs.

Conclusions

The degree of advantage taken of resources to guarantee a **thematic approach** in the projects has generally been adequate; moreover, an integral approach has been applied to the issues identified.

The evaluation team concludes that the thematic approach principle provides a way of approaching EQUAL projects that has proved very useful and adequate to treat the needs of the project beneficiary groups. However, project duration and size in terms of financing prevent significant results for such ambitious objectives. **The project must define a baseline, from which it must progress by applying the principle of mainstreaming**.

The **degree of fulfilment of the principle of** thematic approach in Round One **depended on rigorous diagnosis of needs and careful planning** of the project strategy as well as mechanisms for co-ordination and exchange between the partners of the DP, and also on its internal cohesion. The concurrence of these factors will also determine the success of the projects in the Round Two with regard to effective fulfilment of the principle.

In Round One, in certain areas, application of the thematic approach has been considered too ambitious (area 2.1 (business creation) and 3.1 (adaptability)), or a need has been detected to define the issues dealt with more specifically (4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 4.2 (supporting desegregation)). In others (1.2 (combating racism) and 5.1 (asylum seekers)) they deal with sufficiently well defined issues, and so fulfilment of the thematic approach is more easily undertaken. With regard to **Round Two, a positive trend is observed toward applying the principle in all thematic areas, correcting difficulties encountered in the previous round on the basis of the experience accumulated by the DPs** in performing diagnoses and definition of action strategies; on the basis of the representative composition of the DPs, which in many cases integrate a broad spectrum of key stakeholders within the scope of action; and lastly, on the basis of articulation of co-ordination and communication mechanisms within partnerships.

In Round One, **application of the concentration principle** has generally been lax, often resulting in that the real project beneficiaries cannot be defined as excluded groups, or those at risk of exclusion from the labour market. This principle has perhaps been the most difficult for the DPs to assimilate, as it refers to the need for the actions to have an effect on the most unfavourable situations of discrimination and inequality on the labour market.

An adequate profile of the beneficiary group, along with a rigorous study of its needs, accompanied by a suitable recruitment strategy, establishment of appropriate referral channels and updating of these tools, are all key factors to ensure fulfilment of the principle of concentration. The evaluation team concludes that is not sufficient to perform only one of these activities, such as 'diagnosis', for example.

In view of the **persistence of certain weaknesses in the fulfilment of the Concentration principle, there has been a considerable improvement in its application in Round Two**. This was precisely due to reinforcement of the diagnosis in most thematic areas, leading to a better defined beneficiary profile, which has favoured a recruitment and selection strategy for these and a more or less general, formalised practice of user referral. However, there is still deficient updating of diagnoses performed to ensure fulfilment of the principle in all thematic areas.

The principle of thematic approach and concentration undoubtedly provides added value to actions carried out within the framework of the EQUAL Initiative. Fulfilment of this principle guarantees implementation of specific actions within a strategic framework, which requires effective co-operation within the DPs, aimed at multiple final beneficiaries who, in all cases, must belong to the groups most affected by the specific causes of discrimination. It is necessary to guarantee a better fulfilment of the concentration principle.

9.5 PRINCIPLE OF TRANSNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Transnational co-operation is the first distinctive element of EQUAL, being part of its statutory definition. The added value provided by this principle lies in joining forces to seek joint solutions, which allows using the experience of others, increases own abilities and avoids duplication of efforts when trying out different solutions.

The scope of this section is limited to analysing the **interpretation of the principle** as such, and **its added value**, as analysis of factors and mechanisms that have influenced development of the transnational work programmes has been examined in the relevant section (see Chapter 4.2.4, above).

ROUND ONE

The evaluating team considers that, in general terms, DPs **have theoretically understood the usefulness of this principle**, although it is necessary to point out that they have also identified a small number of DPs, in particular those with little experience in other transnational co-operation programmes, which questioned the usefulness of transnational projects.

However, in spite of understanding the utility of that co-operation, in practice, the great majority of DPs have granted the **transnational project a secondary position in relation to the national project.** A negative consequence of this is the difficulty noted by the evaluating team, on numerous occasions, to maintain motivation in the transnational project. The evaluating team considers this is due to deficiencies encountered by the DPs in the practical implementation of this principle.

Other sections of the report have identified the **influence of other factors** on the successful fulfilment of the objectives of this principle**,** such as affinity of interests, objectives and approaches between the national and transnational DP, participation by all partners of the DP in the transnational project and complementarity between the national and transnational project.

Although there is **insufficient use of the advantages of transnational co-operation** by a considerable number of projects, in cases where the possibilities have been correctly used, it has been observed that transnational projects contributed significantly to identifying innovative solutions based on knowledge of other experiences and approaches, as well as mainstreaming results.

An example of transnational co-operation is DP **444 DIDO** (thematic field 4.2 (reducing the gender gap)) which, within the framework of its transnational project, created its own products that were independent of national actions, following a common working methodology with the 4 DPs in the transnational partnership: General Evaluation System (GES), Equal Opportunities Diagnosis and "Benchmarking" (comparative evaluation).

ROUND TWO

The evaluating team observed that interpretation of the principle of Transnational Co-operation and assessment of the transnational dimension of the Initiative by DPs in the Round Two had few variations on the same trends already identified in the Mid-Term Evaluation and analysis of Round One in this evaluation exercise.

As in Round One, the evaluating team has noted that this principle has been understood in theory by the DPs in Round Two, which understand that co-operation is the *establishment of a collaborative relationship with other projects in other countries or Member States, in order to exchange best practice*. Transnational co-operation is seen by the DPs surveyed as a means to *gain access to new ideas and specialisation* (52.3 %) and *to develop new ways of working* (41.5%), which provides benefits for organisations as well as people involved in such co-operation.

However, on many occasions, in all thematic fields, **the conclusion reached in the Mid-Term Evaluation continues to apply, in that DPs generally do not perceive the importance of the contribution of the transnational project to the national project, understanding these to be independently-driven projects.** However, evaluation of the **complementary, enriching nature** of transnational projects, as a source of learning and innovation for the national work programme tends to be **more positive in DPs with prior experience,** compared with those without. In this regard, the Initiative has been proved to have a positive influence in generating habits of co-operation as sources of mutual learning and innovation.

In general terms, **transnational co-operation continues to be considered as secondary to the national programme,** which continues to give rise to considerable problems and to act negatively in maintaining motivation and the rate of work, as previously pointed out in the Mid-Term Evaluation and the analysis of the implementation of the transnational programme in Round One. Thus, transnationality is perceived by many DPs as yet another requirement to gain access to the EQUAL Initiative. The evaluating team considers that difficulties in encountering an ideal partner, lack of synchronisation between different national programmes and inflexible administrative practices have caused DPs in Round Two to continue to assign a secondary role to this defining principle of the actual EQUAL Initiative in the second Report by the Commission.

As to **formalisation of Transnational Co-operation Agreements (TCAs)**, prior experience has led the projects to be more cautious in the search for partners. In this regard, a critical point to be emphasised in the fulfilment of the principle of transnational co-operation has been the failure of the Support Unit to consider the recommendation of the Mid-Term Evaluation: *To offer active support in the search for transnational partners and in establishing transnational relations*. In, general, if we consider the order of evaluation given in the survey conducted with the DPs, the conclusions are significant: 25.9% and 25.96% of the DPs with prior experience in EQUAL have not observed more active monitoring by the Support Unit in this round, compared to Round One, or do not know what answer to give to that question. The evaluating team considers it surprising that 26.9% of the DPs has not given any reply to that question.

In general terms, **DPs in Round Two have made a greater effort, investing more time and resources in getting to know their potential partners.** This process has been evaluated positively, with 96.7 % of the DPs surveyed declaring they had managed to consolidate a TCA with like-minded partners, which amounts to a most positive starting point in overcoming the difficulties caused by lack of synergies between partners during implementation of the transnational programmes in Round One. Moreover, a positive trend was observed in the more intense participation of the different partners of the DPs in the activities of the transnational project which, in many cases, have been articulated through the co-ordinating bodies within the technical structure of the DP. This trend is more intensely observed in thematic fields 1.1 (access to the labour market), 2.1 (business creation), 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life), 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) and 5.1 (asylum seekers).

Thus, **certain expectations have been created concerning greater and better use of transnational co-operation, maximising the advantages and opportunities it offers**, in spite of the fact that, as observed in a fair number of case studies, the Spanish DPs have not been able to sign a TCA with the most appropriate partner, but rather with the available partner, due to delay by the Support Unit in entering project information into the EQUAL data base. However, at this point, it is worth emphasising the unpredictable nature of transnationality, which leads corporate transnational groups that initially seemed to be potentially effective to gradually lose "momentum", due to the influence of external factors relating to implementation of national programmes, or due to difficulties in translating affinities into a coherent work programme.

Conclusions

The EQUAL definition does not respond to the real weight of transnational co-operation as observed by the evaluating team in Round One and the initial development of the Round Two. The evaluating team considers that **transnational programmes do not attain the desired level of intensity as to content and transnational actions,** if one considers the first definition of EQUAL as "*transnational co-operation to promote new methods to combat discrimination and inequality in all kinds of labour market relationships*".

In spite of the **DPs having recognised, in general terms, the advantages of transnational co-operation** and having evaluated them positively in theory, **they have, however, in practice, allocated them a secondary position** with regard to fulfilment of national project objectives, in Round One as

well as in Round Two. Thus, such projects lack a proper understanding of the contents of this programme, which must help progressing in the achievement of the main objectives of the projects, establishing common solutions for similar problems. The evaluator considers that this **weakness has had the most negative effect on the correct fulfilment of this principle during Round One and that it may also be affecting Round Two**, as the normal pressures put on implementation of the national programmes may lead to loss of motivation and reduced of transnational ambitions.

Disregarding the Mid-Term Evaluation recommendations in this respect, **this weakness persists in Round Two** as DPs have generally not been provided with more active support in explaining the importance of the principle and its application through establishment of a transnational relationship by the Support Unit

In spite of this, the existence of greater complementarity between DPs partners, the fact that their participation in the transnational project has been better articulated and their prior experience of transnational project management in Round One has established the basis **to take better advantage of the opportunities offered by transnational co-operation**, facilitating not only the establishment of transnational groups, but also implementation of the work programme.

9.6 PRINCIPLE OF MAINSTREAMING

According to the EQUAL CIP for Spain, March 2004 Version, mainstreaming consists of including best practices tested into general policies relating to the labour market. To achieve this objective, the projects must design a Mainstreaming Plan and provide mechanisms that allow dissemination of the results and awareness by those policy makers on employment issues.

Analysis of the fulfilment of the mainstreaming principle in this section is limited to **evaluating how the principle has been interpreted and assimilated by the DPs**. Other sections of this report analyse the implementation of mainstreaming actions and impact within the framework of Action 2, as well as Action 3.

ROUND ONE

Interpretation of the principle

The first noteworthy aspect identified by the evaluating team was the confusion, observed in a large amount of the field work, **in the DPs' interpretation** of the terms mainstreaming and dissemination, especially in fields 1.1 (access to the labour market), 1.2 (combating racism), 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap). In thematic fields 2.1 (business creation) and 3.1 (adaptability) there is **a correct interpretation, but with a restrictive implementation** of the principle and only in field 5.1 (asylum seekers) was there a **correct interpretation** of mainstreaming. **Incorrect or restrictive interpretation of the principle of mainstreaming has led, in many cases in practice, to mainstreaming being assimilated to dissemination and awareness.**

Analysis of the information gathered shows that **restrictive interpretation of the principle, or the confusion between mainstreaming and dissemination occasionally has its origin in a failure to understand the content of mainstreaming, while in many others it is due to a difficulty in articulating a mainstreaming strategy, as success is hindered by lack of commitment by policy-maker stakeholders**.

Another deficiency identified in the interpretation and application of the principle considered by the evaluating team is to confuse **mainstreaming activities,** as a means to achieve mainstreaming, with **actual mainstreaming.** Again, this confusion is not apparent in thematic field 2.1 (business creation) and field 5.1 (asylum seekers).

Thematic field 5.1 (asylum) has been different as to the interpretation and assimilation of this principle. Within the framework of the only project financed on this theme, in which were represented the main partners operating within the scope of the action, the DP organised a monitoring unit and another co-ordination unit. These units were commissioned to guarantee internal mainstreaming on one hand, and external horizontal mainstreaming on the other, by working locally with other bodies.

Moreover, the fact that the legal representative is responsible for asylum policy, and thus he/she and the rest of the DP partners have co-operated in drafting the CIP, has meant that fulfilment of this principle was guaranteed.

The greatest assimilation of the principle occurred in thematic field 2.1 (business creation): the DPs have internalised both the horizontal and vertical principle of mainstreaming and understand the ultimate objective of such projects to be none other than the aim of integrating innovative solutions into the general policies of the regions concerned. However, although there has been full assimilation of the principle, the lack of a clear, explicit channel to complete the mainstreaming circle prevents a correct assimilation of the new solutions and services in the horizontal policies of the Autonomous Regions.

Although this trend has been detected with greater intensity in field 2.1 (business creation), it extends to mainstreaming efforts in the remaining thematic fields and its ultimate cause lies in the lack of an adequate procedure to complete mainstreaming.

Policy makers at local level (Local Governments and Provincial Governments) in DP 98 "Desarrollo Territorial Compartido" (*Shared Territorial Development*), DP 344 INDECO and DP 558 "Yacimientos del Vino" (*Vineyards*), believe they can evidence that real results have been achieved on the projects, but they accept that they will not be able to maintain the same rate of services without support from the Regional Government. A valid expression provided by the respondents is that EQUAL is a "*turbo*" engine for general business creation policies. Without a suitable application of the principle of mainstreaming, integration of innovative solutions into general policies cannot take place, thus breaching one of the most important basic principles of the Initiative.

Absence of Mainstreaming plans

The evaluating team has also noted the **absence of Mainstreaming plans,** understood as a systematic strategy containing specific actions to obtain political commitment and involvement by policy makers on employment issues at regional and/or national level. **This is so in spite of the provisions of the EQUAL CI relating to the fact that projects** *"(...) must design a Mainstreaming Plan and provide mechanisms to allow dissemination of results and awareness among policy makers on employment issues (...)".*

At this point, the following example may serve to clarify the situation: in **field 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life)** analysis of mainstreaming planning led to identifying that, although some DPs selected for case study declared they had developed Mainstreaming Plans, all those plans did were to detail mechanisms to articulate dissemination of results and making the project products available to policy-making persons and entities on employment and reconciliation issues.

The first negative consequence of the absence of Mainstreaming Plans is the lack of a strategy in the organisation of activities and has also led to the performance of **various activities concerning advertising, dissemination and even mainstreaming by DP partners without any global consistency or even any co-ordination between them,** which is identified as a weakness in the mainstreaming approach. This weakness is less frequent in thematic field 3.1 (adaptability).

Predominance of dissemination over mainstreaming

The evaluating team has identified a clear predominance of dissemination over mainstreaming and, within mainstreaming, a predominance of horizontal over vertical mainstreaming. In fact, the evaluating team has found, except on some occasions, striking cases of absence of vertical mainstreaming when evaluating the intervention of ESF - EQUAL in Spain.

The evaluating team considers that weaknesses in interpretation and assimilation of this principle, as mentioned above have influenced the weak mainstreaming results identified during this assessment year, although they are not their only cause.

ROUND TWO

Interpretation of the principle

Interpretation of the principle throughout thematic fields **seems to have overcome the weaknesses evidenced in the previous round.** The field work performed by the evaluating team shows that **mainstreaming in the strict sense has acquired a greater dimension in the DPs' approach, increasing activities aimed at mainstreaming beyond actions of dissemination and awareness**, although a certain confusion remains between the concepts of mainstreaming and dissemination, and between mainstreaming activities and mainstreaming itself, as already detected in the Mid-Term Evaluation and confirmed in the analysis of Round One.

> For an example, in "*mainstreaming*" projects (integration into all the policies and actions) DP **270 KIDEITU** and DP **569 CALIOPE** in thematic field 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) show a high degree of internalisation and application of the principle. Mainstreaming forms an intrinsic part of the project strategy. Project implementation involves a political commitment *ex ante* by policy maker bodies and persons responsible for active employment policies, who are members of both DPs, to effect the mainstreaming of the project results, where appropriate, initiate a transformation process within the core of their structures and internal work methods.

The evaluating team understands that this strengthening is due, to a fair extent, to a more appropriate composition of partnerships than in the previous round. Thus, one may appreciate an about-turn by DPs toward **active participation in the partnerships by policy-maker bodies more suitable for achieving the effective mainstreaming of future project results**. This trend seems to comply with the Mid-Term Evaluation recommendations concerning encouraging the active involvement of policy makers in reflecting on the suitability for mainstreaming of the project results.

Lack of Mainstreaming Plans

In keeping with the trend identified in the interpretation of the principle of mainstreaming, the evaluating team has detected as a strength the **strategic willingness to mainstream results on the basis of more accurate, focused planning** which allows the partners to act in a co-ordinated fashion and obtain a higher degree of involvement of policy-maker stakeholders in all thematic fields in Round Two. Thus, **91.9% of the DPs declare to have drafted, or that they intend to draft a Mainstreaming Plan**. This shows a trend to correct one of the weaknesses detected in the Mid-Term Evaluation with regard to Round One.

However, in thematic fields 1.1 (access to the labour market), 2.1 (business creation), 3.1 (adaptability) and 5.1 (asylum seekers) many DPs do not have a proper strategy, understood as systematic planning of actions based on a process with certain objectives and specific mechanisms to perform dissemination of results and obtain the political commitment of policy makers on employment and human resources issues.

Predominance of Dissemination over Mainstreaming

Although a greater emphasis on dissemination related activities over mainstreaming has been noted in the Round Two, this critical trend is less intense in **thematic fields 1.1 (access to the labour market), 2.1 (business creation), 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life), and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap).** Mostly in these thematic fields, **a remarkable effort has been made to set up mechanisms or actions that favour more direct involvement by policy-maker stakeholders in particular work groups, or so-called "mainstreaming boards" as recommended in the Mid-Term Evaluation**. This confirms the positive trends stated above concerning interpretation of the principle and the more systematic planning of mainstreaming by DPs, on the basis of mechanisms that are more oriented toward involvement of policy-maker stakeholders.

Conclusions

In general terms, Round One has frequently confused the interpretation of mainstreaming, being understood, in many cases, exclusively as dissemination; or the term has been correctly interpreted, but its application restricted. **As a result of the partners' experience, the better composition of the DPs and a more active participation in the partnerships, interpretation of the Mainstreaming principle has been reinforced and improved by partnerships in Round Two**.

There has also been **certain confusion between dissemination**, as a means to facilitate mainstreaming, **and actual mainstreaming,** in Round One as well as in Round Two, although less intense in the latter.

In spite of the provisions of the CIP in this regard, **in general terms, there has been an absence of mainstreaming strategy or plans** in projects in Round One, allowing the DP partners to act in a co-ordinated manner, and to obtain the requisite degree of involvement by policy-maker stakeholders to effectively incorporate best practices of the projects. In Round Two, real Mainstreaming Plans or systematic, strategic approaches, are not the norm either. However, there is a tendency to encourage more active participation of policy-maker stakeholders through committees, work groups or direct dialogue and negotiation with political counterparts, in addition to the dissemination actions provided.

These restrictions to the interpretation and assimilation of the principle have contributed to the poor mainstreaming results of Round One projects. It is thus convenient to **correct the weaknesses identified in the Round Two** in order to maximise project results for mainstreaming purposes.

9.7 PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Equal Opportunities (EO) between men and women requires dealing with situations of gender-related inequality, by integration of an analysis of its causes in all work plans and incorporation of effective mechanisms to combat them.

Two qualifications must be made to the application of this priority in the EQUAL Programme for Spain: firstly, there has been a specific focus on Equal Opportunities between men and women, and, secondly, it has also been raised to the category of an EQUAL principle, granting it more importance than the remaining horizontal priorities of the ESF. This priority has bee granted in Round Two, but in order for the evaluating team to provide consistency to the evaluation process as a whole, this principle has been included among basic EQUAL principles also in its analysis of Round One.

The evaluating team has aimed to examine the interpretation of this principle by the DPs, the specific mechanisms and measures used to include the gender perspective in each and every phase of the project and in the actual internal operation of the DP, to guarantee women's participation in the labour market under equitable conditions. Lastly, it has evaluated the contribution of the principle to the added value of actions performed within the framework of the EQUAL Initiative.

ROUND ONE

Interpretation of this principle **does not present any deviation or distortion whatsoever by** the DPs. Of the documentation gathered by the evaluating team (through the survey and case studies), this principle is **included in all actions and the phases of the projects, to a greater or lesser extent in all thematic fields**, from their design to the management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The highest, most intense levels of integration of the principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women are appreciated in thematic fields 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap), largely as a result of the type of projects. Although the remaining thematic fields do not reach optimum levels, the evaluating team's analysis shows the horizontal incorporation of the principle in the projects' activities, as shown in the examples included in tables on the following pages.

It has been observed, with special emphasis on specific thematic fields in the Equal Opportunities theme, **that specialist technicians have participated on Equal Opportunities issues** and **that the gender perspective has been incorporated into the design, evaluation and monitoring** of the actions. The **technical staff** interviewed showed high **awareness and training in Equal Opportunities** and scrupulous use of **non-sexist language**. This **was not always the case for all members of the DPs and policy-maker stakeholders.**

Establishment of **accompanying measures** to guarantee participation and access by women under equal conditions in these project actions and the inclusion of **modules on Equal Opportunities in training actions** carried out by the projects has been a general feature in all thematic fields, to ensure due fulfilment of the principle. On the other hand, performance of **activities of awareness and dissemination** concerning application of this principle was less frequent in fields 2.1 (business creation) and 5.1 (asylum seekers) than the rest.

Upon asking the DPs about the mechanisms used to ensure fulfilment of this principle in the work programme, the most frequent reply was checking that all the **activities and materials developed fulfilled that principle** (72.6% of the responses by the DPs), **followed by employing specialist personnel** (60.5%), **and undertaking dissemination and awareness of the principle** (60.5%). As concerns the mechanisms to integrate the principle within the DPs, the most frequently used mechanisms, according to the DPs in the survey, were also the use of technical personnel specialised in the matter (59.2%), checking fulfilment of the principle in all the materials (52.6%), as well as providing training in Equal Opportunities to the partners of the DPs (48.7%).

Below is a summary of the main means of applying this principle in each thematic field:

In **thematic field 1.1 (access to the labour market)** the evaluating team notes a clear assimilation and incorporation of this horizontal principle in the implementation of actions and in the actual internal functioning the DPs.

> Some of the mechanisms used, which illustrate this assessment, are listed below:
> - Creation of "Equal Opportunities Commissions" to safeguard fulfilment of the principle.
> - Training of Equality Officers and internal training for the DPs on gender issues.
> - Inclusion of Equal Opportunities modules in these actions.
> - Flexible timetables for actions to match the availability of female users.
> - Inclusion of priority criteria for women to participate in the different actions of the projects.
> - Studies concerning the main inequalities between men and women as regards employment and employment policies from a gender perspective.
> - Corporate awareness of professional diversification and equal opportunities between men and women.

The following lessons have been learned by the DPs in this thematic field relating to the correct formulation of the principle:

- Need to include the gender perspective from the first approach to the actions, not only upon implementation and evaluation of the project.
- Having technical personnel specialised in equality to direct and drive its application and to monitor its fulfilment.
- Importance of training on equality issues of all people working on the project, as they will continue to apply their knowledge and experience to other projects implemented by their respective entities.
- Experimenting with actions aimed at improving the self-esteem and empowerment of women, as key factors of their access to employment.
- Preparation of data breakdowns, not only in quantitative, but also in qualitative terms. This is due to the fact that "*although women do not find a job in the short term, the actions designed considerably improve their quality of life*".

It is worthwhile to note that, within the context of the work carried out by the National Thematic Group for Employability, Combating Racism and Asylum, a working subgroup was proposed to reflect on the application of the gender perspective in projects concerning access to the labour market, based on common discussion and analysis of the specific experience of some DPs in the planning, development and evaluation of their EQUAL projects. These reflections were set out in a practical manual ("***The Gender Perspective in EQUAL projects for Employability – Practical Guide to Application***") which was most highly valued in all thematic fields and also provided orientation to present projects in Round Two of EQUAL[25].

In **thematic field 1.2 (combating racism),** it has been noted that, in order to ensure fulfilment of this principle, different measures have been taken: from training personnel within the DPs, to hiring **specialist technicians** in Equal Opportunities, and in certain cases, participation within the DP by partners **specialised** in the field. Likewise, special care has been taken to use **non-sexist language** in all published materials.

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[25] The activity carried out by National Thematic Groups (NTGs) is examined in detail in chapter 5. However, it has been considered convenient to emphasise this action in analysis of fulfilment of this principle.

The DPs are aware of the **importance of developing specific actions for immigrant women due to the double discrimination they suffer** (women who often have family obligations, are alone, have medium to low training). The unfavourable situation and lower capacity to gain access to the services (due to family obligations or for cultural/traditional/religious reasons), have contributed to **the implementation of facilitating mechanisms** in these training actions (day-care centres, travel expenses, etc.), empowerment actions addressed to them, positive action measures, methodological guides, etc. The future projects favour alternatives to domestic work, with training aimed at immigrant women to allow them **to develop self-esteem and increase their empowerment**.

A positive impact in the application of this principle in this thematic field has been inclusion by the Women's Institute of the **Inter-cultural dimension,** a concept unknown to date.

In **thematic field 2.1 (business creation),** there has been uniformity in assimilating the principle and in the strategy developed for its application. The main ways in which the principle has been internalised are as follows:

- The staff at the integral advice centres for business creation **usually includes an Equality Agent**. As "guardian of the principle", this person studies the impact of the principle on each and every one of the actions of the project and reports to the management committees of the DP on its implementation.
- Actual training actions and even awareness actions (in schools, etc.) **are based on the principle** and in many cases there is a **specific module on gender equality.** There is also frequent use of **selection criteria** to favour access by women to the courses.
- There are **specific indicators** for equal opportunities, and the actual results confirm a high participation rate by women in the specific actions implemented. (DP Shared Territorial Development: Company creation itineraries completed: 280, with 186 carried out by women and 94 by men).
- **Specific awareness measures for women**, especially in rural areas where women's attitude to starting up businesses must be changed.
- Creation of **specific guides for women entrepreneurs and clubs for women entrepreneurs.**

As to the impact of the principle, taking into account the physical indicators and surveys, these show more women than men participating in these actions and an increased demand for information by women at advice and business centres. The possibility of starting a business has been observed as a major driving and attitude changing force in women, which the evaluator considers to be one of the ultimate objectives of this thematic field.

In **thematic field 3.1,** the **interpretation of the principle observed is as provided in the Programme Complement**, although in some cases, it refers to equal opportunities in its broadest meaning of the term, which covers all groups at risk of exclusion, and not only gender-based discrimination.

There are usual **internal guides** for DPs on non-sexist language, **methodologies** to include the gender approach, **training of** the whole technical team on equal opportunities, etc. Women are usually prevalent in the main bodies of the DPs, although this is not always the case in the upper echelons.

In some projects, application of the principle has been diluted, as the majority of actions are aimed at **production sectors in which the presence of women was practically non-existent.** In such cases, as there are no women with whom to work on measures of reconciliation of family and professional life or other areas of EO, the projects have been limited to performing awareness actions to the general population.

A small number of projects in this theme has had its main successes on this issue, as remarkable emphasis was given to women who are especially vulnerable to changes in the production environment, or because they have managed to convey their concerns over reconciliation of family and professional life to policy maker stakeholders, with the implementation of effective measures for such purpose by the competent authorities.

In **thematic field 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life),** the principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women **is included horizontally in all phases and actions of the projects**, with the exception of some isolated cases. The projects have mobilised key stakeholders, services and resources in order to set up a strategy to overcome the barriers that prevent women from reconciling family and professional life.

In addition to being present in these **actions** of the projects, the principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women has been included in all phases of the projects, from their design and planning to their management and co-ordination (women's groups' representatives in the DP; equal participation in the management and governing bodies; technical personnel with high awareness and training on Equal Opportunities; participation by final beneficiaries in defining and adapting actions of the projects through satisfaction questionnaires); through to their evaluation and monitoring (ongoing monitoring and evaluation depending on the situation between men and women; use of indicators broken down by gender and by actions).

Please note also following specific mechanisms and measures to apply the principle used by the projects selected as case studies:

- **Dissemination and awareness actions** addressing society as a whole, as well as specific segments, and partners and key stakeholders in the labour market (public institutions, employers, Trade Unions): brochures and newsletters, interviews on the radio, forums for debate on the Internet. Some original examples are:
    - ⇨ The comic "A day in the life of Ana and Rafa", aimed at children and young people;
    - ⇨ An Activity Day with young people (nappy-changing gymkhana); and a Domestic Skills Workshop for men (cookery course, cleaning, looking after children.)
- Inclusion of **training modules** on Equal Opportunities between men and women in all training actions carried out on the projects. There are also training actions on Equal Opportunities

issues aimed at key stakeholders on the labour market such as Human Resources directors and managers of businesses within the territory.

- **Mechanisms to guarantee access by women** to the activities of the projects, (support services to care for dependants – children and the elderly-; transport subsidies, aid to obtain a driving licence - in the case of women in remote rural areas-; free Internet access).

- Encouragement of the use of **non-sexist language.**

The contribution of the principle of Equal Opportunities provides in **added value** to the actions performed within thematic field 4.1 is unarguable. Only inclusion of this key principle in the projects may contribute to achieving the ultimate objective of thematic field 4.1, that is, to combat the factors of discrimination that prevent women from reconciling family and professional life; factors that, in a great number of cases, are mere cultural stereotypes on a gender based division of labour and on organisation of working schedules.

In **thematic field 4.2 (reducing the gender gap),** the principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women **constitutes an integral element of projects in this field**. As shown in our analysis of the projects selected as case studies, they all relate to the fulfilment of the principle of Equal Opportunities.

Project management inclusion of the principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women has taken place through the mechanics, composition and decision-making systems within the DPs, as well as participation by the organisations representing beneficiary groups at all levels of organisation and decision within the DP. A striking feature is the high standard of EO training among the staff, in addition to participation by EO specialist technicians and inclusion of gender perspective in all actions.

Emphasis must be placed on the following mechanisms and measures used by projects to include gender perspectives in all actions:

- Establishment of accompanying measures such as, for example: flexibility in the schedules of training actions, support services for dependants (day-care centres, etc.); service-cheques, online training, transport subsidies, etc.
- **Training aimed at technical personnel** of all DP partners on Equal Opportunities issues and gender approach. Training of Equal Opportunities Officers and Equality Mediators.
- **Awareness and dissemination actions**, such as, for example: use of websites, brochures, fairs, conferences, publication of women's studies, etc.

ROUND TWO

As a result of prior learning experiences by partnerships who are participating again in Round Two and the emphasis on the principle of Equal Opportunities now that it has become a basic principle of the Initiative, there is a clear assimilation and horizontal inclusion of the principle in the definition the work programmes and composition and internal functioning of the DPs. **The principle seems to be more present in the whole cycle of the projects in all the thematic fields, from the initial**

diagnosis to the evaluation methodology, through internal management of the partnership and planning of the actions.

In this regard, **the strengths detected by the evaluating team in Round One in thematic fields 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) as to inclusion of the principle persist with the same or greater intensity in the Round Two**. Thus, the aspects recommended by the Mid-Term Evaluation (inclusion of the gender perspective in diagnoses; reinforcement of the principle's horizontality, differential formulation of expected effects of the projects) are widespread in projects in both thematic fields, due to the actual experience and working dynamics already applied by the DPs and/or partners working in this field.

In general, **the DPs' show a willingness to include key elements from the start, which ensure fulfilment of the principle in Round Two, during implementation of the projects.** DPs have made a **greater effort** in this round, **especially those that do not belong to Theme 4 of the Initiative**, to provide a response to the recommendation of the Mid-Term Evaluation to include the gender perspective in project diagnoses in a more satisfactory manner. Although diagnoses have been strengthened compared to the Mid-Term Evaluation, **this statement cannot be extended extensive** to all projects, as **certain weaknesses persist in some projects in field 3.1 (adaptability)**.

If we consider the assessment of the DPs in the survey, confirmed by the case studies, the DPs have shown conclusively that they rely mainly on the **presence of members with experience and/or powers on Equal Opportunities issues to guarantee inclusion of the principle in the projects (87.7% of surveyed DPs) and, secondly, in hiring technical staff with knowledge in the field of Equal Opportunities (61.8%)**.

The Mid-Term Evaluation recommended close monitoring of the fulfilment of the Equal Opportunities principle in thematic fields 1.2 (combating racism) and 5.1 (asylum seekers) due to their deficient integration of the gender approach. In order to prove that the principle has been assimilated and the lessons internalised, please note the case of thematic field 5.1 (asylum seekers), the only project of which, DP **664 ENEAS II, provides for the creation of a gender workgroup. Assistance by the Women's Institute was also requested to review inclusion of the principle in the project**.

Another strength detected in relation to the projects in Round Two, which reinforces fulfilment of the principle, is a **greater joint responsibility of all members of partnerships to incorporate Equal Opportunities**. While in Round One, responsibility lay with the partner who had experience and/or powers in the matter, all DPs will now take part, which also shows the learning process undergone by the DPs, especially those with prior experience in EQUAL. In addition to the thematic fields within Theme 4, this positive trend is more evident in thematic fields 1.1 (access to the labour market) and 3.1 (adaptability).

As to the **integration of the principle in the work programme,** in Round Two the DPs **in 82.9% of the cases resorted to awareness actions among beneficiaries on gender related matters**, followed by **checking that all the materials and activities comply with the principle (77.2%)**, which was the main tool used in Round One. However, **certain weaknesses** were noticed concerning the preparation

of **awareness and dissemination** measures for the principle in thematic field 1.2 (combating racism), which may detract from the effectiveness of the accompanying measures provided in Round Two in many projects for female immigrants within this field, as they suffer from double discrimination. Also in **thematic field 5.1 (asylum seekers) there have been some deficient dissemination and awareness actions aimed at women.** In general, all thematic fields, including those in Theme 4 on Equal Opportunities, **also lack dissemination and awareness actions aimed at male subjects, or even a share of male participation, which would be most convenient in order to increase their effectiveness.**

In line with the projects in Round One, the presence of **accompanying measures** in planning many actions in all thematic fields remains a usual factor in this new round, **for the purpose of favouring participation by women** with dependants and facilitating reconciliation of family and professional life. Likewise, please note that the monitoring and assessment mechanisms of many projects in all thematic fields consider a gender-related analysis of the effects of their actions, which undoubtedly reinforces the effectiveness of fulfilment of the principle.

Conclusions

Based on analysis of the projects in both rounds, there has been no interpretational deviation with regard to the principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women. The analysis of Round One and Round Two projects shows that the principle has been **incorporated, in general terms and with varying intensity, to all the phases of the projects**. There has been remarkable integral application of this principle in thematic fields 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) in both rounds.

Assimilation of the principle is evident in the current composition and organisation of the DPs, which take care, in general terms, to include specialist personnel in the matter and organisations within DPs on Equal Opportunities. This positive trend has been more intensely detected in Round Two projects, which shows the importance given to the principle.

In general terms, projects in all thematic fields in both rounds have established **accompanying measures to ensure participation by women in project activities**. However, in Round One, in some cases, particularly in thematic field 3.1 (adaptability), this has been considered necessary but insufficient to guarantee Equal Opportunities between men and women.

In the previous round, thematic fields 2.1 (business creation) and 5.1 (asylum seekers) did not generally contain **dissemination and awareness activities** to apply this principle within their scopes of action. Moreover, a problem has been detected in field 3.1 (adaptability), consisting of massive attendance by women in Equal Opportunities awareness activities, while men have been often left out of these activities, which detracts from their effectiveness to a great extent. Moreover, certain deficiencies have been noted with regard to dissemination and awareness actions aimed at the target population in thematic fields 1.2 (combating racism) and 5.1 (asylum seekers) in Round Two. **In general, in all thematic fields, there are also insufficient awareness actions aimed at men and an absence of male quotas to participate in awareness actions**.

Monitoring application of the principle has often been limited to routine accounting for the women attending each one of the actions of the project, which the evaluating team considers insufficient. In the Round Two, there seems to be more widespread analysis of their particular effects and impact, although not all cases provide for the use of qualitative data to obtain evidence on the evolution of beneficiaries.

Products prepared by DPs in Round One have generally taken care over the **language** used to guarantee their **non-discriminatory** condition.

The **impact** of the measures set up concerning Equal Opportunities in Round One, especially with regard to actions on raising awareness, and activities carried out within the framework of field 3.1 (adaptability), cannot easily be appreciated in the short term. **The impact of this principle is much more evident in the internal operation of the DP members**, in which the role of "consciousness" on Equal Opportunities' techniques on the project has been achieved and, if not internalised, at least the need to bear the principle in mind in all activities at each entity has been considered.

9.8 HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES

In this section, the evaluator has examined how the horizontal priorities of the ESF (Information Society, Environment and Local Development) have been assimilated by the projects[26].

9.8.1 Information Society

ROUND ONE

In general terms, the projects in Round One have incorporated this priority, developing varied actions that include Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) as a supporting or basic element for their implementation.

In general, ICTs have been used as working tools that have facilitated **online connection and exchanges between the DP partners and the transnational partners**. Thus, communications networks and platforms have been created and databases developed to facilitate co-ordinated management and networking.

The use of ICTs in different activities has been an outstanding feature of the **implementation of work programmes.** We may quote the following examples:

- Creation of communications networks and data bases to facilitate co-ordinated management and networking.
- Use of ICTs as active job-seeking tools.

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[26] Equal Opportunities has been analysed as a basic principle of EQUAL.

- Inclusion of training actions in handling computer tools, extending that training to groups that do not normally benefit from it.

- Creation and use of dissemination tools (websites, newsletters, etc.) using ICTs.

- Training modules exclusively on the Internet, or combined with classes.

- Internet-based advice and mentoring for future entrepreneurs.

ROUND TWO

As in the previous round, **the Information Society generally has been found to have a major presence in the projects throughout all thematic fields**, both in the actual organisation of the DPs, and in the application of national and transnational work programmes. Thus, ICTs have been applied by DPs, in the first place, to improve networking within them for the purposes of management, co-ordination and communication, at national as well as transnational level and, secondly, they have been applied to training actions (courses on the Internet, computer literacy, etc.) and dissemination of the projects.

Actions aimed at familiarising and training beneficiaries in the use of information technologies and communication on the projects in all thematic fields remain more frequent. On the other hand, support of ICTs as a medium for varied services is not such a feature of the projects, with the exception of thematic field 3.1 (adaptability).

Compared to the Mid-Term Evaluation's analysis on the fulfilment of this priority, the evaluating team has observed the persistence, to a certain extent, of confusion between the tools that facilitate the processes (the ICTs) and the actual priority, although in a lesser degree than in the previous round. Thus 98.3% of respondent DPs confirmed the importance of this horizontal priority in the projects.

9.8.2 The Environment

ROUND ONE

In general terms and in practice, the projects have not paid special attention to this priority, although certain initiatives set up and activities developed have had a positive effect on incorporating it, such as:

- Inclusion of environmental modules.
- Consideration as scope for development within actions to promote self-employment.
- Inclusion of agreements with recycling companies.
- Awareness actions by the technical staff.

An example of specific action is the work performed by DP **454 "Suratlántico",** which focused its project on labour market access by promoting sustainable development. The DP itself considers that

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its contribution to this priority concentrates on the identification of low environmental impact activities that may be carried out in protected natural spaces or surrounding areas, and which have encouraged new financial alternatives and the transformation and diversification of existing ones, such as extensive fish-farming, use of traditional salt flats, and eco-tourism.

In **field 2.1 (business creation),** environmental concerns could have been targeted as a new source of employment, on which future entrepreneurs could concentrate. However, the impact of that priority on field 2.1 has been neutral.

In **thematic field 3.1 (adaptability), territorial projects with a strong local component** (Local Governments in the same county or districts within the same province) have taken **the environment most into account**, with emphasis on setting up local Agenda 21s and, especially as a result of their greater potential and more innovative nature, county Agenda 21s. In these projects with greater local presence, more attention has been paid to the employment potential of the environment, through **activation plans for new sources of employment linked to natural heritage**.

ROUND TWO

Compared to Round One as evidenced by the Mid-Term Evaluation, **remarkable progress was made in some thematic fields, such as thematic fields 1.1 (access to the labour market) and 3.1 (adaptability)**. In addition to **greater awareness and training** of participating bodies in environmental issues, a **growing presence of environmental contents has been noted** in some activities of the projects, with more or less intensity in certain thematic fields. In this regard, in **thematic field 3.1** (adaptability) there has been a **thematic evolution** of the projects toward aspects of **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR),** a characteristic of adaptability projects in Round Two. CSR actions are materialised as distinctive actions aimed at optimising **environmental management by businesses**.

On the other hand, **analysis of the remaining thematic fields shows that the Environment priority shows the worst horizontal approach**. In general, justifications of the incorporation of this priority by the DPs are still forced, and some DPs interviewed have even questioned the suitability of the projects to provide horizontal space for environmental considerations. Mainly, attempts have been made to apply the environmental priority in the same way as in Round One: through encouraging corporate initiatives, due to the great potential of the environmental sector to create jobs; and through awareness modules within training actions, and internal measures relating to internal functioning of the DP that encourage improvement and protection of the environment (recycling, promoting ICTs to avoid the use of paper, etc.).

9.8.3 Local development

ROUND ONE

All projects generally point out the **positive benefits of implementation of their projects on local development in their respective areas.** A great majority of projects have a local scope of action, so fulfilment of this priority appears to lie at the core of project activity.

Most have attempted to optimise existing resources, to co-ordinate interventions and to improve, and in some cases formalise, co-operation between different entities and bodies that operate in these areas. As explained by a technician at one of the interviewed DPs "*access to the labour market by the population of a territory that are either at risk of exclusion or not, involves the inherent social and economic development of the area. Thus, the overall project contributes to local development.*"

ROUND TWO

Analysis of the projects in the Round Two shows that **the priority of Local Development is understood to be intrinsically related to all Initiatives that tend to improve the local labour market on which they act or intervene.** Thus, all action aimed at improving access to the labour market, especially for less privileged groups, improving their capacity to adapt to changes in the production and human environment, and including the principle of Equal Opportunities, are actions within the field of local development. A clearer presence of the priority is appreciated in projects that form part of a strategy at local level, and in those which mobilise the most representative local stakeholders (social and economic stakeholders and local policy maker stakeholders).

Conclusions

The three horizontal priorities have been correctly assimilated by the partnerships and are included in the work plans in both rounds, although with variable intensity. The Information Society has often taken on more of an instrumental than a final role (supporting management of the project and supporting other actions). The evaluating team considers that practically all projects in both rounds have, to a greater or lesser extent, some kinds of technological tools, although certain differences in their use have been observed, especially in Round One.

The evaluating team considers that, although the projects have set up actions that have a certain influence on the **Environment**, in general terms **widespread attention to fulfilment of that priority has not been appreciated**, with the exception of some thematic fields in Round Two. This is perhaps due to ignorance and, in some cases, to not considering it relevant to the actual activities of the project, which has led to a limited contribution of such priority to the projects.

The priority of Local Development is implicit in the very nature of the EQUAL project actions. The evaluating team considers that all **local development** requires social and economic growth of the area involved. **Through the projects,** emphasis has been placed on aspects relating to access to the labour market of beneficiaries, setting up local businesses, etc., and this has **achieved** financial improvements

for beneficiaries and their families and **development of the area**. However, all local development processes must be linked to their sustainability and in this regard not all projects are homogeneous.

9.9 GLOBAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERRELATION OF BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE EQUAL CI IN SPAIN

The table below provides a graphic representation and summary of the fulfilment of the basic principles of the initiative in each thematic field:

Table 9.1:

BASIC PRINCIPLES	THEMATIC FIELD						
	1.1	**1.2**	**2.1**	**3.1**	**4.1**	**4.2**	**5.1**
Institutional co-operation and partnership	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Complementarity	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Innovation	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Thematic approach and concentration	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Transnational co-operation	☹	☺	☹	☺	☺	☺	☺
Mainstreaming	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☺
Equal Opportunities between men and women	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺

In general terms, application of the principles governing the EQUAL Initiative has led to a substantial increase in the quality of design, management and implementation of projects, aimed at improving the labour situation of excluded groups or those at risk of social exclusion. Although the analysis performed shows that a better fulfilment of each principle could have taken place, in general terms, they appreciate an effort at implementing them, with positive results in the implementation of the projects, as well as in the structures and corporate culture of the partners involved.

After a detailed individual analysis of the fulfilment of each basic principle of the EQUAL CI and the added value contributed to the activities carried out within the framework of the Initiative, it is necessary to conclude by underscoring the relationships between the principles, which entails that the proper fulfilment of ones to depend on proper fulfilment of the rest.

The illustration below shows how one set of principles were correlated with others, and how the principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women is implied in all of them.

Graph 9.12

principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women
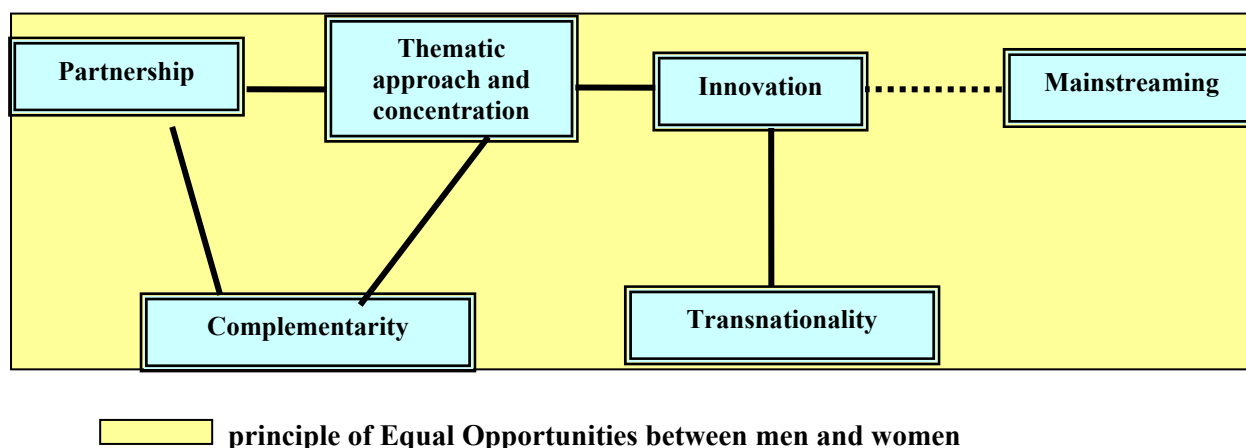
The principle of empowerment and institutional co-operation (partnership) is the basis for the correct fulfilment of the principles of complementarity, thematic approach, innovation and Mainstreaming. Correct composition and operation of the DP will facilitate knowledge of the reality of the field in question, which is a key factor for the correct fulfilment of the principle of complementarity. Likewise, joint action by all stakeholders who know and combat all causes of social and labour exclusion of underprivileged groups allows a guarantee of the fulfilment of the thematic approach and concentration.

The search for complementarity with existing actions within the operational scope is a first major step toward finding a new space to act on (innovation). Transnational co-operation is a source of innovation due to the different kinds of knowledge and contexts of the members of the transnational partnership.

Lastly, application of the mainstreaming principle may only take place through the remaining principles being adequately implemented. Mainstreaming is based on perpetuating a practice or activity that has proved to be positive.

The principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women as reflected in the figure above must be taken into account as effecting actions performed to fulfil each principle.

SECTION 5: ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVENESS, RESULTS AND IMPACT

This section analyses, in the first place, the effects and results of the EQUAL Community Initiative (CI) in Spain. Furthermore, we have assessed the impact of the Initiative both on beneficiaries and on policies, structures and businesses.

CHAPTER 10: ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS AND RESULTS OF THE PROGRAMME

In this chapter, the evaluation team has analysed the financial and physical programming of EQUAL in Spain, and the degree of performance. This analysis has been made at programme level, and also broken down by themes and thematic areas, also distinguishing between Objective 1 regions and non-Objective 1 regions[27].

We have performed an analysis of the financial and physical results of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) in Action 2 from the start of their financial implementation in 2002, and in Action 3 from their start in 2003, up to December 31, 2004, all of which has been done with reference to the implementation of the projects approved in Round One[28], and implementation corresponding to Technical Assistance of the Programme. In order to perform such analysis, we have used the information provided by the EQUAL CI Monitoring System[29] [30].

Please note that the physical and financial programming used are the ones currently in force, i.e., reflect the programming resulting from the changes introduced in the CIP and Programme Complement on March 2004 (there was an analysis of the preceding programming in the previous Mid-Term Evaluation, which motivated the introduction of certain changes, whose results are analysed in the present chapter).

10.1   FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

10.1.1 Financial programming

Financial programming of the EQUAL CI for the whole of Action 2 and Action 3 in Round One has amounted to 330,825,013.23 Euro, representing the subsidy provided by the ESF, amounting to 224,939,210.24 Euro, i.e., 68% of the total cost (see table 10.1 in appendix I). The co-financing of ESF has amounted to 75% for Objective 1 regions and 50% for non-Objective 1 regions. Technical Assistance has received a contribution of 68% of the ESF, to be provided to the division including the

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[27] Most tables mentioned in the chapter are located in the appendices.

[28] Please note in this regard that the financial programming analysis focuses mainly on the EU subsidies from the European Social Fund (ESF), which financial performance considers the total cost of implementation up to December 31, 2004.

[29] There have been certain difficulties in using the data relevant to implementations carried out by the Development Partnerships (DPs). We would have appreciated greater homogeneity and order in the different databases made available to the evaluation team, and also the codification of certain variables. Also some of the items included, especially for variables relating to activities with beneficiaries, are hard to understand.

[30] In some tables, especially those broken down by regions and types of action, the total cost of Action 2, obtained based on the EQUAL CI Monitoring System, slightly differs from the data provided in the annual Implementation Report for 2004, although in very small amounts.

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scope of action of the Initiative in Objective 1 regions and non-Objective 1 regions. This same system co-financing has been used for theme 5 (asylum seekers), which has not distinguished between actions performed in Objective 1 regions and non-Objective 1 regions. However, co-financing by the ESF in this case has been somewhat higher than the Technical Assistance, amounting to 70%.

Budgetary distribution between themes and thematic areas was subject to analysis in the last evaluation, and responds to the need to counter the problems detected in the Spanish labour market. The programming shows that the higher budgetary allocations are concentrated on themes 1 and 4, amounting to 35.5% and 31.4% of total EC subsidies, respectively; particularly in thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap). The importance given to thematic area 1.1. by those responsible for designing and managing the CIP is confirmed by the budgetary effort made in the Programme Complement, through indexation[31] and transfer of the reduction in the initial allocation to the asylum area.

Table 10.0 Financial programming of the EQUAL CI. Round One (2000-2004)

EQUAL CI Financial Programming. First Round (2002-2004)			
	Total Cost	**FSE**	**%FSE in respect of total cost**
Action 2	316.995.340,45	215.365.890,58	67,90%
Action 3	13.829.672,78	9.573.319,66	69,20%
Actions 2 and 3	330.825.013,23	224.939.210,24	68%

While in Action 2 Theme 1 represents the highest percentage, in Action 3, Theme 4, concerning *Equal opportunities between men and women* is especially relevant. Implementation of Action 3 depends on the initiative of the actual Development Partnerships (DPs), which must submit a proposal to perform an additional dissemination or mainstreaming activity of best practice developed. Thus, one may deduce that programming managers responsible for spend have estimated the convenience of supporting to a greater extent more dissemination and mainstreaming activities concerning best practices in Theme 4. This can be explained in two possible ways: **the special attention afforded by the EQUAL CIP for Spain to the theme of equal opportunities, and Spain's backwardness in equal opportunities practices**, which renders this area more suitable to the rise of potentially "mainstreamable" best practice.

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[31] On March 8, 2004 the Monitoring Committee of the EQUAL CI approved certain modifications to the CIP and the Programme Complement. Especially noteworthy was an increase in the initial allocation in the Spanish CIP by indexation, which has entailed an additional allocation of 9.2 million Euro of EC aid. Thus, the total financial allocation for Spain for the 2000-2006 programming period amounts to 524.6 million Euro of EC aid. Adding to this the part corresponding to national public participation and the private sector cost, the total financial allocations for the operative programme amount to 790.2 million Euro. Total subsidy expenses effectively paid and certified as of 2004 amounted to 302.8 million Euro, representing 38.32% of the total expenses subject to a subsidy.

10.1.2 Financial performance

The total implemented and certified cost of the EQUAL CIP from the start of the financial implementation of Action 2 in 2002 until December 31, 2004 amounts to 292,710,235.80 Euro: 281,911,333.,14 Euro in Action 2 and 10,798,902.66 Euro in Action 3 (see table 10.2 in appendix I).

With the complete implementation of the actions comprising the projects approved in Round One of the EQUAL CIP, throughout 2004 partial and final expenses certificates were submitted which permitted the CIP to absorb its financial commitments for 2002, thus complying with the N+2 rule[32] and preventing eventual decommitment. Real financial implementation of Actions 2 and 3 compared to expectations, i.e., **the degree of financial performance, represents 88.48%** over the first programming period (Round One) (See table 10.3 in appendix I). In terms of ESF aid, the degree of performance amounts to 88.29%, according to the Annual Implementation Report for 2004. Please note in this regard that **absorption of the third commitment dated March 31, 2005 amounts to 28.66%**, evidencing **the need to increase payment certification efforts, in order to prevent the application of the N+2 rule** at the end of the year. The evaluation team considers that this situation may be caused by the actual cycle of the projects. Selection of projects in Round Two was approved end 2004, so that, as of March 31, 2005, such projects were still in Renewed Action 1 (which entails an implementation of expenses far below that of Action 2). We expect that implementation will increase exponentially throughout the year (although the analysis of Renewed Action 1 shows that DPs have not shown excessive urgency in starting to implement their work programmes (see chapter 8 above)).

By themes, the highest degree of financial performance in Action 2 and Action 3 as a whole is registered by the *Adaptability* theme, with 92.73%, at the opposite end of *Asylum seekers*, with an implementation of 71.10% of total programmed expense. This low implementation of theme 5 has been due to a significant reduction in the target population for the project (asylum seekers), which has prevented assisting the number of beneficiaries initially provided for.

Financial performance in Action 2

- *Financial performance by themes and thematic areas*

Financial performance by themes is proportional to programming, with a slightly higher proportion of implementation for themes 1 (e*mployability*) and 3 (a*daptability*) and lower in themes 2 (p*romoting entrepreneurship*) 4 (e*qual opportunities between men and women*) and 5 (a*sylum seekers*). Save for the issues noted above in the implementation of theme 5, small variations in the implementation of the remaining areas do not present significant issues.

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[32] The Automatic Discharge rule (Rule N+2) means that amounts which have not been paid within the two years following their commitment must be discharged. The simplification of this regulation is based on practical rules of application, and calculation of amounts (dates and reference document, precautionary information proceedings for Members States and allocation of financial contributions to most promising interventions). However, it is impossible to calculate discharge by programmes, as the commitment is specific for each Fund.

- *Degree of financial performance in Action 2 by themes and thematic area*

As noted above, accumulated financial implementation of Action 2 since its start in 2002 up to December 31, 2004 amounts to 281,911,333.14 Euro, which entails a degree of financial performance amounting to 88.93% over total programmed cost[33]. The low degree of financial implementation of theme 5 makes this figure fall by almost one percentage point. However, this aggregate figure reflects the consequences of initial delays, and problems in the dynamics of implementing expenses for Action 2 and 3, which are concentrated on a very limited period in which to absorb them.

As regards the degree of financial performance by themes and thematic areas (Graph 10.1), we must highlight theme 3 and thematic area 3.1 (adaptability), where the degree of financial performance reached 93.17%, followed by both thematic areas included in theme 1: 1.1 (access to the labour market) and 1.2 (combating racism), with 91.04% and 91,19%, respectively. The only noteworthy difference in implementation is provided by 5.1 (asylum seekers), showing a degree of financial performance amounting to 71.10%.

Graph 10.1 Degree of financial performance in Action 2 (en %)
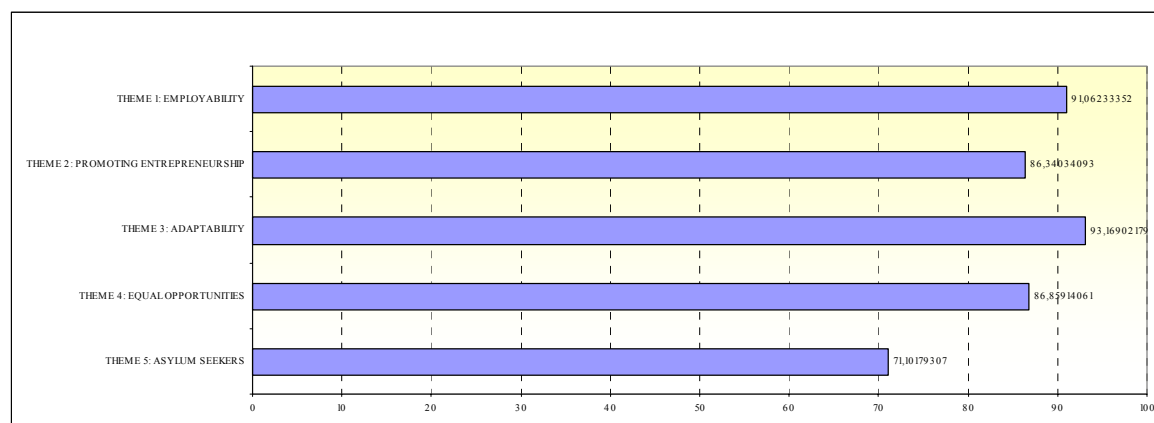
Source: EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)

- *Financial performance by objective regions* [34] *and Autonomous Regions*

Graph 10.2 shows the distribution of financial performance by Autonomous Regions. The fact that there is a lower degree of performance in Objective 1 regions is significant, as these regions have a broader scope of action (to the extent that that these regions have higher unemployment rates and lower activity and employment rates) (see chapter 3 above). However, **the lower level of economic development in such regions is, in general terms, related to the possibilities to implement and manage different actions in terms of employment in the territory**, which, in the evaluation team's opinion, may partially explain the lower degree of financial implementation in respect of programmed expenses.

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[33] This has been calculated based on total cost, and is therefore different to the data provided in the Annual Implementation Report for 2004, which has been calculated based on the programmed and executed ESF.

[34] The EQUAL Monitoring System distinguishes between implementation performed by geographically-based projects located in Objective 1 regions, or in non-Objective 1 regions, implementation of sector-based projects operating in several regions (distinguishing between activities undertaken in Objective 1 regions and in non-Objective 1 regions) and implementation of the Asylum Seekers theme, which does not include any differentiation as to implementation, as the action is performed from a national perspective.

Please note that the **highest degree of financial performance has occurred in multi-regional projects** (excluding the asylum theme), having implemented 92.78% of the total programmed cost in Action 2. They are followed by geographically-based projects located in non-Objective 1 regions, with 87,93%. This higher absorption capacity of sectoral projects may be explained by the **greater capacity for expense generated by the simultaneous performance of activities on groups located in different regions.**

Graph 10.2 Financial performance by Autonomous Regions and Autonomous Towns in Action 2 (in %)
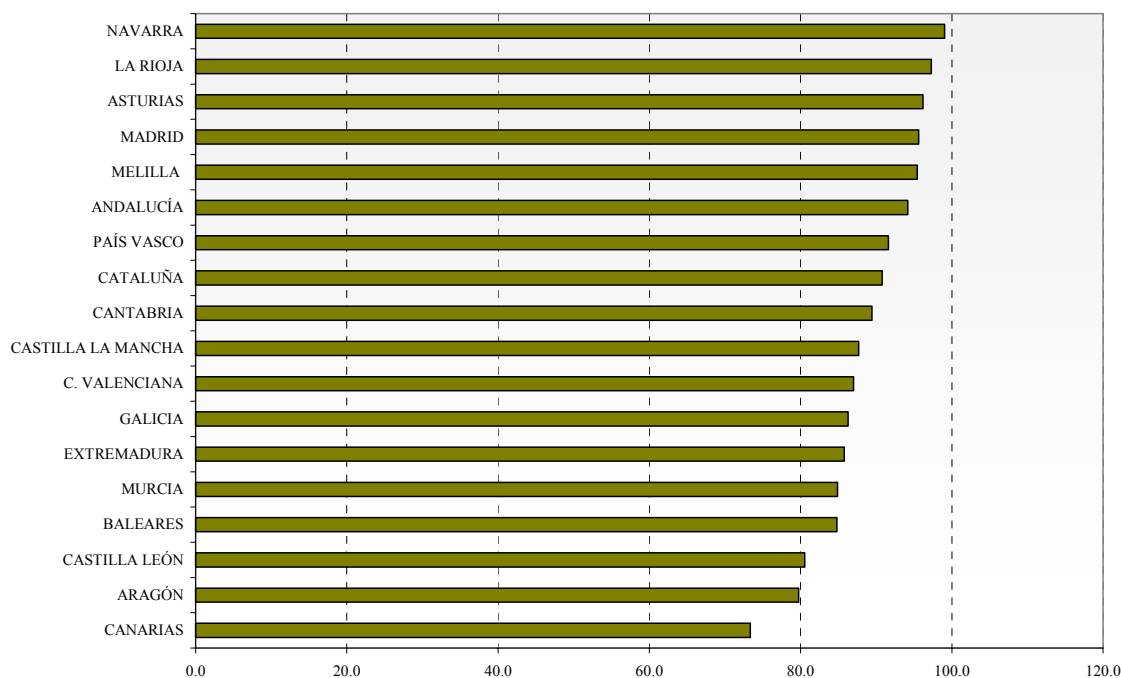
Source: EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)

Distribution of the EQUAL budget between Autonomous Regions was studied in the last Mid-Term Evaluation and depends on the distribution of the budget between themes and thematic areas of the CIP, between Objective 1 regions and non-Objective 1 regions and, within this scale of measurement, depending on the quality of proposals submitted. On examining the data the evaluation team concludes, that proportionality has had a certain influence, depending on the size of the region or its population.

As concerns the causes for the differences between levels of expense absorption by the different Autonomous Regions and Towns (see table 10.4 and 10.5 in appendix I), the evaluation team considers that **it cannot be concluded that the type of representative body or participation of regional governments in Development Partnerships (DPs) has had a decisive influence** in projects' absorption capacities. Furthermore, neither has it been observed that there is a relationship between the number of projects implemented in regions and a greater or lesser financial absorption capacity (see table 10.5 in appendix I related to graph 10.2). Pursuant to the foregoing, the evaluation team considers that financial absorption capacity analysed by regions is simply a result of **the absorption capacity of projects implemented**.

- *Degree of financial performance by objective regions, themes and thematic areas*

As regards distribution by objective regions of the financial performance of different themes and thematic areas, table 10.7 (see appendix I), it is observed that there is a higher implementation in Theme 1 (employability) in Objective 1 regions (53% of the total theme), which is consistent with the fact that these regions have the highest rates of unemployment and the lowest employment rates. Following them are non-Objective 1 regions (35.9%) and multi-regional projects (11.1%). The same pattern is observed for thematic area 1.1 (access to the labour market), while in thematic area 1.2. (combating racism), the highest percentage of financial implementation occurs in multi-regional projects.

In themes 2, 3 and 4, the higher percentage of financial performance is also concentrated on Objective 1 regions, although in these cases there are greater differences compared to remaining regions, with a higher percentage of implementation, amounting to 67.2%, for Theme 4 (equal opportunities between men and women).

Finally, Theme 5 (asylum seekers), as mentioned above, follows a different pattern. This is the only project which, being focused on assisting asylum seekers, has no territorial basis, as the location of such persons does not influence the treatment of the issues affecting them.

- *Financial performance by types of action*

The different actions performed within the EQUAL CIP are grouped into six eligible expense categories set down in graph 10.3. Such graph shows that the highest percentage of financial performance occurs in the category *Assistance to persons*, followed by *Structures and systems*. This distribution is consistent with the point of development of the Programme, to the extent that, after completion of the project start-up phase, (where, as seen in the Mid-Term Evaluation, the expense category with the highest weighting was *Structures and systems),* the current evaluation, analysing the implementation phase, *Assistance to persons*, which is actually the final goal of the Programme, becomes particularly relevant.
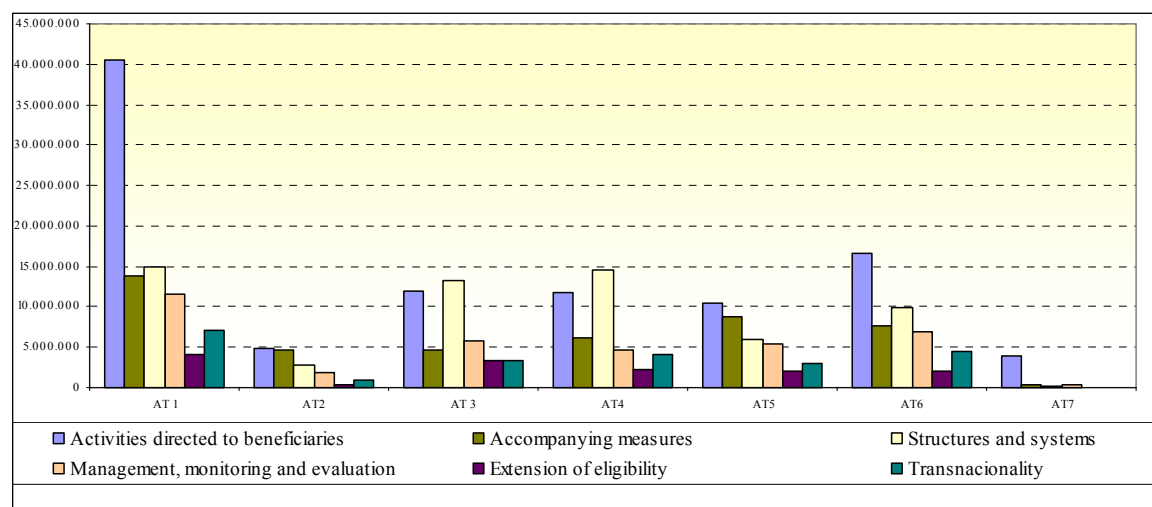
Graph 10.3 Financial performance by types of activity in Action 2 (in %)
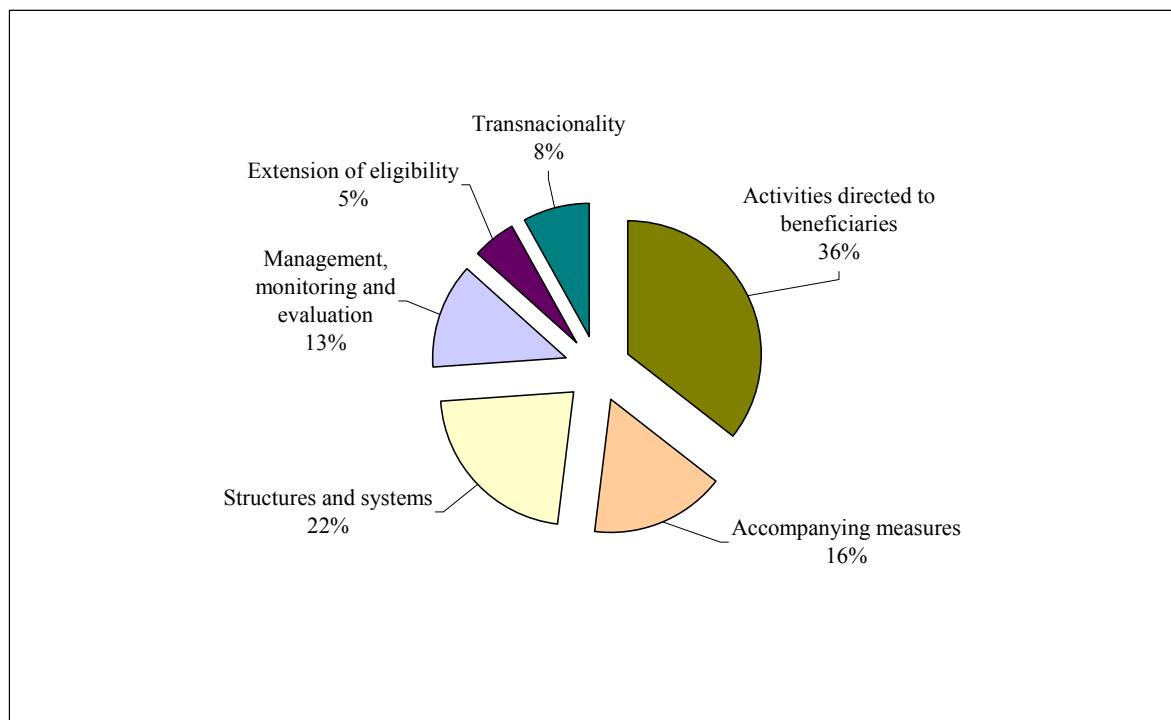
Source: EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)

Thus, during Round One of the EQUAL CI, up to December 2004, actions performed in terms of *Assistance to persons* represent 35.5% of the total (see graph 10.3) with special weight granted to integrated access plans, training of unemployed persons and guidance, advice and job search. In the next position is the action for *Structures and systems* (21.9%), wherein integrated advice and tracking services to support job creation are particularly important.

- *Financial performance by types of action and thematic area*

Depending on the thematic area, a different type of action predominates, as a result of the area's priorities (see table 10.8 in appendix I and graph 10.4). In thematic area 1.1 *Access* (a*ccess to the labour market),* the highest performance action is *Assistance to persons*, with special relevance given to the performance of access plans; in *Combating racism and xenophobia, Assistance to persons* is once again the most important activity, followed closely by *Accompanying measures*; in *Business creation*, actions within *Structures and systems* are important, especially those relating to integrated advisory and follow-up services to support job creation; in *Adaptability*, the most important action as to performance is *Assistance to persons,* mostly training of employed persons; in *Reconciliation,* there is a greater balance in the performance of different actions, although there is a predominance of actions relating to *Assistance to persons*, mainly as concerns training of unemployed persons and *Accompanying measures,* in terms of awareness actions; in *Reducing the gender gap,* there is also a predominance of *Assistance to persons*, with special weight given to integrated access plans and training of unemployed persons; and finally, in *Asylum seekers,* 80% of actions performed are related to *Assistance to persons* and, in particular, to integrated access plans.

Graph 10.4 Financial performance by thematic areas and types of action (in Euro)

Source: EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)

Financial performance in Action 3

- *Financial performance by themes and thematic areas*

In 2003 the financial implementation of Action 3 began, although the bulk of it took place during 2004, ending in December 2004. The activities included under Action 3 include Action 3 projects implemented by the Development Partnerships which forwarded proposals in this respect (and whose proposals were approved) and the activities developed within the framework of the National Thematic Groups.
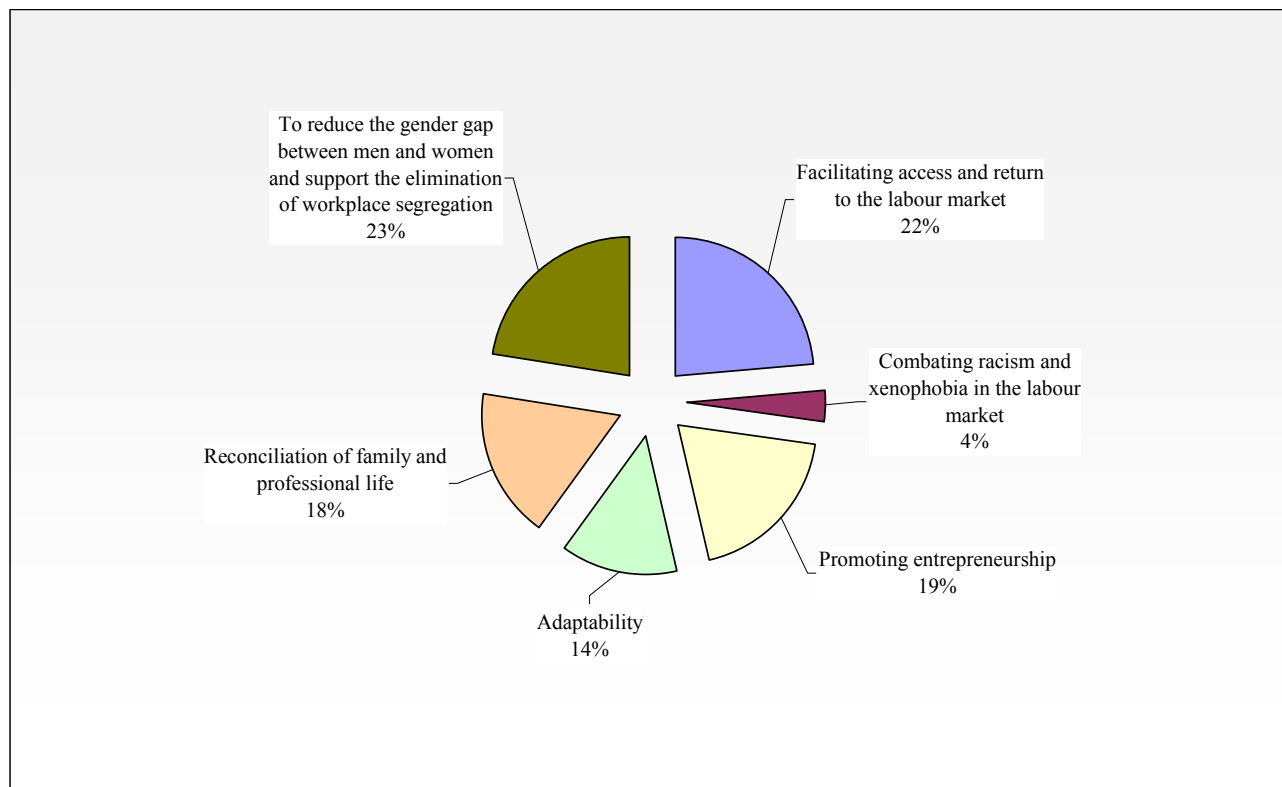
Accumulated financial performance in Action 3 amounts to 10,798,902.66 Euro, which represents 78.09% of the total programmed cost (see tables 10.9 and 10.10 in appendix I). This negative data may be explained by the problems encountered by DPs in presenting Action 3 proposals (i.e., best practice mainstreaming) at a time **of high levels of activity in the implementation of the work programmes (Action 2), plus the fact that it is mandatory to complete both actions (Action 2 and Action 3) on the same date**. This has prevented submission of a higher number of proposals and has prevented DPs from concentrating their efforts in the implementation of Action 3.

Distribution by themes and thematic areas (see table 10.2 and graph 10.5) differs slightly from distribution in Action 2, as in this case theme 4 on *Equal opportunities* predominates, accounting for 40.1% of the total, followed by theme 1 *Employability* (27.3%). Thematic areas with the highest financial allocations are 1.1 (access to the labour market) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) followed by thematic area 2.1 (business creation). On the opposite side is thematic area 1.2 (combating racism and xenophobia), with 3.8% of total performance.

Please note the **reduced percentage of financial performance shown by this last thematic area (1.2)**, both in Action 2 and in Action 3, although it deals with the issues of a population group

suffering major discrimination and, thus, difficulties in accessing the labour market, which has also experienced intense growth in the past few years in Spain.

Graph 10.5 Financial performance by thematic areas in Action 3 (in %)

To reduce the gender gap between men and women and support the elimination of workplace segregation
23%

Facilitating access and return to the labour market
22%

Combating racism and xenophobia in the labour market
4%

Reconciliation of family and professional life
18%

Promoting entrepreneurship
19%

Adaptability
14%

Source: EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)

- *Degree of financial performance by themes and thematic areas*

The highest degree of financial performance has occurred in theme 2 *Promoting entrepreneurship*, where 91.38% of approved expenses have been delivered, followed by theme 3 (*adaptability*), with 81.28%. In its turn, in thematic area 1.2 (c*ombating racism*) only 51.52% of financial resources have been delivered.

Graph 10.6 Degree of financial performance in Action 3 (in %)

THEME 1: EMPLOYABILITY — 70,80577201
THEME 2: PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP — 91,37597228
THEME 3: ADAPTABILITY — 81,28374553
THEME 4: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES — 77,1123181
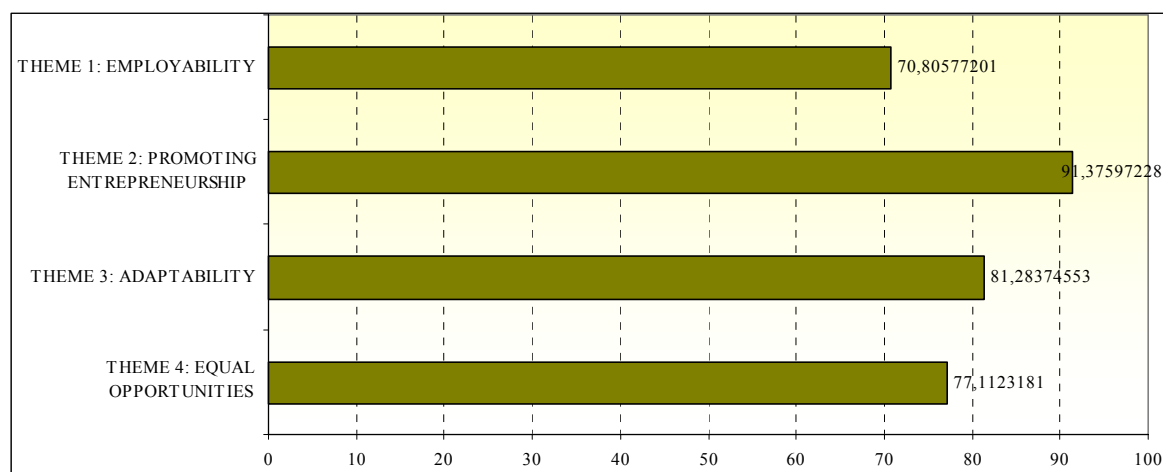
Source: EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)

- *Financial performance by objective regions*

Out of the total financial cost implemented in Action 3 (see table 10.9 in appendix I and graph 10.7), 7,218,171.91 Euro (66.8%) are concentrated on geographically-based projects delivered in Objective 1 regions, 2,014,761.43 Euro (18.7%) on geographically-based projects implemented in non-Objective 1 regions and 1,565,969.32 Euro (14,5%) in sectoral multi-regional projects. In Action 3, the only project included in theme 5 for asylum seekers was withdrawn, and therefore this classification must disappear.

Graph 10.7 Financial performance by objective regions in Action 3 (in %)

Multi-regional 15%
Non Objective 1 19%
Objective 1 66%
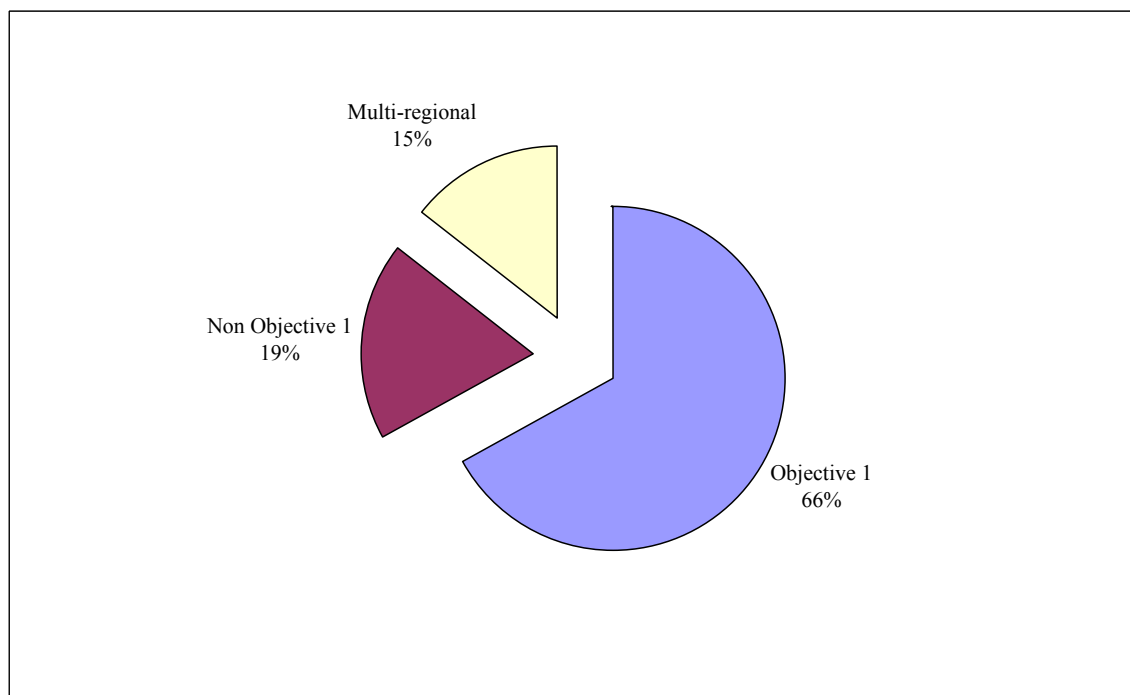
Source: EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)

As concerns distribution of the implemented cost in Action 3 by Autonomous Regions and Towns, once again the most important is Andalusia, which, in view of the high number of projects located there has also delivered the highest volume of expense. At a distance are Madrid, Comunidad Valenciana and Galicia. (See graph 10.8)

Graph 10.8 Financial performance by Autonomous Regions and Towns in Action 3 (in Euro)
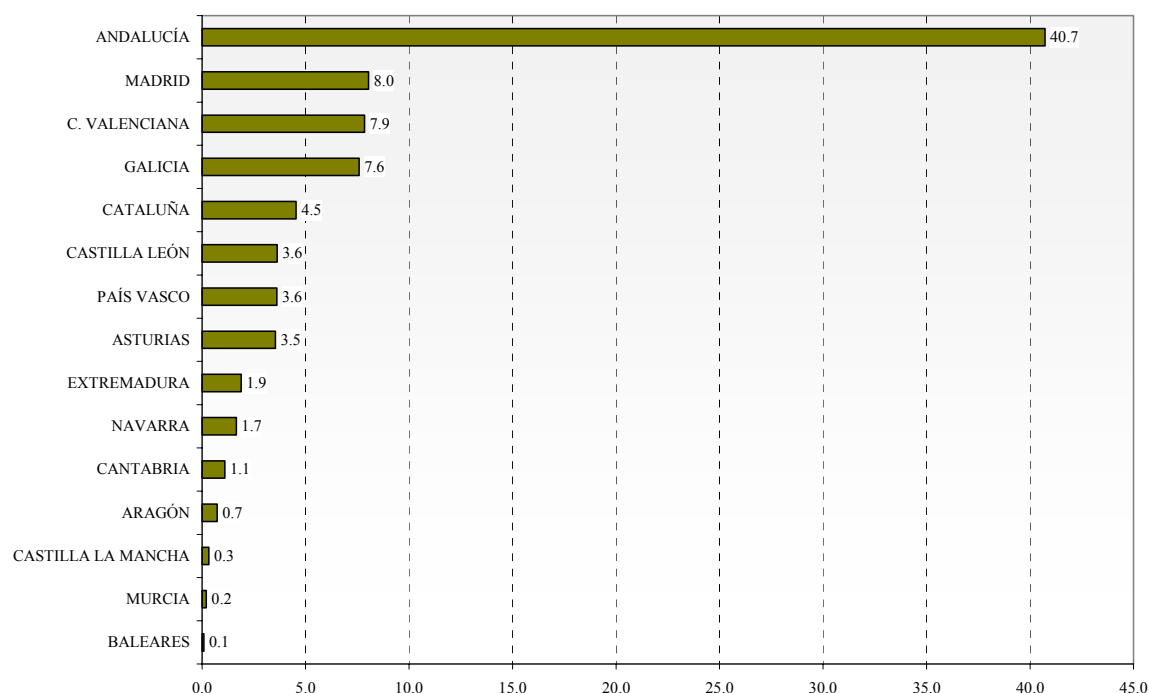
Source: EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)

- *Financial performance by themes, thematic areas and objective regions*

Distribution of implemented expenses by themes in Action 3 shows a higher percentage of delivery in all cases for Objective 1 regions (see table 10.10 in appendix I) where 80.86% of the total cost approved had been delivered in 2004, while in non-Objective 1 regions, 68.40% had been delivered. In their turn, in multi-regional DPs the degree of performance amounts to 79.98% (see table 10.10 in appendix I).

By thematic areas, **the concentration noted in Theme 3** *Adaptability* is especially significant, where 86.3% of expenses are concentrated in Objective 1 regions. The only case where Objective 1 regions do not represent the highest percentage of delivered expenses is in thematic area 1.2. (combating racism*)*, where multi-regional projects circumscribed to several Autonomous Regions (both within and outside Objective 1) concentrate the highest levels of implementation of Action 3, 65% of the total. However, these multi-regional projects have been mostly delivered in Objective 1 regions.

No thematic area shows a degree of performance amounting to 100%, although the area *Business creation* has 91.38% performance, followed by the area *Adaptability*, with 81.28%. The worst levels are registered by area 1.2 (combating racism), with a degree of performance amounting to 52.51%.

By Autonomous Regions and Towns, (see table 10.11 in appendix I) two Autonomous Regions Cantabria and Castilla La Mancha are especially relevant, (both within Objective 1) where the percentage of implemented expenses represents 100% of programmed expenses. In the opposite end are Murcia (Objective 1) and Baleares (outside Objective 1) with degrees of financial performance amounting only to 9,39% and 19,12%, respectively. The evaluation team considers that, after the lapse of the deadline in December 2004 for the implementation of Action 3, this information reflects a **delay in certification of expenses already spent**, as we are not aware of serious problems in the implementation of Action 3 (which undoubtedly would have been apparent in the event of completion of certain projects with such low levels of implementation). It would be beneficial to examine certifications issued during the first months of 2005 to verify this conclusion.

- *Financial performance by types of expense and thematic areas*

Actions undertaken in Action 3, mainly focusing on dissemination and mainstreaming of best practice into employment policies, have represented the implementation of different expense items shown in the table. The higher percentage of cost is concentrated on remuneration of experts and professionals, with 24.7% of the total, followed by organisation and communication expenses, and personnel costs, amounting to 18.6% and 18.3%, respectively. Subsequently are expenses for publication and broadcasting in the media, amounting to 13% of the total. The evaluation team does not detect, as a general rule, any significant trend in expenses, as they correspond well to this type of activities. However, we must highlight high expenses in remunerating experts and professional, as we do not understand this major contribution of experts and professional if activities focus on mainstreaming or disseminating best practice already designed and tested.

By thematic area (see table 10.12 in appendix I), distribution by type of expense shows the following: Thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market), 1.2 (combating racism), 3.1 (adaptability) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) have as one of their largest items *Organisation and communication expenses* and *Personnel costs* (between 18.4% and 32.6%), while in area 2.1 (business creation) and 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) expenses in this regard are far lower (9.4% and 10.9% respectively). Parallel to the above, these two areas have allocated a greater percentage of their budget than others to *Remuneration of experts and professionals,* which indicates that Action 3 in these two areas has focused more on these actions than the rest, which however, have done more work within the DP. Area 3.1 (adaptabilit*y*) has dedicated 5% of its budget to restaurants and/or hotels, far above the rest; however, it is the only thematic area whose multi-regional DPs (which, pursuant to their scope of action, have a greater need to travel) have not executed any Action 3 activities. Thus one may deduce that this has been the area where most mainstreaming has taken place towards other regions. Lastly, please note the expense item allocated to translation and interpretation costs. As Action 3 deals with dissemination and mainstreaming activities at national level, this item corresponds either to translation from or to other co-official languages, or to dissemination and mainstreaming of practices in the transnational area of the project, which evidences the added value of the transnational component. The adaptability area has allocated a greater proportion of the budget to these actions (5%), followed by area 1.1 and 1.2, both with 3.4%. Area 2.1 on business creation and 4.1 on reconciliation have allocated the least budget to this expense, with 1.3 and 1.5% respectively.

10.1.3 Financial implementation of Technical Assistance

Theme 6 of the EQUAL CI, *Technical assistance*, includes a series of support activities, started up and executed by the Managing Authority, through the Support Unit or in co-operation with Autonomous Regions. These activities are represented by the following measures:

1. Preparation, selection, assessment, follow-up and control activities.
2. Information, equipment and external evaluation activities.

Technical assistance has a total eligible cost of 19.6 million Euro, of which 13.3 million Euro correspond to the EC participation (ESF) (see table 10.13 in appendix I). Out of the total cost, 75% (14.7 million Euro) is allocated to the first measure, which amount is explained by the inclusion of Support Unit (SU) expenses. In its turn, the second measure represents a cost of 4.9 million Euro.

As of December 31, 2004, expenses subject to subsidies effectively paid and certified corresponding to *Technical assistance* amounted to 6.1 million Euro (31.24% of total cost), where 4.7 million corresponded to the first measure, with an accumulated implementation amounting to 31.86%, and 1.4 million, to the second (29.40%).

As noted in the Implementation Report for 2004, the accumulated percentage of implementation is "*easily explainable*" if it is taken into account that the *Technical assistance* item includes all support activities started up by the Managing Authority and executed thereby, through the Support Unit or in co-operation with the Autonomous Regions. However, **the evaluation team considers that this implementation as of December 2004** (covering 75% of the implementation period of the Programme and taking into account the expenses involved in starting up the Initiative, commissioning of external evaluations already performed, commissioning the start-up of the IT Monitoring System, launching of both rounds, i.e, to summarise, the advanced state of implementation of the CIP**), should be higher**.

The analysis of the implementation of tasks and responsibilities by the Support Unit reveals that, although dedication of its personnel has been intense, its excessive workload of technical and administrative responsibilities has led to certain tasks being left undelivered, or not having been performed with the necessary dedication. The evaluation team thus concludes that **the Support Unit has been efficient in the tasks it has implemented, but could have absorbed more responsibilities, and therefore, financial resources,** if it had been allocated more human resources.

Similarly, the evaluation team, throughout its analysis of different activities undertaken, has identified **that the potential offered by the different structures created to manage the Programme, and the different players involved has often gone unfulfilled**. This potential could be fulfilled in the final implementation phase of the Programme.

The chapter on recommendations includes many recommendations directed to broaden the responsibilities of the structures responsible for management of the Initiative. An increase in (human and financial) resources to implement such recommendations would entail an increase in absorption of resources.

Conclusions

Up to now, financial absorption by the EQUAL CIP for Spain 2000-2006 has been adequate to prevent decommitments pursuant to the application of the N+2 rules. Partial and final certifications submitted by Round One projects as of December 31, 2004 have allowed to absorb 100% of financial commitments provided for the year 2002, thus complying with the N+2 rule, and preventing eventual financial decommitments. In this regard, please note that **absorption of the third commitment as of March 31, 2005 amounts to 28.66%, which evidences the pressing need to increase efforts to certify payments to prevent the application of the N+2 rule** at the end of the year.

Project cycles, which result in major expenses being concentrated within short periods, make it impossible to put the whole weight of responsibility for expenses exclusively in the implementation of Action 2 for projects approved in Round Two. **If expenses other than for Action 2 are not increased** (i.e., for Action 3 and Theme 6, Technical Assistance), **the risk of application of the N+2 rule will reappear** at the end 2005 and in subsequent years.

Distribution of the financial performance of the EQUAL CI in Action 2 by thematic areas is to a great extent similar to the distribution in the programming phase, save for area 5.1 (asylum seekers) caused by the changes in the group. Thus, the highest volumes of implemented expenses up to December 2004 are in thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market) (32.7% of total executed expenses) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) (16.9%). Most executed types of actions have been *Assistance to persons* and *Structures and systems*, which is consistent with the phase of the EQUAL CI under analysis. Distribution of implementation by objective regions indicates lower implementation rates in Objective 1 regions, which may be due to a reduced infrastructure to implement the Initiative. The higher implementation rate of multi-regional projects reflects, according to the evaluation team, simultaneous action in different territories, thus affecting a larger group of beneficiaries. In relation to differences in implementation by regions, the evaluation team considers that no pattern is apparent, but that it depends on the correct implementation of projects operating in the regions.

Regarding financial performance of Action 3, the highest percentages of financial implementation by thematic area are for thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market) (23.5% of total executed expenses) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) (22.6%). On the contrary, thematic area 1.2. (combating racism) shows a much reduced financial performance, amounting only to 3.8%. By types of action, the volume of expenses allocated to *Remuneration of experts and professionals*, followed by *Organisation and communication expenses / Secretariat* is especially significant.

The lower levels of implementation and financial performance of Action 3 compared to Action 2 are due to **the fact that priority has been given to implementation of Action 2, to the obligation to complete both activities on the same date, and the sometimes inaccurate understanding and definition of Action 3**.

Expenses subject to subsidies effectively paid and certified corresponding to **theme 6 *Technical Assistance***, reveal, in the evaluation team's opinion, a **low level of implementation** of this theme. This is due, according to the evaluation team, to 2 reasons:

- The evaluation team considers that there is **insufficient allocation of human resources in the Support Unit,** which means, in spite of the significant dedication of the team, that all duties attributed cannot be adequately fulfilled. Furthermore, this prevents offering services required to optimise the Structure and to guarantee successful implementation of the Initiative. This insufficient allocation of human resources also hinders the Technical Assistance's capacity to absorb financial resources.

- The evaluation team also considers that there are low levels of financial implementation in Theme 6 and Action 3 as a result of **not fulfilling the potential of structures created to manage and implement the Initiative**.

In view of the current point of implementation of the Programme, having completed the second and previous round of the projects, **expenses may only be increased via Action 3** (both for the projects and for structures responsible for the management of the CIP, mainly NTGs and Autonomous Regions via regional networks). For these purposes, it will probably be **necessary to increase internal or external human resources dedicated to the management of such structures.**

The increase in activities for Technical Assistance will also entail an increase in expenses for such an item, thus guaranteeing better service to the projects and securing conditions for an adequate mainstreaming of the Initiative into employment policies, structures and businesses.

10.2 ANALYSIS OF PHYSICAL IMPLEMENTATION

10.2.1 Physical Programming in Action 2

The goal of the EQUAL CI is to combat all forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market. To the extent that it is a "test lab" to achieve such goals, fulfilment of key principles (institutional co-operation and empowerment; integrated thematic approach; innovation; transnational co-operation; mainstreaming; equal opportunities; complementarity and concentration) has priority in respect of the number of beneficiaries. However, the Initiative is an employment programme, and affects final beneficiaries, and therefore an analysis of the physical performance as provided below holds a clear interest in order to ensure the comprehensiveness of this evaluation.

This analysis of physical performance is limited to the period between 2002 and 2004, corresponding to the implementation period for the DPs' work programme and, thus, to the period in which final beneficiaries are affected. Furthermore, this evaluation is performed based on the analysis undertaken in the past Mid-Term Evaluation, thus avoiding a repetition of the exercise.

Accounting for the number of beneficiaries, as mentioned in chapter 4 (above), has entailed a **series of problems caused by the absence of clear instructions to DPs on the method to account for such beneficiaries** at the start of implementation. This is why data provided in the Monitoring System is occasionally in duplicate or aggregates beneficiaries of individualised actions and beneficiaries of dissemination activities. Thus, there is no uniform accounting for expected and effective beneficiaries, making the usefulness of such data limited. The most noteworthy instance has been for one DP which

made an estimate of beneficiaries, counting all potential beneficiaries of a dissemination action which would affect the whole territory of the Autonomous Regions in which it operated (population 3,700,000). To prevent analysing such widely differing figures, the evaluation team has deemed it beneficial to take this DP out of the figures of expected beneficiaries. Thus, this estimation of beneficiaries for Action 2 on projects approved in Round One (see table 10.14 in appendix I) amounts to 518.860 persons, most of which, 63.7%, are included in theme 4 (equal opportunities), and in particular, in thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) (44%). Thematic area 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) has the second highest expected beneficiary figure (102,165). Lastly, the lowest expected beneficiaries - 3,500- are for thematic area 5.1 (asylum seekers).

10.2.2 Physical performance and degree of performance in Action 2

Physical performance by themes and thematic areas

As mentioned above, physical performance of the EQUAL CIP in Round One amounted to 389,671 beneficiaries (see table 10.15 in appendix I). Among these, as shown in table 10.15 included in the appendixes, the greatest percentage is concentrated on theme 1 Employability (38.7%), and more particularly thematic area 1.1 (access to the labour market) (34.9%). At the opposite end is thematic area 5.1 (asylum seekers), with 3,113 beneficiaries (0.8% of the total), followed by thematic area 1.2 (combating racism), with 14,732 (3.8%). The fact that thematic area 5.1 *(a*sylum seekers*)* registers the least number of beneficiaries responds to the reality of such group in Spain. However, the number of beneficiaries in thematic area 1.2 (combating racism*)* is considered to be very low in relation to the immigrant population and gypsy population resident in Spain. The evaluation team considers that this responds to different factors: in the first place, the remaining thematic areas may perfectly well include actions benefiting immigrants and ethnic minorities, while the projects in area 1.2 are directed to a greater extent to awareness actions on the immigrant and gypsy population. In the second place, the target population to which area 1.2 actions are directed has high mobility, which reflects in their participation in different actions. Lastly, projects in this thematic area have often focused on immigrants and less on ethnic minorities, and thus, at local level, where most DPs operates, there are not so high a number of potential beneficiaries.

Degree of physical performance in Action 2

Regarding the degree of physical performance, i.e., the percentage of beneficiaries of the EQUAL CI compared to initial estimations (see table 10.16 in appendix I) there are three major thematic areas by physical performance: 1.1 (access to the labour market), with 268.5% performance over programmed activity, 2.1 (business creation), with 183.7% and 3.1 (adaptability)*,* with 149%. However, in area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) the degree of overall physical performance global of the Programme only amounts to 17,17%, 9,3% over programmed activity. This shows once again **the lack of homogenous criteria used when making beneficiary forecasts**, and in accounting for beneficiaries (for example, beneficiaries of dissemination and awareness activities are sometimes accounted for and sometimes not). It is thus not too far-fetched to deduce that in forecasts made for areas 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 4.2 (reducing the gender gap), beneficiaries of dissemination and awareness activities were accounted for in the estimations but not in the implementations, while in area 1.1 (access to the labour market), beneficiaries of dissemination

actions were probably accounted for in implementation but not in estimation data. In this context, analysis of physical performance and, consequently, interpretation the degree of performance in respect of the number of estimated beneficiaries requires a certain precaution, as they might not correctly reflect reality.

*Gender perspectives in physical performance in Action 2*

The EQUAL CI includes among its basic principles equal opportunities between men and women, for all themes and thematic areas. In fact, it requires horizontal application thereof in Round Two to all principles and actions started-up from the projects. In this regard, the physical implementation results show a positive bias in favour of women. Thus, according to Action 2 data, 64.6% of total beneficiaries of the EQUAL CI have been women (251,579), mainly concentrated in themes 1 *Employability* (35.7% of total beneficiaries) and 4 *Equal opportunities* (35.5%). In their turn, men are mainly distributed between theme 1, *Employability* (43.8% of total male beneficiaries) and theme 3 *Adaptability* (27%).

Comparison between both genders shows a greater percentage of women beneficiaries in thematic areas 4.2 (reducing the gender gap), with 87% of total beneficiaries, 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) (81.7%), 2.1 (business creation) (63.1%) and 1.1 (access to the labour market) (61.3%). In its turn, men are the majority beneficiaries of thematic areas 1.2. (combating racism), 3.1. (adaptability), and 5.1. (asylum seekers). However, as mentioned in 12 on impact (see below), these data are not always what they appear, as **there seems to be a lack of male participants in awareness actions for theme 4**, while in area 3.1, in qualitative terms, women have been the main beneficiaries of some of the most relevant actions in the area projects (see chapter 12 below). Lastly, the male immigrant population exceeds the female in Spain, as do male asylum seekers.

In terms of employment, such differences show an important advance for gender equality compared to data provided in the previous Mid-Term Evaluation report, as there has been an increase in female participation compared to male in thematic areas *Access*, *Business creation* and *Reducing the gender gap*. However, their participation is reduced in areas *Combating racism*, *Adaptability*, *Reconciliation* and *Asylum*.

Physical performance by objective regions

Graph 10.9 and table 10.17 (see appendix I) show that most beneficiaries in Action 2 (57%) are for Objective 1 regions (222,907 persons), 26.8% in non-Objective 1 regions (104,843), 15.4% (60,191) in multi-regional projects and 0.8% (3,113) in Asylum (see table 10.17 in appendix I). Except for the Asylum project, in all regions considered women represent a greater percentage than men. This distribution corresponds to the budgetary distribution of the CIP (59.7% of expenses executed in Action 2 for Objective 1, 26.7% outside Objective 1, 11.8 for multi-regional projects and 1.7% for asylum).

Graph 10.9 Physical performance in Action 2, by objective regions (in number of persons)
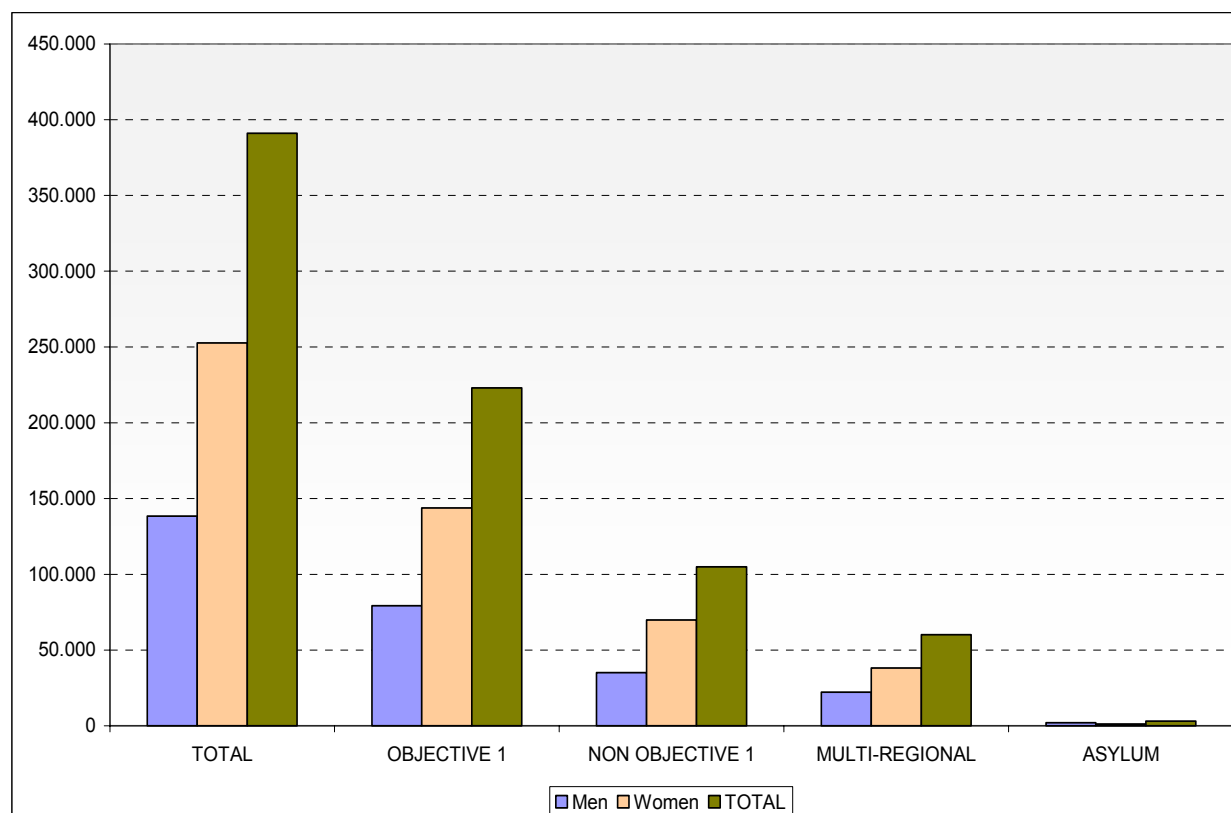
Source: EQUAL Monitoring System (EMS)

Physical performance by types of action

At beneficiary level, expense categories relating to types of action developed in Action 2 are limited to three types: *Assistance to persons*, *Structures and systems* and *Transnationality* (see table 10.18 in appendix I).

The greatest level of physical performance takes place in the category *Assistance to persons*, with 335,952 beneficiaries (91% of the total), within which actions with the greatest number of beneficiaries have been *Orientation, advice and job search*, with 152,445 beneficiaries, *Integrated Access Itineraries*, with 76,750 persons and *Training of unemployed persons* and *Training of employed persons*, with slightly more than 50,000 beneficiaries each. The next category showing most beneficiaries is *Transnationality*, with 19,679 persons, with a majority of actions on *Exchange of information and experiences* and *Student/teacher/technical personnel exchanges* and, lastly, *Structures and systems*, where the action *Training specialised coaches, personnel and agents,* registering a total 15,423 persons. In all actions performed, the percentage of women exceeds that of men.

Physical performance by types of action and thematic areas

In four thematic areas (1.1: *Access*; 1.2: *Combating racism,* 2.1: *Business creation* and 4.1: *Reconciliation)* the greatest number of beneficiaries has been registered in the action *Orientation, advice and job search*; in thematic area 3.1 (*Adaptability*) physical performance was greatest in the action *Training of employed persons*, while in areas 4.2 (*Reducing the gender gap*) and 5.1 (*Asylum*

seekers), the greatest percentage was registered in *Integrated Access Itineraries*. This distribution is, in the evaluation team's opinion, consistent with the essence and goals of each thematic area.

10.2.3 Average cost per beneficiary

The average programmed cost per beneficiary in Action 2 amounts to 605.50 Euro, after deducting from the total programmed cost 2,825,688.51 Euro and 3,700,000 beneficiaries corresponding to DP 354, for the reasons mentioned above. By thematic area, the highest levels of expected expense per beneficiary are in thematic area 1.1 (access to the labour market), with 1,998.44 Euro, followed by thematic area 5.1 (asylum seekers), with 1,981.75 Euro. On the opposite end is thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life), which only provides 171,80 Euro per beneficiary, followed by thematic area 2.2 (combating racism) with 314.54 Euro.

In analysing the results of the projects, we appreciate an increase in total average cost per beneficiary amounting to 18.4%, which becomes 717.12 Euro. Such increase mainly corresponds to a 393.8% increase in the average cost per beneficiary corresponding to thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 232% for thematic area 1.2 (combating racism). Both thematic areas, as mentioned above, showed the least expected cost per beneficiary, thus reflecting a significant undervaluation thereof in the programming stage (also motivated by the aforementioned factors).

In its turn, except for thematic area 4.2 (reducing the gender gap), which also increases average cost per beneficiary as implemented compared to programmed cost (39.1%), the remaining thematic areas experience a reduction in expenses, showing a failure in the initial forecasts. In this regard thematic area 1 (access to the labour market) is especially significant, which initially estimated a cost of 1,998.44 Euro per beneficiary and actually amounted to 677.50 Euro, i.e., a reduction of 66.1%.

Conclusions

The lack of homogenous criteria and reliability of the physical programming data of the EQUAL CIP caused by a failure to issue clear instructions to the projects **concerning accounting for beneficiaries makes it impossible to extract conclusions** regarding the levels of implementation and physical performance. Thus, there are no homogenised criteria in estimating and accounting for beneficiaries of individualised actions, or beneficiaries of awareness, dissemination and advertising actions to the public. Furthermore, the projects have not received instructions regarding accounting for beneficiaries who interrupt their participation in an activity from which they are benefiting.

There have been a greater percentage of women beneficiaries than men, i.e. a general positive trend, save for awareness actions on gender discrimination and reconciliation of family and professional life, where it would be recommended to have a greater male participation.

CHAPTER 11: ANALYSIS OF INTERMEDIATE IMPACT AND COMMUNITY ADDED VALUE

This chapter examines the intermediate impact of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) in Spain. As noted throughout this report, **the key feature and added value of EQUAL derives from its potential to impact on policies, structures and businesses.** This impact is called, at a European level, **intermediate impact**. Its analysis seeks to evidence whether the EQUAL CIP for Spain meets its goals of *creating, testing and mainstreaming new forms of implementing employment policies.*

The **mainstreaming responsibility** of the Initiative in all activities undertaken in its implementation allows it to develop an **added value**. The present chapter analyses and values **the impact of this mainstreaming responsibility**, studying **changes in policies, structures, and businesses** as a result of implementation of the Initiative. This chapter is therefore closely related to chapter 5 (above), which analyses how mainstreaming is articulated.

11.1 COMMUNITY ADDED VALUE

Throughout this report we have highlighted the features of the EQUAL Initiative which, in the evaluation team's opinion, provide its added value. This section provides succinctly and systematically, the aspects that have undoubtedly contributed added value to the EQUAL programme for Spain brought about by its EC dimension.

In the first place, **the internal logic or approach of the Initiative, as articulated around a series of basic principles** is, in the evaluation team's opinion, one of the aspects which gives the programme a specific weight and singularity which benefits Spain. The fact that it promotes new approaches to issues relating to the labour market and social inclusion make the Initiative an engine of progress on how to deal with existing problems. This aspect of the Initiative was discussed in detail in chapter 9 (above).

In the second place, European project financing, which in many cases was locally based, and the obligation to co-finance the same has entailed **a multiplier effect for the investment.** This has resulted from the opportunity afforded by EQUAL to demonstrate the potential of local stakeholders, and by the need, on many occasions, to seek partners with sufficient financial solvency to contribute to the co-financing obligation. This aspect has been discussed in greater detail in other sections of this same chapter (see below).

Thirdly, the EQUAL Initiative has resulted, in its application in Spain, in an added value pursuant to its European origin, and to the design of the system dividing responsibilities within it. As a result of the Spanish division of functions on employment issues, where management of active employment policies lies with Autonomous Regions, it is logical that the selection of actions to be performed on employment issues and the financing thereof be determined by the goals set in regional employment programmes. **The EQUAL Initiative allows the encouragement of certain more global goals,**

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directly linked to the objectives set by the European Commission, common to all Member States participating in the Initiative. Thanks to this and to the monitoring and evaluation system on achievement of project objectives, the Initiative prevents them being sidetracked to satisfy regional or local needs that might escape the objectives of the Initiative.

Lastly, the clear emphasis provided by the EQUAL Initiative in **changing policies, businesses and systems is its main added value.** These intermediate results, which do not have a great impact in the short to medium term in employment figures, are more rarely sought by national administrations but, however, are extremely necessary to encourage evolution in structures at all levels in order to deal with issues detected. Without an *ad hoc* EC community programme, this evolution in structures occurs at a slower rhythm. This added value is explained in detail in the next sections of this chapter (see below).

11.2 IMPACT ON POLICIES

The evaluation team's analysis has been based on two different perspectives: in the first place, they have analysed from a *"Top-to-top"* perspective the contribution of the Programme as a whole to Spanish policies and programmes. This was undertaken by **examining the possible influence of the EQUAL Initiative, and it predecessors ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT, in the contents of employment plans and programmes.** In the second place, they have undertaken a "*bottom-up*" analysis to examine how the mainstreaming efforts made by the EQUAL projects have influenced policies, structures and systems. This last analysis was performed separately **for each thematic area**, for the purpose of assessing the individual contribution of each of them, and in order to subsequently **aggregate common patterns observed**, and noting exclusive features of one or several areas, where applicable[35].

11.2.1 *"Top-to-top"* impact in policies

The European Union (EU), using different tools to act on issues affecting employment, has brought about a clear positive influence to employment policies in Spain. EU intervention, with its policy guidelines and financing possibilities has allowed a major advance on employment issues. Thus, the need to co-ordinate with the remaining Member States and the establishment of common objectives has allowed employment policies in Spain to become more structured. Furthermore, this European influence is observed in the faster introduction of certain aspects and mechanisms, such as the obligation to evaluate policies and programmes. Community Initiatives (CIs) have also contributed to the evolution of employment policies and programmes since their initiation in 1995. However, **it is hard to accurately isolate the influence of EQUAL from other EU influences**.

This section attempts to identify areas of Spanish policies where an evolution is observed towards aspects, methodologies or features characteristic of the CIs. For such purpose we shall examine the

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[35] EQUAL projects approved in Round Two are still in an initial stage of implementation. They have therefore not yet caused any impact, and analysis of project impact has been undertaken by examining those which have already been completed at the time of drafting hereof (which were approved in Round One).

evolution in management and content of Operative Programmes (OPs), and in regional employment policies.

The impact of EQUAL in the National Plan of Action for Social Inclusion (PNAIN) and in the National Plan of Action for Employment (PNAE) is subject o specific study in chapters 12 and 13 (see below).

Exchange between EQUAL and Operative Programmes

There are currently no institutional of formal channels for exchanges between OPs and EQUAL. This means that, **on many occasions, both instruments have been developed in parallel** without taking advantage of synergies which may be generated by application of successful results of experimentation in EQUAL to the OPs.

However, although there is no institutional exchange channel, it is possible to appreciate different **ways in which EQUAL is reaching the OPs**:

In many cases the influence of EQUAL and other CIs in the OPs is triggered by the fact that persons responsible for the management and/or design of OPs are the same who hold responsibilities for the management and/or implementation of the CIs, thus making it natural for the OP manager to be aware of the approaches and innovations provided by EQUAL. The evaluation team has been able to identify different occasions where persons responsible for OPs have formed part of EQUAL Development Partnerships (DP), and how the EQUAL project has been used as a test lab to try out new actions to be incorporated into subsequent OP programming.

This direct link between EQUAL experiences and impact in the Operative Programme was evidenced in two case studies for thematic area 3.1, where the regional employment service of the relevant Autonomous Region was a major partner in the DP.

Another example of direct exchanges between EQUAL and the OPs occurred at the start of 2005, where certain persons responsible for the management of OPs in the Spanish ESF Unit, having noticed a deficiency, suggested an initiative to channel mainstreaming of positive experiences in EQUAL to the OPs. Such initiative, which arose and has been maintained as a result of the intention of the persons involved, materialised in the creation of the Exchange Group between Community Support Frameworks and EQUAL (GIME). **Although communications within it are not official, the GIME provides a suitable channel for exchange**.

The GIME consists of EQUAL Support Unit (SU) personnel, and ESF Unit personnel, with responsibilities in the OPs. **Its main goal is to guarantee success of actions included in the OPs, for which it attempts to take advantage of positive experiences accumulated by EQUAL**. Among actions undertaken we must highlight dissemination of all information taken from EQUAL among the members of the Monitoring Committee of the Community Support Frameworks (CSF) and the inclusion of information on EQUAL best practice within the chapter concerning contribution of the OP to the European Employment Strategy (EES) in the annual implementation report for 2004 issued by the CSF. The GIME is currently promoting the drafting of a study analysing the needs of OPs,

which may be covered by synergies with EQUAL, such as, for example, the role of equal opportunities in future programming periods.

Evolution of OPs

The OPs show an evolution consisting of incorporation of certain activities for the first time into the actions on the labour market, through the CIs. Such activities feature innovative forms and methods to solve problems in accessing the labour market. Little by little, in part as a result of the CIs' influence, the OPs have stopped focusing their activities mainly on training courses and subsidies to encourage access to the labour market and are beginning to show more active and innovative contents to deal with problems. An example of these actions are personalised action plans to access the labour market, integrated services, access accompanying measures, job search agencies and professional guidance actions[36].

Another aspect wherein the CIs' influence in the evolution of OPs may be observed is the priority granted to certain themes relating to the labour market: the growing attention paid by OPs to **the treatment of social exclusion factors** of persons excluded from the labour market, the increasing importance of the theme of **equal opportunities** between men and women and between other groups which may suffer inequality, having noted in certain cases the need to adopt horizontal measures to conciliate family and professional life, and reducing the gender gap; and, lastly, the importance of **adaptability**, both for businesses and for employees.

Impact at regional level

Autonomous Regions are in charge of management of active employment and occupational professional training policies, and therefore the influence of CIs and EQUAL should be felt in policies applied by the Autonomous Regions within their territories.

Influence in programming policies for Autonomous Regions is similar to that observed in the OPs: increasing priority of the **equal opportunities** theme in practically all aspects of the policies of Autonomous Regions, covering all aspects of such equality and adopting positive measures to facilitate such incorporation and encouragement of **innovation** as a key factor in human resources policies. On the other hand, the team also observed traces of the CIs in the gradual incorporation of **continuing training, IT training activities**, exploration of **new employment possibilities** and use of **personalised access plans[37]**.

Impact at national level

The impact of the EQUAL CI on the European Employment Strategy (EES) and on the National Plan for Social Inclusion (PNAIN) is analysed in detail in appendixes 3 and 4 (see below). Furthermore, decentralisation of employment competences makes the impact of EQUAL relative at national level.

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[36] These actions have been listed for the first time in OPs issued for the present programming period (2000-2006). The evaluation team considers that CIs have contributed to generate these activities, among other factors.
[37] Once again it is necessary to insist that Community Initiatives have influenced this evolution in conjunction with other factors.

However, both co-ordination and legislative powers still vest with the State, and it thus makes sense to analyse impact on this level.

A illustrative example of the possible impact had by EQUAL at national level is the Draft Bill for an Organic Law on Gender Equality (*Anteproyecto de Ley Orgánica de la Igualdad de Género*), which takes a horizontal approach and includes aspects typical of EQUAL, such as the **thematic approach**.

Conclusions

EQUAL contributes to the evolution of employment policies and programmes in Spain within the general framework of the contribution of European employment guidelines and financing. **The influence of EQUAL is difficult to isolate in this structure, although the team has observed the growing inclusion of a series of typical features of Community Initiatives in national and regional policies and programmes in which its influence may be identified**.

The positive influence of EQUAL is perceived by managers and stakeholders with responsibilities in the design or management of employment policies or programmes (in methods used, ways to approach users and beneficiary groups, structures and processes). However, in spite of recent efforts, there is no institutionalised framework to promote exchange and influence, and therefore there is still a long way to go in this respect.

The evaluation team concludes that **EQUAL's impact is slow but sustainable. It could be possible to create a framework to encourage this impact, but, as a result of the nature of the initiative, it would not be reasonable to seek a radical acceleration of such impact.**

In the evaluation team's opinion, **failure to articulate the Programme's mainstreaming strategy** evidenced in chapter 5 (above) **has had a negative influence in its impact.**

11.2.2 Impact on *"bottom-up"* policies

The analysis broken down by thematic areas has shown similar reactions and impact of projects in policies, and we have therefore proceeded to aggregate the assessment of common trends, showing distinct examples or features where noted.

Lack of evidence

The analysis of the EQUAL projects' contribution to policies **is one of the aspects for which the evaluation team has obtained the least evidence** throughout the evaluation process.

In Spain, in order to make an impact employment and social inclusion policies, players must act mainly **at regional or national level**, while the **Development Partnerships' (DPs) created to implement the EQUAL Initiative are mainly local in scope.** It has therefore been necessary to seek **"*bottom-up*" vertical mainstreaming** in order to determine EQUAL's impact on policies.

As mentioned in preceding chapters, the analysis of effective mainstreaming by the projects in different thematic areas shows that **DPs do not constitute the ideal basic unit to perform vertical mainstreaming**. This leads to the logical consequence that the **impact** achieved by these projects in regional and national policies has been **relative**. Having said this, please note that, although in principle EQUAL has not had much impact in policies, **there is a certain casuistry evidencing a weak impact** thereof on higher levels of decision, appreciating higher influence in instances closer to the local administrations.

An example of difficulties faced by the DPs wishing to undertake vertical mainstreaming: **DP 98, Shared Territorial Development**, has developed a project for business creation (thematic area 2.1) with very satisfactory results, making two local development agencies in the Madrid Autonomous Region (Getafe and Alcalá de Henares) work with two labour co-operative associations (*agrupaciones de sociedades laborales*). Its impact in policies, however, has been limited, as vertical mainstreaming to competent bodies in the Madrid Region (the regional government) has been impossible. As there are no formal negotiation channels or analysis of the results of EQUAL projects, the best practices subject to mainstreaming has remained at local level, where the integrated service continues to be offered, although with less intensity, as they have less financial capacity after completion of the EQUAL project (entails end of financing by the European Social Fund (ESF)). A greater impact, and thus greater effectiveness of the EC budget might have been secured if the appropriate mechanisms had been in place for the entrepreneurial assistance services to continue to be provided by the local authorities participating in the project, financed or as part of general policies of the Autonomous Region.

To the weak impact in policies must also be added a **failure to monitor the results of mainstreaming actually performed**, resulting on several occasions in the impossibility of determining a cause-effect relationship between the influence of a mainstreaming activity and a change in policy. In this regard, please note the activity of National Thematic Groups (NTGs) and regional networks created within the framework of the Initiative:

National Thematic Groups undertook a series of actions mainly directed to the identification and compilation of best practice, and to perform an exchange between organisations involved in the Initiative (DPs) and to achieve an increase in visibility of project results. In some cases, such as NTG-1, they have also listed the results of successful mainstreaming experiences at DP level. However, **NTGs could have made a greater effort to mainstream best practices compiled, or to follow-up on the mainstreaming undertaken by DPs thus perhaps increasing visibility of the impact of the Initiative.**

In relation to **thematic networks created by Autonomous Regions**, the latter have undertaken several activities during Action 3 directed to **analysing, detecting and disseminating best practices detected in the performance of the projects and to promote exchanges with political officers.** Among activities undertaken are studies, meeting, conferences and debates, launching of Internet portals and publications. All these activities have increased the visibility of practices developed by the projects, and have contributed to promoting their impact in policies.

However, the only case where the team has appreciated an intention to follow-up on the incorporation of these experiences into general regional employment policies is in the case of the **Andalusia**

> **Network**, which, according to the *Junta de Andalucía* **is currently finalising** an action in this respect, with the most obvious impact being the awareness of public officers on equal opportunity and business creation' issues.

In spite of the difficulties in achieving visibility of the results of mainstreaming into policies, there are several examples of impact in national policies contributed by several projects analysed in greater depth:

> According to the final report of project **DP 303 Mi.Ma** (thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life)), an unexpected achievement of the project was the incorporation of a major **amendment into the Law on Cooperatives of the Comunidad Valenciana** influenced by the project. Thus, a new article 113 was introduced relating to reconciliation of family and professional life in order to encourage, always respecting the legal framework, the use of more flexible formulas for working in co-operatives.
>
> **DP 130 FILOXENIA** (thematic area 1.2 (combating racism)), worked on the development and implementation of the occupational profile of the concept of "mediator-tutor". Such profile is currently being taken into account by the Qualifications Institute (*Instituto de las Cualificaciones*) (INCUAL), to be included as part of the National Qualifications and Professional Training System based on Law 5/2002 on Qualifications and Professional Training.
>
> **DP 393 LUMEN** (thematic area 2.1 (business creation)) created in La Ribera county (Comunidad Valenciana) an advice centre for entrepreneurs, the CIER, which offers a series of services not covered by the Autonomous Region. The Government of the Comunidad Valenciana created within its territory, within the framework of EQUAL projects, the so-called **Mainstreaming Forum**, within the context of a **regional network** created for the purpose of mainstreaming EQUAL experiences. This forum provides direct contact between political government officers responsible for employment issues with managers of the project. As a result of their co-operation in project LUMEN, five of the DP partners, plus the regional employer's federation, created the **Territorial Agreement for Employment of La Ribera**. This Agreement is co financed by the Structural Funds of the Integrated Operative Programme for Objective 1 of the Comunidad Valenciana and precisely the first action undertaken by the PATER was to secure the continuation of the CIER by allocating it sufficient resources.
>
> **DP 617 ENEAS EQUAL** (thematic area 5.1, asylum) has executed an asylum project that seems to have at least contributed to accelerating the drafting of an amendment to asylum legislation.
>
> In **thematic area 3.1 (adaptability)** there are examples of changes in policies, such as the introduction of flexible labour measures through a collective bargaining agreement for a whole Autonomous Region, and in the methods of employer co-operation and support in intermediate structures, in order to make competitiveness support programmes available to small businesses, which are generally left outside the scope of such initiatives. Other changes are approaching continuing training to employee groups who are traditionally excluded, or who exclude themselves, from usual professional training measures.

As a general rule, there is an **absence of effective mechanisms** to ensure mainstreaming and sustainability of changes promoted by innovative practices of the projects, which has **hindered performance of their expected impact** as concerns decision-making processes at a political level and contribution to changes and improvement so promoted. Thus, lack of effectiveness of the mainstreaming process, both in Action 2 and Action 3, evidenced that the effective contribution of the projects, although it does exist, could have been much greater if mainstreaming had occurred.

As well as the assessments made in the preceding paragraphs, it is the opinion of the evaluation team that **it is not always possible to find a direct cause-effect relationship or to determine conclusively** an impact **when analysing structural changes, without being focused on the long-term effects**.

Multiplier effect

As regards **mobilisation of new resources,** the multiplier effect experienced by EQUAL projects at a county level evidences that such territories gain access to new resources thanks to the work involved in delivering EQUAL, which is a clear example of added value to the community:

> For example, **DP 28 LA SELVA@COOPERA.COM** (thematic area 3.1 on adaptability), whose co-ordinator pointed out that, as a result of Community Initiatives developed within its territory (combined effect of the EQUAL project analysed plus a former ADAPT project), "**now more resources reach the county**". This effect is due to the strategy of strengthening the local development agent network, capable of distributing alternative resources for the territory.

Impact on policies through implementation of basic principles

There is an **influence in decision-making policies as a result of the extension of the work / co-operation processes within the DP (empowerment and partnership principle).** Participation of employers' associations, trade unions, representatives of beneficiary groups and other social players in partnerships which include policy-maker stakeholders has propitiated **co-operation and participation in decision-making** on employment and social inclusion issues, which has continued especially in cases where the partnerships have continued. Also frequent is the case where, after dissolution of the partnerships, some partners continue to co-operate in different actions on these issues, to which they transfer their experience in co-operating in EQUAL. This system **has contributed to adopting a broader and more diversified approach** as concerns issues affecting certain groups, the instruments used thereby to reach them and to influence actions to combat barriers affecting them.

As concerns improvement of **links between experimenting within the project and political decisions**, this is only evident **when policy-maker stakeholders actively participate and are involved in the implementation of the project**, "internalising" experiences, so that incorporation of the tested method or tool occurs spontaneously. However, where partnerships are dominated by organisations that implement policies designed by other administrations (such as projects with predominance of local corporations) such links do not seem to have improved.

Effective application of the **thematic approach principle** in the projects has involved the recurrent practice of making specific diagnoses to complete information on the needs of the target population,

and to design and select suitable tools to cover them. This practice has had a **very positive effect in diagnosis ability of DP members, including policy-maker stakeholders and policy implementers,** such as the regional and local administrations. The importance of this practice seems to have been internalised in the work processes of these stakeholders, so that due importance is now given to providing accurate and up to date diagnoses, compared to the alternative of going to secondary sources or out of date analyses of the reality on which they wish to act. The fact that a high number of projects analysed used diagnosis as a complement to initial assessments, because the latter did not reflect the real needs shown in executing the work programmes, seems to evidence the impact of EQUAL in the work processes of such organisations.

DP 48 CONSORCIO MADRID-SUR (thematic area 1.1 (access to the labour market)) created a County Employment Observatory, considered very useful to the regional administration, whose permanence after completion of the EQUAL project was being studied. This type of observatory allows to analyse policies implemented *in the closest context,* thus providing clues or lines of action on the needs of the most underprivileged population, and to provide feedback for policies implemented by learning from other experiences to combat discrimination.

The **transnational dimension** of the projects has boosted their added value to the community, providing **enriching approaches** to work methods in the projects, and essential contributions for the achievement of the final products of some of them, such as the creation of certain occupational profiles or the development of tools later mainstreamed or currently subject to mainstreaming process. However, this does not seem enough for employment policies to deem transnational co-operation necessary.

Innovation of the actions of the projects has been a **key to favouring incorporation of new elements complementing existing employment policies**.

In **thematic area 2.1** (business creation), the greatest impact comes from the fact that in the territories examined in the different case studies there were no integrated advice and follow-up services for entrepreneurs, and much less services of this kind, addressed to EQUAL beneficiary groups. **DP 324**, **project LARVAE MENTORI**, whose main recipients have been young women without qualifications and young people who have dropped out of university; **DP 344, project INDECO**: young people and women from a rural environment, etc. This in itself generates an impact, as policies have been formulated and a series of advanced services have been created to allow promotion of business creation by these groups.

In **thematic area 3.1 (adaptability),** projects have been able to experiment with new forms of bringing training to employees who do not participate in the usual programmes, to create new occupational profiles which render policy application more effective, development of IT tools which complement and boost traditional forms of action, etc. This experimental side is essential to surmount problems of adaptability to changes in the economic environment which cannot be corrected by usual procedures.

The community added value of policies relating to the application of the **equal opportunities principle** has been **the improvement of the DP partners' awareness of these issues and, as on many occasions the DPs include policy-maker stakeholders, we expect to see positive effects in this area in the medium term**.

For example, the creation of an inter-institutional commission on reconciliation in including government organisations from the Autonomous Region, whether or not they belong to the **DP EQUALcan** (thematic area 3.1 (adaptability)), which project propitiated the creation of this commission thanks to its diagnosis of the state of reconciliation in Cantabria.

Conclusions

Policies **must incorporate new approaches to tackle new problems and to solve those which have traditionally been left unsolved**. Here lies the greatest potential of test labs such as the EQUAL Programme.

There are few evidences of the impact of the projects in policies. The evaluation team considers that this is due to different reasons:

- Evaluation of impact on policies requires a more long-term approach.
- Vertical mainstreaming from DPs (usually at local level) to political decision environments (regional and national) has occurred in a small scale.
- The cause-effect relationship between the influence of the Initiative and policies is in many cases gradual, however useful and necessary.
- There has not been an effort to monitor and compile mainstreaming effectively occurred, and therefore, sometimes, it has not been identified.

In spite of the fact that **impact** on policies has been **weak**, **certain positive effects** are appreciated. Such impact has been similar for actions in all thematic areas, and could have been much greater if responsibility for vertical mainstreaming had been vested in suitable organisations.

National Thematic Groups (NTGs) have in some cases performed a monitoring of mainstreaming performed. However, they could have contributed more actively to impact policies. **Regional networks** have proved more effective in the compilation of mainstreaming results and in the performance of mainstreaming activities, although evidence of results is not always available.

EQUAL projects have on occasion had **a multiplier effect in mobilising resources** to certain local or county environments.

Sustainability of networking has positively influenced political decision-making, incorporating a certain **co-operation and participation of different stakeholders**.

The **impact** on policies **is more in evidence where there is a greater involvement** in the EQUAL projects **of policy-maker stakeholders**.

A generalised understanding of the **importance of diagnoses,** prior to designing actions, and the **strengthening of diagnosis abilities** of EQUAL participants has been a positive and sustainable contribution to policy development.

There has been no impact to policies which has resulted in a **generalised understanding of the advantages of transnational co-operation.**

Innovation has been a **vehicle to impact policies in other areas or new approaches.**

EQUAL has been a **vehicle to increase awareness of policy-maker stakeholders on equal opportunities.**

11.3 IMPACT ON STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS

This section analyses the **influence of the Initiative in organisational and institutional changes,** i.e., in forms of organisations, services, education and training systems and labour market access systems.

As observed in chapter 5 **implementation of the EQUAL projects by the DPs in compliance with the basic principles structuring the Initiative has had an effect on different levels**: the first comprising the **DP partners** (horizontal mainstreaming), in the second place, an effect on **structures at DP level** (enlarged horizontal mainstreaming) and lastly, **a higher level of action and decision-making** (vertical mainstreaming) although at this level effects have been reduced.

This impact may be analysed by examining the contribution of the different principles which, as noted above, constitute the main added value and thus one of the main strengths of the Initiative.

The **principle of institutional co-operation** requires **working in partnership** by institutions of different natures which, to the extent of their possibilities, capacities and interests, co-operate in developing a project.

As a general rule, all thematic areas analysed show the importance of **the principle of institutional co-operation in its contribution to organisational changes**, by allowing the effective and actual implication of different stakeholders who are aware of the realities and issues. **The dynamics generated from working in partnership have immensely favoured the creation of new forms of organisation, new organisational structures and networks,** which evidences a certain generalisation of the ability to work in partnership of DP partners in Round One projects.

The actual European Employment Strategy (EES) recommends creating broad-based local partnerships to orchestrate innovative solutions to employment problems and thus achieve the goals of full high quality employment. Thus, for example in thematic areas such as 1.1 (access to the labour market) and 2.1 (business creation), local administrations set up organisational links with lesser local organisations and different employers' and industry associations. Such local partnerships in most cases

intend to continue existing through time. EQUAL thus allows **different stakeholders to work together**, which is not achieved by other horizontal programmes lacking this Community Initiative's flexibility.

It is thus the **sustainability** of partnerships created, either through participation in Round Two, or through the continuation of informal co-operation, which has had an effect in organisations and structures. These new forms of organisation have materialised in "informal networks" and networks and partnerships which reproduce the DP's organisation at a smaller scale. **Sometimes they have become new stable structures,** or have reinforced existing structures by incorporating new stakeholders. This allows **networking by all relevant socio-economic stakeholders in the industry or territory**. Especially important in these new structures is the presence of representatives of final beneficiaries (employer associations, trade unions, women's associations, etc.) which enable a greater awareness of the real needs of final recipients of the actions, and allow reaching such businesses and persons.

In the evaluation team's opinion, EQUAL Round Two contributes to a great extent to this sustainability of the partnerships, and it is therefore not possible to conclude at this stage whether the partnerships will continue once the common link with EQUAL has disappeared.

In **thematic area 1.1 (access to the labour market) and 1.2 (combating racism), institutional co-operation has allowed the projects to cover the whole process of access to the labour market** and have facilitated to a greater or lesser extent a **culture and practice of co-operation by organisations and services**. This has both **improved their management abilities and their awareness of inequalities in the labour market and of discrimination**. This joint participation of all kinds of bodies and organisations operating in the territory of the project and their active involvement in project implementation, based on their experience and knowledge, irrespective of their nature and status, **has also contributed to training and motivation of the organisations and to reinforce their joint abilities, especially in the case of representatives of beneficiary groups**, who, in some cases, "had all been brought to the table for the first time". Furthermore, the presence of social groups and beneficiary representatives has added the perspective of the recipients of the actions, which has impacted the implementation of measures addressed to improve their access to the labour market.

Some of the benefits resulting from this co-ordinated approach to provision of services in **projects in area 1.1(access to the labour market) and 1.2 (combating racism)** refer to the integration of actions such as personalised access plans for Social and Labour Access, incorporating own resources and network resources of organisations acting within the territory, establishment of co-ordination mechanisms between management of public and private guidance, employment and training programmes, creation of networks (capture, continuity, thematic..) or encouraging co-operation between departments of the public administrations.

On the other hand, **mainstreaming** of innovative approaches has led to the **creation of new organisational structures by DPs in Round One** as shown in the following examples:

In **thematic area 4.1** (reconciliation of family and professional life), certain projects have given rise to the **creation of new bodies which purport to implement experimental practices tested by the projects**. This is the case of DP 425 AVIGUEN, whose Action 3 project contributed to the creation of the "Professional Association of Equal Opportunities Officers of Castilla y León" for the purpose of promoting the profile of this profession and its development in the region.

DP 305 CAMPIÑA SUR: WORKING TOWARDS EQUALITY also in area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life), **created the Equal Opportunities Forum**, as a co-ordination mechanism between organisations which provide services to the recipient group (mainly women between 35 and 45 with family burdens) within the area targeted.

Thematic area 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) includes significant examples, such as the project delivered by DP 444 DIDO, which contributed to the creation of a **Women's Secretariat** in a branch of CCOO (trade union) in Jerez.

In this same thematic area, the project delivered by DP 244 SABINA generated productive synergies, on the one hand, between women's secretariats of the four trade union's present in the DP, and, on the other, between the Associations of Women Entrepreneurs present as partners in the DP. For the latter, synergies materialised in the creation of a **Federation of Associations of Women Entrepreneurs** of Canarias (before each insular Association worked separately). Furthermore, the level of co-operation within the framework of the transnational project has given rise to co-operation between partners in DP 244 SABINA and partners in the transnational DP subsequently to completion of the project.

Furthermore, please note that a high number of DPs in different thematic areas have contributed to creating new forms of organisation in existing structures, in particular within public organisations participating in the DPs. In this regard an important impact in structures are **the changes made by applying the principle of gender equality**. Participating organisations and DP partners increasingly adopt the figure of the **Equal Opportunities Officer of a certain type of occupational profile which increases awareness of the actions of the projects within the partners, and their awareness**, and contributes to incorporate this political priority into future employment and business creation actions.

The projects have in some cases motivated the partners' -especially public organisations on a local and regional level participating in the DP- taking into consideration the need to provide support services and mainstreaming of the services and products create by the projects.

In **thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life)**, **DP 254 CONCILIA** serves as a representative example. According to partners interviewed, the experience has influenced departments of education in local organisations to open schools in the evenings, extension of the opening hours of day-care centres and allocating more financing to cover these extended services. Similarly, they highlighted the influence of the project on businesses participating in project actions, as some large businesses have begun to implement services to enable reconciliation, which has constituted a reference for the town.

Please note, however, that many of these differences introduced in existing structures have not been sustainable upon completion of the projects, as a result of **lack of financial support** by another kind of subsidy or public intervention. Thus, the impact of the changes promoted within the structures is curtailed by the lack of effective vertical and also in certain cases horizontal mainstreaming, and by the **absence of mechanisms to secure their sustainability, which may be identified as negatively affecting a possible impact**.

Articulation of the **innovation** principle has led to seeking new solutions within the relevant territory or industry. As a general rule it is observed in all thematic areas that these innovative elements in the project have contributed to **institutional changes,** through an **impact on systems to access the labour market and on education systems**. Thus, the projects have triggered new mechanisms within educational and training systems to improve levels of training of beneficiaries, to improve their skills (social, entrepreneurial etc.), adapt their qualifications to changes in the production system and, by extension, improve beneficiaries' access or return to the labour market.

As regards employment training issues, we highlight the experiences undertaken to acquire and improve personal and professional skills based on **training experiences within businesses** by projects in **thematic area 1.1 (access to the labour market)** such as "Non-Labour Work Experience" initiated by DP 24 CORUÑA SOLIDARIA as an instrument to provide practical training in trades and businesses lacking specific training.

Thematic area 2.1 (business creation) has developed **new training courses specifically addressed to the reference beneficiary groups,** providing **integral training** and making such courses more effective as regards training of businesses.

Relevant impacts of projects in thematic area 3.1 (adaptability) are **significant improvements in training schemes.** Examples of these improvements are the provision of **postgraduate on-site training on quality management** in certain counties for the first time, or the **supply of courses** based on new methodologies permitting access to training to employees who are systematically excluded from conventional training programmes.

In thematic areas 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life), 4.2 (reducing the gender gap) and 1.1 (access to the labour market), **training is complemented with actions directed to boosting empowerment and self-esteem as** a way to facilitate access to the labour market of beneficiaries.

This **innovation** has led to the creation of **new occupational profiles**.

In thematic area **1.2 (combating racism)** shows the creation of new occupational profiles such as the **"tutor-mediator" and "intercultural mediator"**. Both the tutor-mediator and the mediator have become key profiles to facilitate access of immigrants to the labour market, acting as mediators between employer and employees, allowing them to eliminate stereotyping which may affect the work relationship.

In **thematic area 2.1 (business creation),** new courses undertaken have given rise to **new profiles such as young entrepreneurs, rural women entrepreneurs**, etc.

> In **thematic area 3.1 (adaptability),** these profiles have been introduced in certain environments for the first time, such as in Castilla y León, **profiles such as technicians for the prevention of labour risks** specialised in the farming sector, or **"IT counsellors",** who combine training and advice in ICTs and organising socio-cultural events. Another interesting and innovative occupational profile is the "network manager", an employer who introduces the rest of the company to on-line networking and the use of ICTs.

However, sustainability of these innovative elements started up by the projects, such as these new profiles and new training possibilities depends to a great extent on their effective mainstreaming into an area of local or regional government or other official recognition. Thus, the absence of financial support and a weak political commitment has limited such mainstreaming and consequently, their impact, this being one of the weaknesses of the process.

In the evaluation team's opinion, the impact on structures and systems caused by **transnational co-operation** programmes is more limited still. As repeatedly described above, the fact that transnationality is considered to be secondary means that, even if positive results were generated, transnational networks or observatories created by the EQUAL projects will only be maintained on very few occasions. A different scenario occurs when such partners meet through their participation in thematic and industry European networks, where they will effectively continue to work together, but this is not a result of the Community Initiative analysed, but of the association culture which has encouraged creating such new networks.

Conclusions

The analysis of projects implemented for all thematic areas shows **a major contribution toward changing market, education and training structures and systems and organisational mechanisms.** Compliance with the principles of the Initiative, in particular the principle of Innovation, Partnership and Thematic Approach by the projects has been a determining factor in these impacts.

As regards **changes in organisational structures,** the projects have contributed to creating **new co-operation networks and structures between partners and other stakeholders who have co-operated in the implementation of the projects.** Furthermore, partnerships and networks created within DPs have proved sustainable on an informal basis after completion of the projects.

As concerns **institutional change**, the main contribution of the projects is appreciated in **new mechanisms within educational and training systems to increase training of beneficiaries and in introducing new occupational profiles, which has contributed to create new mechanisms to access the system,** especially important for disadvantages groups**.**

However, please note that, in some cases, **impact** of the projects **has been curtailed by the lack of effective mainstreaming** of mechanisms and practices applied by the projects. Such **absence of sustainability has been due mainly to the absence of financial support and political commitment** on the part of policy maker stakeholders, limiting the real impact of projects in existing structures. Thus, the real impact of the projects in Round One could have been optimised if their results had been more effectively subject to mainstreaming.

11.4 IMPACT ON BUSINESSES

An analysis of the contribution of the projects to changes in businesses shows differences in intensity and form in each of the thematic areas, and therefore we shall proceed to describe contributions by thematic area. Please note that, although the evaluation team has not taken into account industry variables in its analysis, it has observed that participation of industry organisations in DPs has served to establish direct contacts with industries with a great need to hire employees (such as the Construction and Service industries), thus opening new opportunities for such groups, and for businesses within these industries, which have been able to participate in designing specialisation training actions.

Projects in **thematic area 1.1 (access to the labour market)** have started up new mechanisms and methods seeking active involvement of businesses in the access process, mainly based on the concept of **social responsibility**. In this regard "Caring Business Networks" which represent **a new form of public-private sector co-operation**, encouraging awareness of the business community on different issues while at the same time providing continuity for actions, as they involve making formal commitments by the parties involved. Several projects have obtained mainstreaming results relating to the **creation of awards and prizes to provide recognition to businesses involved in processes on access and continuation in the labour market of persons suffering discrimination and inequality**. Their mainstreaming guarantees continuation of such distinctions.

> **DP 41 "Accord"** has created the "Accord Award to the social quality of businesses" seeking to encourage commitment by economic agents to certain groups with problems in accessing the labour market. This annual Award purports to serve as recognition for businesses that develop best practice in this regard.

Please note also that one of the factors motivating businesses to form part of projects in this area has been the **efforts to adapt to business needs** made by DPs seeking to create links between the supply of personalised and tailored training offered by DPs to the demands of businesses. In this regard, work experience in productive environments has also had a positive impact, as it has influenced employer awareness, not just as concerns the hiring of persons from these groups, but also regarding the need to offer more training and support opportunities (such as reconciliation measures).

In **thematic area 1.2 (combating racism),** projects have sought to reach agreements with employers to enable access to the labour market of the immigrant population. For such purpose they have launched **awareness campaigns** underscoring the **positive aspects of multiculturalism and diversity, and favouring and encouraging self-employment.**

In **thematic area 2.1 (business creation)** a **considerable impact** has been observed on businesses, which is to be expected as a result of the subject of the area. In general, there has been an **improvement in the competitiveness of businesses** created or consolidated after strict training and advice, incorporating aspects such as ICTs and updated management and organisational models. Training has on several occasions included quality and risk management modules, contributing to improve global management of the business project.

Financial advice received by the projects; learning to obtain micro-credits and other financial products; access to innovative products such as new tailored training tools and methodologies; and especially **changes in the attitudes of economic players** have all contributed to providing opportunities to groups, demonstrating that entrepreneurial attitudes also apply to them, thus validating this method as a way for such groups to access the labour market.

On the other hand, monitoring systems and observatories (DP 98, project on Shared Territorial Development and DP 393 LUMEN) have **effectively helped to sustain and consolidate new business projects.** Similarly, **business "socialisation"** promoted by certain DPs by encouraging participation in certain entrepreneur and women entrepreneur clubs also has an impact in boosting business activity, by constituting groups of entrepreneurs which work towards the same objectives, performing particular actions to consolidate their businesses.

Another impact of the EQUAL projects is **innovation in tailored training methods, and especially the use of new IT tools,** encouraged by the integrated entrepreneurial support centres.

In **thematic area 3.1 (adaptability),** the projects have performed **actions to improve business management** in environments such as business co-operation, innovation, total quality, environment, etc. These areas show some of the most significant impacts in this thematic area, as, contrary to other EQUAL projects, in this area, final beneficiaries are often the actual businesses, and it is they which show the impact of the actions performed.

Most projects in this area **have undertaken awareness seminars** in these areas, and have performed a significant amount of training and advice actions on both employees and businesses. **Many projects included pilot experiences to implement business management systems in such areas in reduced numbers of businesses**. A direct impact is appreciated in businesses where such implementation took place, but there are also major, although not easily measurable, indirect effects due to the impact of the "demonstration effect" had by these particular implementations on remaining businesses within the industry or the territory.

Many projects have worked to incorporate **ICTs to businesses and employee skills**. The effective impact of these actions may be considered progress in the awareness of the importance of these aspects in order to remain competitive, but real achievements on businesses which consider to have effectively become more competitive are minor, many times affecting only businesses in the small pilot groups in which projects have tried out effective implementation formulas for business management systems.

As concerns changes in the attitude of employers and economic players, please note that **another important dimension of the projects in the adaptability theme is corporate social responsibility, although no further developments were made in their implementation**. Even so, there have been frequent activities leading to improve the situation of women employees, or to favour reconciliation of the family and professional lives of the staff. In this regard, advances such as the introduction of certain flexibility measures to render competitiveness and reconciliation compatible have been introduced through collective bargaining. Another advantage in this area has been an increase in

awareness and, to a much lesser extent, implementation of attitudes compatible with environmental sustainability.

Development partnerships in this area insist on the importance **not so much of the number of businesses having benefited from the programme, but of the innovative formula's success in making the businesses more competitive.** The evaluation team totally supports this statement; as a result of the experimental nature of EQUAL, the impact must be analysed on a more far-reaching basis than by merely analysing figures concerning final beneficiaries, as effective impact will be in the medium to long-term, when awareness achieved shall materialise into changes in the internal operation of businesses, and whenever there is a real mainstreaming of practices into employment policies.

In **thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life),** the main contribution of projects to changes in businesses and entrepreneurs is limited to initial changes in employers' and economic players' attitudes as regards implementing measures in favour of reconciliation in the workplace, and more flexible timetable organisation formulas. We have also perceived the need to work more directly and constantly with employers to increase their awareness of the opportunities afforded by measures to incorporate the principle of Equal Opportunities and, in particular, measures in favour of reconciliation. The ultimate success of public policies tending to eliminate inequalities and discriminations in the labour market depends on promoting actions on the business environment.

In this regard, projects within the thematic area on reconciliation of family and professional life have performed **actions specifically oriented towards employers, in order to find key arguments to motivate them to incorporating the gender perspective in their organisational structures and measures to promote reconciliation.** Although reduced, the impact generated by the projects in this regard must receive a very positive assessment, taking into account the existing degree of awareness among employers, the lack of support infrastructures for reconciliation and the absence in many cases of integral policies applied within the territory to incentivate businesses to implement measures favouring reconciliation.

In **thematic area 4.2 (reducing the gender gap)**, the projects have performed **a variety of business skills training actions in order to provide their beneficiaries with the necessary training and tools to draft a business plan and start-up a business**. There is a positive impact on self-employment, and encouraging entrepreneurship among women. We have also appreciated that certain activities within projects in this area have contributed to boost business activity (training in entrepreneurial skills, how to start up a business, etc.), by providing persons with tools to draft and start up business projects. In rural projects, many self-employment initiatives have been oriented towards rural tourism and new agricultural forms (organic agriculture, etc.), environmental activities for people with disabilities, etc. However, in general, the impact of the projects on businesses, although reduced, must receive a positive assessment. There is an initial awareness on the part of employers and of the business world of the principle of Equal Opportunities and of the benefits associated with applying reconciliation measures. However, its impact in actual changes in businesses constitutes a pending issue for projects in thematic area 4.2.

In **thematic area 5 (asylum seekers) awareness campaigns** have been performed **concerning the positive social and economic aspects, and cultural enrichment brought about by immigrants,** but

their impact has been very reduced, due to legal difficulties suffered by the target group (many times the true obstacles have been bureaucratic deadlines and barriers, rather than employers).

Conclusions

The evaluation team concludes that **the Initiative has contributed to changes in businesses mostly in thematic areas 2.1 (business creation) and 3.1 (adaptability). As concerns other thematic areas, although there have been positive contributions, it is necessary for projects to seek the more active involvement of businesses. Furthermore, it would be generally beneficial for the business community to become involved in the process to access the labour market, if it wishes to obtain a greater and more sustainable impact.** It is thus necessary to seek mechanisms to involve businesses more directly and actively, and to involve the business community in the implementation of the projects, in order to match "supply" with "demand", and to combat cultural stereotypes on which are based existing discriminations and exclusions to the labour market. The evaluation team therefore concludes that the active involvement of the business community is an essential condition to improve sustainability of impacts and to guarantee success in the medium to long-term.

CHAPTER 12: ANALYSIS OF THE FINAL IMPACT

This chapter analyses the **final impact,** which evaluates the effective contribution made by EQUAL to the *reduction of discrimination and inequality in the labour market at different levels*. This analysis has been undertaken by examining the effect of the EQUAL project innovations on its final beneficiaries, and more generally on target groups.

In order to value the contribution of the Initiative to the production of the aforementioned effects within its scope of action, data obtained from the EQUAL Database have been analysed, as well as case study interviews and the results of the final beneficiary survey.

In spite of the problems mentioned in Chapter 2 (methodology of the Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation) to perform a representative beneficiary survey, the results of the have allowed the evaluation team to compile sufficient evidence on the impact of the Initiative on final beneficiaries of actions performed within the framework of the EQUAL projects. The value allocated to the survey is thus to corroborate the conclusions obtained by analysing other information sources. Table 12.1 (see Appendix II) shows the selected sample and the variety per thematic area.

12.1 FINAL IMPACT AT PROGRAMME LEVEL

Our analysis of the final impact has taken into account differences in the nature and objectives of each thematic area and differences in intensity and types of contribution of the projects to their impact on final beneficiaries in each thematic area. Results have therefore been exploited in aggregate form at programme level and separately by thematic areas. Quantitative survey results are summarised in the tables and graphs provided in Appendix II (Appendix to chapter 12).

Multidimensional analysis of the final impact

In general the analysis has distinguished between four kinds of impact:

- *Improvements in employability,* including, improvements in qualifications, improvements in training (specialised, technical, etc.), etc.

- *Improvement in personal and social skills,* including self-esteem, self-confidence, ability to associate, empowerment, social skills, favourable attitudes to active job searching, etc.

- *Improvements in employment,* which may be self-employment or as an employee

- *Improvements in awareness,* including increased awareness of certain specific issues such as equal opportunities between men and women, changes in attitudes, barriers to accessing the labour market or even to training, etc.

As well as these direct impacts, there are *indirect impacts* such as **encouraging local development** or **improvements in visibility** of groups subject to actions in thematic areas 1.2 (combating racism) and 5.1 (asylum seekers).

However, please note that this classification according to *types of impact* does not entail a ranking order valuing one type of impact more than any other.

In order to make a final assessment of final impact the analysis has used a series of variables such as:

- *Thematic area.* As mentioned above, the intensity and form of impact is different depending on the nature and objectives of each thematic area.

- *EQUAL principles.* Essential EQUAL principles, especially the principles of innovation, thematic approach, concentration, equal opportunities and empowerment, are linked to the final impact of the Initiative, as fulfilment of these principles has contributed to produce positive effects relating to participation, improvements in employability and in employment.

- *Methodology of the implementation of the projects and characteristics of activities undertaken.* For example, it has been observed that training methods or personalised monitoring have acted as a catalyst to the impact. This is why quantitative data have been enriched with an appreciation of the role played by project methodology on the effects obtained.

12.1.1 Analysis of the Impact obtained at programme level

The analysis shows that the **EQUAL Initiative has to a great extent fulfilled its objectives towards beneficiaries,** as revealed by survey data, according to which 88.5% of participants have completed the activity in which they took part. An analysis by thematic areas shows that in thematic area 1.2 (combating racism) nearly one third (28%) have not completed their activities. This is due to the special features and difficulties faced by the target groups for these projects, such as, for example, their high geographical mobility, which results in a greater rate of abandoning of the action.

Contributions of the EQUAL projects to the final impact show **added value because they directly tackle unemployment** (according to the survey, more than half (58.3%) of the persons surveyed were unemployed at the moment of starting their participation – see graph 12.5 in appendix II). This can be appreciated programme level and also by thematic area (see table 12.6 in appendix II), save in thematic area 3.1 (adaptability), where the majority of surveyed persons (73%) was an employee with an indefinite labour contract. This last piece of data is justified by the nature of this thematic area, comprising actions to implement new management systems or a greater flexibility of processes within businesses.

In spite of the positive trend observed in the different thematic areas as concerns achievement of objectives and the fact that **almost half of persons surveyed (46%) has progressed in their employment situation (found work, improved their position at work, made changes to their business), the majority (70% of persons surveyed) do not perceive that such results are a direct result of their participation in the Initiative**. Taking these statements into account, the evaluation team **appreciates that the impact of the EQUAL Initiative must be sought not just in job creation figures but also in more qualitative effects, which form the basis for gaining and continuing in employment in the long term.**

Impact on final beneficiaries through implementation of the basic principles

As mentioned above, impact may be analysed by examining the contribution made by the principles, which constitute one of the principal added value features and one of the strengths of the Initiative.

The search for **empowerment** of beneficiaries results in a better awareness of the issues surrounding them, and thus in the start-up of mechanisms to allow their participation in the project. This entails that **only a small percentage (6.4%) of persons surveyed have had difficulties to take part in the projects**. In general the greatest difficulties have been **time schedules** (30%), followed by **family burdens** (15%). The latter is especially important in thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life), where family burdens constitute a **difficulty for 21% of beneficiaries.**

There is also a greater incidence in women, as a result of applying the principle of **equal opportunities between men and women**. This is confirmed by physical performance data obtained by the EQUAL database (64.6% women) and survey data (77.9% women), at programme level and by thematic area, especially in thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market), with 61.3% of women participants, 63.5% in 2.1 (business creation), 83.6% in 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 88.3% in 4.2 (reducing the gender gap). This greater incidence in women is also observed when analysing **beneficiaries by age groups**, the majority whereof (70.6%) are **between 25 and 45**, of which almost **80% are women** (survey data).

Analysis of types of action in which beneficiaries have participated reveals that effective application of the principle of **thematic approach** in all thematic areas has resulted in the initiation of a **combination of different actions** covering common causes to each of the inherent discrimination and inequality issues faced by groups participating in the Initiative. **Such thematic approach is most clearly visible in area 1.1 "access to the labour market"** (see table 12.4 in appendix II). **The thematic approach impact is even more obvious when analysing data relating to achievements of beneficiaries as a result of their participation**. In this regard thematic area 1.1 shows the most pronounced thematic approach, which has resulted in a higher percentage of beneficiaries who have found jobs (46%) and who have started up a business project (41%) (Table 12.9 in appendix II). This cross-referenced analysis of the information allows the evaluation team to conclude that **application of the principle of thematic approach may have a significant impact in access to the labour market of disadvantaged groups.**

Concentration of actions on the most disadvantaged groups has allowed the projects **to reach persons who**, as a general rule, **have not participated in other activities or similar projects** (59%), which also supports the **complementarity** of the actions. The added value of this extension of actions to formerly excluded groups which formerly did not take part in traditional actions is even greater in thematic areas 1.1 (access to the labour market) with 70% and 1.2 (combating racism) (62%) both related to improvements in employability (see table 12.7 in appendix II).

Thus, the evaluation team considers that application of the EQUAL thematic approach and concentration principles, inherent to its design and manifested in its implementation, has made EQUAL **an Initiative which is open to all** groups suffering **discrimination or inequality** to access the labour market, and this inclusive natures is one of the strengths of the Initiative.

However, the **analysis of the educational level of final beneficiaries** (according to the survey) **reveals that a significant percentage (25%) holds university studies** (see table 12.10 in appendix II).**Interviews also confirm that there are beneficiaries who, although unemployed, do not have a profile corresponding to EQUAL favoured groups.** These results confirm the weakness noted in chapter 9 (Principles, see above) on the more lax application of the principle of concentration, resulting on several occasions in the real beneficiaries of the project actions not being part of excluded groups or those suffering the risk of exclusion from the labour market, which has to a certain extent reduced the effectiveness of the Initiative in reaching out to the most disadvantaged groups.

Impact on final beneficiaries depending on action methods

The evaluation team notes that final impact is also a result of the **innovative methodology followed by the actions.** A comprehensive analysis of all thematic areas discloses three methodological aspects which, have contributed to the final impact, as shown in the following table:

Table 12.0 Methodological aspects

Methodological aspects	Thematic area						
	1.1	1.2	2.1	3.1	4.1	4.2	5.1
Adaptation to the needs of beneficiaries	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Individualised follow-up	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Application of activities in real environments	√		√	√	√	√	

Source: Assessment by the evaluation team

Adaptation to the needs of the beneficiaries relates to whether **actions were flexible in adapting to the needs of the beneficiaries**, thus being distinguished from traditional actions which, in the evaluation team's opinion and in the light of internal results obtained by the projects, **has been evidenced as a more efficient way to achieve a greater impact.** However, although there is an active involvement of the beneficiary in selecting actions in which to participate and in making his/her own itinerary in order better to adapt it to his/her needs, skills and preferences, **it is also true that in most cases there is no prior consultation of the actual target population in the planning and design of the actions to be finally included in the DP working plan** (which would have adjusted actions from the beginning to the reality of such population and of the territory, ensuring a stronger link between the beneficiary and the project)[38].

Individualised follow-up is also a significant aspect. In general, the projects have undertaken **personalised actions**, with this **individualised follow-up of people being perhaps one of the most important features of the projects,** i.e. the difficulties faced by the projects' target populations are due to multiple factors, and therefore only a personalised and individualised treatment allows an in-depth analysis of the issues involved, and to overcome such difficulties. In this regard, **another key element has been performing prior actions** in order to allow technical personnel to **evaluate the**

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[38] It is true, however, that our analysis of the implementation stage has revealed a greater participation through group representative associations or direct participation by the actual beneficiaries.

degree of user employability; to work on motivating and facilitating participation of beneficiaries and on the acquisition of **basic skills.**

An example of this approach is the Individualised Professional Plan undertaken by **DP 367 (ZAMARAT),** in thematic area 1.1, which consisted of the following stages: selection and design of the individual plan, basic training and compensation, plus fostering an attitude of willingness to enter the labour market and learning of professional skills relating to new employment opportunities detected. An evaluation of learning within a real employment context, complemented with a follow-up on the job (by a tutor), promoting protected employment (Personalised tutorial plan and support to business creation) and maintenance of professional skills (Continuing Beneficiary Improvement Plan).

In view of the practices observed in the case studies, the evaluation team can conclude that the most effective actions undertaken by the projects are those which entail **real participation or involvement of the beneficiary** in the action, sometimes leading to adapting the action based on their suggestions.

Application of activities in real environments has proved to be **useful to link training and practical activities and the business world, geared toward the professional diversification of the target population.** This training methodology in real environments, together with continuing support on basic complementary training has obtained interesting results, which validate it as an effective method when working with socially excluded persons, which is not being used in ordinary training methods. The adaptability area features pilot actions on small groups of businesses, which implemented management systems in a real environment for demonstration purposes.

This methodological aspect is not observed in thematic area 5.1 (asylum seekers), whose target group consists of asylum seekers who have not been subject to training in real environments. Actions in this thematic area have focused on social integration of this group.

Types of impact observed at programme level

The different kinds of impacts described at the beginning of the chapter may be found in all thematic areas, but in varying intensity and showing differences depending on the specific objectives of each thematic area. As provided above, there are also indirect impacts, which are also different depending on the thematic area, such as impacts on local development, visibility of certain groups and motivation of the groups.

Although the impact of the Initiative is not homogenous, and there are differences by thematic area, in general terms there is an **improvement in employability of final beneficiaries**. Physical performance data show a **clear emphasis on actions addressed to improving employability** (75% of beneficiaries participating in the actions). Graph 12.11 in appendix II shows the importance of actions relating to "assistance to persons", especially actions not directly linked to job creation.

This **improvement in employability** is also observed in the replies to the survey on final beneficiaries. Most beneficiaries have taken part in training actions (61.7%, according to graph 12.12 in Appendix II), and in actions supporting access to the labour market (30%) whose number 1 impact is an improvement in employability (improvement in job-search skills encouraged by "guidance and

advice to access and return to the labour market" and improvements in technical skills encouraged by "specific training in ICTs to support access to the labour market, self-employment or entrepreneurship").

In the evaluation team's opinion, the impacts of the Initiative may be appreciated not just in respect of the general objectives of the programme, but also in relation to the expectations of the beneficiaries. According to the replies obtained in the final beneficiary survey (Table 12.13 in appendix II), the expectations of those surveyed are focused on the possibility of finding a job (35.6%) and on improving their professional qualifications (28%). Consequently the above are "**expected impacts**" **of the Initiative** on **employment, followed by improvements in employability**. Analysis by thematic area shows that this general trend differs only in thematic areas 2.1 (business creation) and 3.1 (adaptability), where "improvement in qualifications" has been the most important factor to participate in actions, with 29% and 43% respectively. In this regard, the 43% marked relating to thematic area 3.1 (adaptability) is consistent with the nature of the area, which supports business and employee adaptability to structural economic changes and to the use of information technologies and other new technologies.

In view of the assessment given by final beneficiaries on the activities in which they have taken part, **the evaluation team has identified three effects of participation** (ranked by order of importance, see table 12.14 in appendix II)**:**

1. Increase in possibility to continue training/studies (32.5%).
2. Increase in possibilities to find a job (24%).
3. Improvement of conditions allowing them to perform a job (18%).

These three types of impact correspond to an improvement in employability, which may help finding a job. Please note that only in 10.8% of persons surveyed have the activities of the EQUAL Initiative actually contributed to their finding a job, and in 7.3% to starting up a business. Although in general terms the first impact is more marked, the second impact predominates in areas 1.1 (access to the labour market) and 1.2 (combating racism), with 25% and 33% respectively, as they are more focused on professional access. The third effect, improvement of conditions allowing them to perform a job, has reached in the particular case of thematic area 3.1 (adaptability) a high response of 30%, due to the peculiarities present in this area.

These results allow the evaluation team to conclude that **although beneficiaries' expectations are mainly focused on employment, the final impact mainly consists of an improvement in employability**. This conclusion must not underestimate the contribution of the Initiative's activities to the main objectives**. The positive impact on employability is **consistent with the objectives of the EQUAL Initiative** to *"...reduce discrimination in the labour market and inequalities faced by disadvantaged persons"*. Furthermore, **the analysis of its impact on employment cannot always show direct cause-effect relationships, nor make any conclusive evaluations, without taking a more long-term perspective**. Improvements in employability must therefore be considered an initial and essential step towards employment in the medium to long-term.

12.2 FINAL IMPACT BY THEMATIC AREA

12.2.1   Thematic area 1.1: Facilitating access and return to the labour market

In evaluation the impact of projects implemented within thematic area 1.1 in Round One, the team must take into account the vastness of this area, which purports to "*facilitate access and return into the labour market for persons suffering integration or reintegration difficulties relating to the labour market, which must be open to everyone*".

This thematic area, during the period comprising 2003 and 2004[39], physical indicators (table 12.15 in appendix II) show a **high effectiveness**[40] of the projects (223%)[41] and at the same time, existing demand for this type of project[42]. The figures also reflect that projects in this area have granted **priority to women** (61.3% of beneficiaries, see table 12.16 in appendix II).

Types of actions

In order to better understand the impact of this thematic area, it is also necessary to analyse **types of actions**. **Training actions** (20% of beneficiaries of this thematic area, according to EQUAL database data), **access action plans** (33% of beneficiaries) and **guidance, advice and job-search activities** (43% of beneficiaries) have contributed to employability and improvement of personal and social attitudes, which in their turn boost access to the labour market (see graph 12.18 in appendix II). Training actions have visibly contributed to improving access to education and training, and this access to the labour market by beneficiaries, by improving their employability. Furthermore, access action plans have had the effect of improving the **self-esteem** of beneficiaries, their **social skills** and, in particular, to **develop favourable attitudes towards active job-searching** (25.4% according to the survey), providing awareness on the necessary tools to facilitate access to the labour market, and encouraging their use by users in order to undertake job-searches with a greater chance of securing success.

Types of impact observed in this thematic area

There is a significant impact in the **improvement of the beneficiaries' employability** (see table 12.14 in appendix II), where the projects have highlighted the fact that, after participating in the project, beneficiaries are "ready to gain access into the labour market" (as selected by 37% of surveyed persons). This shows the need to take into account the "distance travelled" by the beneficiary from his/her entry into the project, which is essential in measuring impact of the Initiative in the target population when working with groups suffering social exclusion. **The evaluation team considers this "qualitative" impact to be very important, as it sets the basis not only for social integration of the beneficiary, but also sustainability of the access process**.

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[39] Period during which the actions in favour of persons are executed

[40] "Effectiveness" refers throughout this chapter to the percentage of implementation over expectations.

[41] This percentage is due to the fact that the number of beneficiaries was higher than initially expected.

[42] Absence of homogenous accounting for beneficiaries both in the programming and performance stages has made efficiency figures lack representativeness in all thematic areas.

In practice, greater experimentation is felt to be necessary, with actions geared towards **improving personal and social skills** such as self-esteem and empowerment of the target population, as key elements of their access to employment, observing that, for example, in the case of women, even if they do not find a job in the short-term, the actions considerably improve their quality of life.

As concerns **improvements in employment,** it has been observed that this **is not a relevant effect in this area**. Thus, according to the survey, only 19% have found a job and 12% have started a business. However, please note that of all beneficiaries of the Initiative surveyed who have found a job, 46% are from this thematic area and, of the ones who have started a business, a significant percentage (41.5%) are in this thematic area (Graph 12.17 in appendix II). In both cases, the direct effect of the EQUAL project in such results is significant (68% and 65% respectively consider they have achieved this impact as a result of their participation in EQUAL). Based on these observations, the evaluation team appreciates that **although impact on employment in absolute terms has been limited, in relative terms actions in this thematic area have been the main source of all employment created by the Initiative.** One may conclude that the features and methodology of this thematic area deserve consideration in employment programmes as a result of their impact on job creation.

As well as the aforementioned impacts, there is an **indirect impact** representing **employer awareness** through practical training in real environments. This has been achieved by adjusting training to the demands of businesses and at the same time increasing the employer's awareness of the reality of the groups and their potential.

An example of training experiences undertaken within businesses are **"Non-Labour Work Experience"** initiated by **DP 24 (CORUÑA SOLIDARIA)** as an instrument to provide practical training in trades and professions for which there is no available training, allowing to practice skills acquired during prior training and to develop the necessary skills to perform an occupation and/or profession. In practice "*they have demonstrated two virtues, by enabling greater awareness by businesses towards groups at risk of exclusion and have also enabled hiring of persons in this situation, which would have been impossible without mediation*".

Impact on the to application of basic EQUAL principles

This thematic area also reflects the **application of basic EQUAL principles**, especially the principles of thematic approach, concentration and empowerment. The preceding analysis of the programme's general impact highlights **the thematic approach** of this thematic area (standard deviation[43] amounts to 13,961 over a total 117,105 beneficiaries, graph 12.19 in appendix II). The principle of **concentration** is also especially relevant in training actions, which have also had the effect of encouraging groups which have traditionally been excluded from traditional training programmes to seek more training. Furthermore, the presence of representative organisations of the groups, together with the participative and egalitarian spirit observed within the DPs have favoured **"collective" empowerment**. The evaluation team deems positive the indirect impact of this collective empowerment, shown by the contribution of EQUAL to the training and motivation of social stakeholders, reinforcing their collective capacity for action on employment and training issues.

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[43] Standard deviation is the measurement of dispersion of values from the median (average value).

12.2.2   Thematic area 1.2: Combating racism and xenophobia in the labour market

An evaluation of the impact of projects in thematic area 1.2 in Round One must take into account that its final goal is to combat discrimination and inequality in the labour market and in social life, in order to facilitate participation of immigrants and eliminate racist and xenophobic attitudes.

The difference between the expected (53,625) and the actual number of beneficiaries (17,350), and the degree of contribution to women (45.4%, table 12.16) reflect a **low effectiveness** (32%) of this type of projects, according to the physical performance data in the EQUAL Database (see graph 12.15 in Appendix II).

Types of actions

There have been three types of actions in this area (by order of importance according to number of beneficiaries, physical performance data): guidance, advice and job search (52%); personalised access action plans (29%); and training of unemployed persons (18%) (see graph 12.20 in appendix II). According to data from the survey on final beneficiaries, training is the action in which the most persons surveyed have participated (73%). Awareness campaigns targeted to the general public and to the groups have also been a key specific element of this thematic area.

Types of impact observed in this thematic area

Improvements in employability do not necessarily represent an improvement in qualifications, which anyway are a controverted issue, as in some cases beneficiaries are persons with prior training and experience in their countries but which is not recognised in Spain. They are thus "obliged" to train, sometimes at lower levels or in skills unrelated to their professional experience, to allow them to access the labour market. It is also the opinion of the evaluation team that there is a **need to work together with public bodies with powers on educational issues** to achieve formal recognition of qualifications obtained in other countries.

In accordance with the case studies and the survey, improvements in employability rather represent an improvement in the possibility to find a job (33% of surveyed persons). This impact covers especially immigrant men, as there is a higher proportion of men among immigrants (55%). Women face even greater barriers in gaining access to the labour market, but the barriers do not relate so much to their condition as immigrants but to reconciliation problems in the case of women with family burdens. However, this impact is important taking into account that **76% (according to the survey) of immigrants who have increased their chances of finding a job were unemployed.**

As concerns the **improvement of personal and social skills**, training actions (74.5% have taken part in training actions, according to the survey) have had an effect in empowering immigrants to integrate into Spanish society, this being the group in which projects in this area have focused. The **immediate and positive impact** of this empowerment has been an increase in **self-esteem** and **security** acquired by participants in facing the search for employment.

Similarly to area 1.1 (access to the labour market), although **job creation has not been a significant impact in this thematic area (only 18% have found jobs according to the survey),** there are examples of innovative projects which have had an impact on immigrants' chances to find a job.

As concerns the **impact of awareness campaigns** on beneficiaries**,** there is a difference between **campaigns targeted towards the general public**, mainly to the home population (at local level) **and awareness campaigns on inter-cultural values addressed to the business community**. The common feature of both kinds of campaigns is that they take as starting point the immigrant as a key factor of development, and promote the added value of inter-cultural values.

12.2.3 Thematic area 2.1: Promoting entrepreneurship

When evaluation the impact of projects in thematic area 2.1, it is necessary to take into account that this area focuses on facilitating the removal of obstacles encountered in the process of setting up and consolidating a business.

Physical performance data reveal an increase in the number of final beneficiaries, representing 51% over expectations. Furthermore, the degree of contribution of women (63.5% of beneficiaries) is remarkable (see table 12.16 in appendix II). Such data confirm a **high effectiveness of the projects** (151%[44]) observed by the evaluation team as concerns results throughout the process (see table 12.15 in appendix II).

Types of actions

As concerns methodologies for actions that the evaluation team considers have contributed to the impact, they highlight the integrated training service, follow-up services and follow-up service for business start-ups. This **personalised attention** to entrepreneur-beneficiaries has contributed to a great extent to the success of business start-ups. Types of actions showing the greatest potential to have contributed to the impact are guidance, advice and job search (74% of beneficiaries, see graph 12.22 in appendix II).

Types of impact observed in this thematic area

As concerns **business creation,** it is observed that the number of businesses created and, consequently, of self-employed beneficiaries (19.6%, see also table 12.14 in appendix II), offers an initial approach on final impact. Please note also that of beneficiaries, who start up a business, 27% are from this thematic area. These figures must be read with caution, as the **duration of the projects** has been two years, and certain business projects or ideas were still in their planning stages upon completion of the projects and have thus not been accounted for. The evaluation team appreciates, consequently, that the added value of actions leading to the setting up of businesses may increase considerably in the medium to long-term (see table 12.21 for examples of DPs which have generated self-employment in appendix II).

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[44] This percentage is due to the fact that the number of beneficiaries participating was far above the initially expected number of beneficiaries

EQUAL projects in the area relating to business creation also seek other objectives parallel to creating businesses, such as an increase in skills and abilities, which has an impact in **improving skills**. This qualitative result is confirmed by the survey (table 12.14 in appendix II), where the most significant impact among surveyed persons is the increase in possibilities to continue training/studies (36%), followed by the creation of the actual business (19.6%) and an improvement of conditions allowing beneficiaries to perform a job (17%).

As well as the aforementioned direct impacts, there is the **indirect impact** of increasing **awareness**, which has been remarkable in this thematic area. The fieldwork undertaken by the evaluation team has allowed to find a series of DPs, especially in rural environments (although certain urban DPs show the same conditions) whose managers and political offices value the significance of communicating to certain groups a **culture of business and entrepreneurship**.

An example of the awareness of certain groups is **DP 344, project INDECO.** As a result of the inherent problems of the region of Palencia and its economic indicators, it is considered a priority to settle the population in the territory. One of the most effective ways to achieve this i.e. by encouraging people to set up businesses or become self-employed has been the focus of this project. The results of the impact have been:

Impact on persons

The actions for the EQUAL project show an increase in demand for training, information, guidance and advice, especially among women in rural environments. People have thus **"become less afraid"** of improving their lives professionally and socially by becoming an entrepreneur. Women's business creation in the Palencia rural area has considerably increased after implementation of the work programme of project INDECO. 15 businesses have been created and another 15 are under way, but have not yet been formally incorporated as of the date of this report.

Changes in attitude
Maybe the greatest impact of the project is for women to understand that they can create a business and that there are channels by which the administration supports the creation of businesses. It has been essential **"for women to get out of their village, to see things, possibilities of setting up a business, to become less apathetic"**. Some of the project representatives value this impact more than training to improve beneficiaries' skills and abilities.

This impact has been evidenced by a significant increase in people from rural areas in Palencia travelling to the capital of the province to request information on mechanisms for business creation. **"I've come about EQUAL"** is frequently heard from this group, who are requesting information from the economic promotion department of the Provincial Administration of Palencia. The action of the project has thus been very visible, and although 15 businesses started up might not seem like much, they represent the pioneers of a movement which might be consolidated in the future and which may lead to fulfilling the objective of settling population in rural areas, and to prevent their displacement to towns.

This example not only illustrates the ability of the thematic area to generate employment through business creation, but also the **impact had by business start-ups on <u>local development,</u> by**

rendering the economy more dynamic, resulting from the start-up of businesses within the geographical area or scope of action of the project.

12.2.4 Thematic area 3.1: Adaptability

When evaluation the impact of projects in thematic area 3.1, it is necessary to take into account that the ultimate goal of this area is *"...to support businesses and employee adaptability to structural economic changes and to the use of information technologies ..."*.

The difference between the expected (4,.210) and the actual number of beneficiaries (63,854) (table 12.15, physical performance data in EQUAL Database in appendix II) shows **the high effectiveness** (135%[45]) of these kind of projects. Projects in this thematic area have tried to give priority to women; however, in the whole thematic area on adaptability the proportion of male beneficiaries slightly exceeds that of female beneficiaries (46.9% of the total).

However, **in qualitative terms women have been the main beneficiaries of some of the most relevant actions of projects in this area,** such as the drafting of career plans, incorporation of labour flexibility measures from a gender perspective through collective bargaining, or participation in innovative methodologies concerning access to professional training of groups traditionally excluded or self-excluded from such opportunities.

The evaluation team therefore considers that, always taking into account the experimental nature of the EQUAL project, **effects on women have been more important than on men**.

Types of actions

The most important **actions to have contributed to the aforementioned impacts** in this thematic area are **training** (59% of total beneficiaries of the area, according to physical performance data) and **guidance and advice** (35% of total beneficiaries).

Virtual e-training platforms developed by different projects in the adaptability theme, such as "Campus Calytech", **facilitate access to training programmes** through the Internet to persons and businesses who cannot, as a result of their schedule or geographical location, access usual training channels. However, please note that this is not one of the most successful elements of these projects. Indeed, frequently they have served more for the internal training of the DP technicians than to train beneficiaries. However, the sustainability of several e-training platforms may make their impact among final beneficiaries more apparent in the longer term.

Types of impact

The main impacts of the thematic area on adaptability focus on advances made in **awareness of the workforces of businesses** on the issues dealt with by the projects (reconciliation, quality,

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[45] This percentage is due to the fact that the number of beneficiaries was higher than initially expected.

environment, new technologies, etc.), followed by impacts relating to **improvement of competence and personal and social skills.**

As a result of the effective application of training actions (61% of beneficiaries have received training, physical performance data) addressed to beneficiaries, or advice and follow-up offered to businesses (35% of beneficiaries, physical performance data) for the implementation of new management systems or to render processes more flexible, there seems to have been a **direct impact in awareness** (graph 12.23). This distinguishes this thematic area from the rest, where impact on awareness has as a general rule been indirect.

The **professional qualification** of employees who have received training and advice on new technologies, quality, prevention of labour risks, etc., has led to **an improvement in their skills** with greater chances to keep or improve their employment. This assessment is confirmed by qualitative data from interviews to final beneficiaries, and by quantitative data from the evaluation/satisfaction questionnaires requested by the DPs upon completion of training actions, and from the survey undertaken by the evaluation team. In particular the survey data reveal that final beneficiaries have increased their chances of finding a job by 20%, while 30% have improved the conditions allowing them to perform a job (table 12.14 in appendix II), once again in line with the special characteristics of this area.

In spite of the positive effects on beneficiaries in terms of improvement of skills, in some cases it is observed that they have had no chance to use in their jobs the skills acquired at the projects. Furthermore, in spite of increasing their qualifications, work conditions do not always improve after undertaking activities within this thematic area. Mere participation in training or advice actions does not guarantee an improvement in professional qualifications. In the evaluation team's opinion, these effects must be valued **in the longer term**, when employees effectively apply the skills acquired in training actions in their jobs, and when businesses actually incorporate new management techniques and improve their competitiveness, or whenever it may be possible to evaluate the performance of measures included in collective bargaining agreements to render daily schedules more flexible or to equal female salaries to their male counterparts'.

There has been an **impact on personal and social skills, such as self-esteem**, especially among women who in many cases took part in training actions for the first time.

An example are the female employees of fruit preserve businesses in project **DP 538 ACENTO,** who, because of their age (many of them above fifty), lack of education and little available time, fear of ridicule in conventional training actions, etc., were self-excluded from usual actions in the industry. Their experience participating in the activity **Virtual Portable Classroom (*Aula Virtual Portátil*)** has not only allowed them access to training which they could otherwise not have had, but has also made them understand the need to be more familiar with new technologies; in some cases they are eager to repeat similar experiences.

This thematic area's impact on employment is reduced (11% of persons surveyed in this thematic area have found a job or started up a business). However, certain positions derived from implementation of the projects have been created which, in some cases, have continued to form part of

the workforce of the DP members, such as local development agents or equal opportunities' technicians[46]. Less frequent is job creation in beneficiary businesses as a result of the direct impact of the projects.

However, it is expected for some businesses which incorporate new management systems to adapt to changes in their environments to create jobs in the medium term, thanks to their increase in competitiveness and in view of the new functions implemented within the organisation. These effects are to be clearly perceived, as mentioned above, in the longer term.

As well as these assessments on types of impact, the evaluation team considers that **analysis of impact in this thematic area lies more in an improvement in skills than in job creation**, in view of the nature of this thematic area, where the large majority of beneficiaries of adaptability actions were not unemployed (73% of surveyed persons were working at the time of participation in the action).

Impact pursuant to application of basic EQUAL principles

Application of EQUAL principles, such as for example **empowerment,** has had a positive effect on the beneficiary group. The businesses towards which most actions of the projects in the adaptability thematic area are addressed, as a result of their success by fostering the creation of associations (for example: seven business associations and a county commercial confederation arisen within the framework of project laselva@coopera). Through their participation in the design and implementation of the project actions, achieved by the presence in partnerships of organisations representing their interests, or as a result of the empowerment principle which, in some cases provided for making consultations to businesses which were recipients of the programmes to define the content of certain actions, **the final beneficiaries of the projects in this area -in general- have improved their involvement in the support mechanisms addressed to them**.

Among **indirect impacts**, an especially significant one is the impact on motivation derived from the **active participation of businesses in exchanges of beneficiaries within the framework of transnational working agreements.** Furthermore, an unexpected but very positive effect was that **sometimes commercial co-operation links are established between businesses in the partner countries subject to transnational exchanges**.

12.2.5 Thematic area 4.1: Reconciliation of family and professional life

An evaluation of the impact of projects in this thematic area must take into account its final goals, which include "*the search for innovative formulas and instruments to break stereotyping on the sexual division of work, and to involve socio-economic players in breaking such stereotypes*".

The number of beneficiaries is only 1% of the expected number (table 12.15 in appendix II). These figures reflect the **very low effectiveness[47]** of this thematic area, but the evaluation team considers that, in view of the serious difficulties in accounting for beneficiaries this piece of data should not be

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[46] This feature is also present in other areas such as 1.1 (access to the labour market), 1.2 (combating racism), 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life) and 4. 2 (reducing the gender gap), but such jobs seem to have been more sustainable in area 3.1 (adaptability).
[47] Total expected beneficiaries for thematic area 4.1 included 3,700,000 beneficiaries programmed by one DP

taken into account, as it would distort the analysis. There is a **very significant concentration of women** (83.6% of total beneficiaries according to physical performance data), which is consistent with the objectives and content of this. Furthermore, please note the **general absence of actions addressed to men.** The evaluation team considers that, in order to eliminate barriers and to combat stereotyping on the sexual division of labour, innovative formulas to be tested by the projects should actively involve men (partners, spouses, employers, policy-maker stakeholders, etc.) so as to optimise resources and ensure a greater impact of practices tested.

Types of actions

Activities which have most contributed to the impact achieved have been training activities (41% of beneficiaries, physical performance data), empowerment and advice on job searches (33% of beneficiaries) and integrated access action plans (20% of beneficiaries) (see graph 12.24 in appendix II). Some of the most common actions in this area have been dissemination and awareness actions too increase awareness of the general public and of key stakeholders, which have contributed to the impact achieved.

Types of impacts observed in this thematic area

This thematic area reflects positive **impacts** relating to an **improvement in employability, personal and social skills and awareness**. The impact on **employment** has been reduced.

Training actions within the projects have visibly contributed to improving access to education and training and, by extension, access to the labour market of the beneficiaries **by improving their employability**. The level of training of participants has increased, and has tried to adapt qualifications to changes in particular production systems. This qualitative side to the impact to the employability of final beneficiaries is confirmed by the survey data (43% have increased their chances to continue training, 25% have increased their chances to find a job and 17% have improved the conditions allowing them to perform a job, see table 12.14 in appendix II).

Training actions have contributed to **improving social skills** and, in particular, to having favourable attitudes toward active job searching. Please note in this regard, that training actions undertaken by the projects had as objective to promote their self-esteem, providing them with suitable training and tools to be able to access public employment services in order to begin a job search. The issue of beneficiaries' self-esteem has been a constant element in the training actions undertaken by the projects, in particular for projects in rural environments.

Examples of the impact generated by training actions:

- Project **DP 303 CAMPIÑA SUR: WORKING TOWARDS EQUALITY**, consisting of 26 partners, developed a permanent training programme addressed to women for areas traditionally performed by men. 3,018 hours of training were performed, helping 947 persons.

- The Workshop on Domestic Skills for Men developed by project **DP 425 AVIGUEN** had excess demand, and was unable to attend to all requests. An evidence of the partners' and the target population's degree of satisfaction with the project have been constant requests for information on the project submitted by the Provincial Government in Round Two (which was finally not approved). The project has generated a lot of interest and expectations.

In view of the nature of the problems which this thematic area addresses, **projects implemented during Round One have achieved considerable impact both on persons and in general on the target populations as regards awareness of the issues inherent to reconciliation of family and professional life**.

> Examples of the need for awareness:
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> - "*It is very complicated and ambitious to undertake a project to promote reconciliation of family and professional life, because it is about changing people's attitudes. Even today, many people, both men and women, do not adopt an open attitude. Nowadays many men still do not want to assume domestic responsibilities, because they know women will do so "*.
>
> - "*The project started up many workshops, forums and debates, including training actions, which contributed to create a debate. Before, reconciliation did not exist. After this project, reconciliation forms part of the political debate, at local level and even at regional level*".

In order for actions on reconciliation to have a real impact on final beneficiaries, awareness must take place at decision-making levels (policy-maker stakeholders, employers, trade unions, etc.). In spite of the remarkable efforts of the DPs to raise awareness of key stakeholders on reconciliation, **the results of these awareness actions, and, especially, the co-operation imposed pursuant to the fulfilment of the principle of empowerment and partnership, however, do not seem to have significantly affected structures, facilitating the mainstreaming of tested experiences in the case of some projects.** In such cases, there seems to be a notorious lack of interest on the part of competent political stakeholders on employment and/or women's issues in the projects in which they take part. In this regard, please note also the lack of awareness of some policy maker partners in certain projects. They have sometimes questioned the effectiveness of awareness actions undertaken by some projects, in particular relating to the incorporation of the principle of Equal opportunities between men and women in the partners' structures.

> One partner with political decision powers explained the issues on reconciliation as follows: "*The problem of women in the labour market is lack of continuity. When they reach a certain age, they get married and leave their jobs. Some women decide to return to work after getting married, but then they leave again because they have children. Then when they return to their jobs, they have to take days off work because their children get sick ...*".

As concerns employment, an important impact was generated, although lower than the other aforementioned impact (according to the survey, only 9% has started up a business and 17% has found work). There has been encouragement to increase the number of self-employed beneficiaries and job creation. Please note that of total persons surveyed who have found a job, 17% are from the thematic area on reconciliation. **This is the second most important area after access as a source for job creation**. In this regard, the team must value positively the projects' promotion of **entrepreneurial skills among women**, especially in rural environments or within the framework of socio-economic structures which provide no incentives to risk-taking by the beneficiaries of actions. However, **the absence of subsequent follow-up does not allow an assessment of the real impact generated by the projects in terms of creating sustainable employment**.

Impact pursuant to application of basic EQUAL principles

As regards **EQUAL principles**, apart from the principle of **equal opportunities**, which is inherent to this thematic area, the principle of **thematic approach** is also suitable for application to this area. This appropriateness results from the deep-rooted barriers which hinder reconciliation of family and professional life, which requires an integral treatment of the issues involving all economic and political stakeholders, and society as a whole in order to be successful and generate an impact. However as mentioned above, **implementation of the projects within such a reduced period and using limited resources in economic and human terms limits the possibility to appreciate an effective contribution to this principle in the final impact**.

12.2.6 Thematic area 4.2: Reducing the gender gap and supporting desegregation

An evaluation of the impact of projects in this thematic area must take into account the basis of discrimination which the EQUAL Initiative purports to combat, and which are grounded in cultural attitudes in the working environment, in the workplace and in organisations and organisations responsible for decision-making on employment and human resources issues.

A comparison between the expected and the actual number of beneficiaries shows an effectiveness of 77% (table 12.15 in appendix II). Furthermore, there is a **very significant concentration on women** (88% of total beneficiaries according to physical performance data) which is consistent with the objectives and content of this thematic area.

Types of actions

Actions which have contributed the most to the aforementioned impacts are training actions (40% of beneficiaries according to physical performance data, of which 33% refers to training of employed persons and work experience, see graph 12.25 in appendix II), and occupational training, hiring training, training within the company, and economic aid to transport and/or meals. Please note, in this regard, the application of the principle of **concentration,** as appreciated in the marked focus of come of these actions in boosting women's self-esteem and awareness, especially in rural environments. Furthermore, many projects have oriented training actions toward industries and occupational profiles traditionally performed by men, and to provide women with entrepreneurial and negotiation skills which favour women starting-up businesses. As in thematic area 4.1 (reconciliation of family and professional life), among the most common actions in this area have been dissemination and awareness actions geared to raising awareness in the general population and in key stakeholders, which have contributed to the impact.

There is a **generalised absence of actions oriented toward men** in many projects. It would be beneficial to involve men more directly in project actions, in particular in dissemination and awareness actions, in order to optimise project results and maximise their impact.

Types of impacts observed in this thematic area

In spite of the low effectiveness of the thematic area, certain positive **impacts** are appreciated relating to **improvements in employability, awareness and job creation (self-employment)**. In general, projects have contributed to improving qualifications and to adapt qualifications to new technologies and new productive sectors through their access to training and education. According to the survey on final beneficiaries, their participation in the projects has increased their chances to continue their training (33% of persons surveyed) and has increased their chances to find a job (24% of persons surveyed). These last data reveal the **significant potential added value of these projects**, as more than half of beneficiaries (54% of persons surveyed) were unemployed at the time of initiating their participation.

Please note the **impact** of the projects in **raising awareness** of the beneficiaries, stakeholders with political decision-making powers and target populations in general, thanks to dissemination and awareness actions undertaken by the projects and geared towards reducing the gender gap in the work environment

As noted by those interviewed, dissemination and awareness actions undertaken within the framework of project **DP 244 SABINA** have made a major impact in target populations. The Itinerant Exhibition undertaken in co-operation with transnational partners was especially significant. Furthermore, actions performed in institutions contributed greatly to raising awareness of persons and structures in local organisations and of civil servants, in particular the ones involved in reviewing current collective bargaining agreements for public local organisations participating in the DP. Thus, the project has made an impact on the organisational fabric and on persons within such institutions, thereby influencing work processes.

As concerns **job creation** the most significant factor is self-employment, although the survey results reveal that only 6.8% of beneficiaries surveyed consider that their participation has contributed to their self-employment. The evaluation team considers that, although in quantitative terms, the impact is low, it is important, given the nature of actions undertaken (more geared towards access action plans and training) and the limited period provided for the implementation of the EQUAL projects.

An example of impact of a project is **DP 498 RURAL EQUALITY**. Among other actions, the project contemplated undertaking a series of training actions in order to promote skills to access the labour market. The number of persons served was high. Such training actions have promoted job creation (through work experience included in many training courses) and self-employment (encouraging the setting up of businesses between participants in the training courses). Please note, for example, that some of the participants of a gardening course have created a co-operative. Directly or indirectly, the project has contributed considerably to business creation in accordance with the persons interviewed.

Actions to promote access to employment in project **DP 444 DIDO** were successful in achieving participation of a wide variety of stakeholders. These actions were adapted depending on the target group to which they were addressed. Around 2,000 unemployed persons received training and also participated in courses on the use of new technologies in professional recycling. A good part of beneficiaries have also been referred to other programmes. For example, female beneficiaries who had taken part in entrepreneurship guidance actions have been referred to other programmes, through which they may benefit from subsidies to create a business.

Although projects in this thematic area have made major impact, especially on the attitudes and behaviours of beneficiaries and target populations in general, the evaluation team feels it is essential **to allocate resources to continue efforts to combat women's inequality in the labour market, in order to maintain and improve such impacts in the medium to long-term.**

12.2.7 Thematic area 5.1: Contributing to the integration of asylum seekers

An evaluation of the impact of projects in this thematic area must take into account the goal of this area, which distinguishes it from other EQUAL interventions in Spain, which is *"...to provide training to the asylum seeker during the processing of his/her situation… and to promote general actions in favour of his/her integration".* The impact achieved in this area is observed mainly through qualitative data, as, for data protection purposes, the DPs have not facilitated contact details to the evaluation team in order to perform the survey.

The difference between expected and actual beneficiaries reveals a low effectiveness (45.3%, physical performance data, see table 12.15 in appendix II) in this thematic area. Furthermore, the concentration of women has been lower than in other thematic areas (only 36.8% according to physical performance data) this being due to the fact that asylum seekers are mostly men.

Types of actions

The **actions** which have most contributed to the final impact in this thematic area are integrated access action plans and training. In the evaluation team's opinion, the project's added value is not so much the nature of the actions but the **methodology applied**. In this context, **personalised monitoring** has contributed to improving personal and social skills.

Types of impact

The most noteworthy impacts of the projects in this area are the **increase in visibility of the group and the improvement of their personal and social skills.**

EQUAL projects have raised awareness in the business community and among politicians of the existence of asylum seekers, which were almost unknown in Spain, thus increasing this group's **visibility**. Furthermore, actions undertaken have contributed to increase beneficiaries' **self-esteem,** as they feel supported by the EQUAL project structures.

Improvements in **qualifications** by training actions has been a controverted issue, as in some cases the beneficiaries had prior training and experience in their countries which is not recognised in Spain. Interviews made to DPs and beneficiaries in case studies reveal that many persons feel "obliged" to undergo training sometimes at lower levels or bearing no relationship with their professional experience: *"...I took a course on welding, which is at a lower level than what I already know, but I had to take it to obtain an assistance certificate." "... I am a doctor but my studies aren't recognised, and it seems that I will have to take some courses to obtain validation of some parts of my studies".*

There is no impact on **employment** in this thematic area, as its main objective was the social integration of asylum seekers. The training provided to the group constitutes a way to gain access to a job, but this is an impact which must be evaluated in the long-term.

Conclusions

The "qualitative" final impact exceeds the "quantitative". In practically all thematic areas, the most positive impact has been on "qualitative" aspects, from improvements in self-esteem and empowerment of disadvantaged groups to improvements in qualifications (employability). This impact reflects the need to take into account the "distance travelled" by the beneficiary from his/her entry into the project, essential when dealing with groups at risk for social exclusion. "Quantitative" impact in terms of "jobs created" or "access to the labour market" or "self-employment" has been positive but without significant statistical value. The evaluation team considers the "qualitative" impact to be very positive, as it lays the foundations not just for social and labour integration of the beneficiary, but also for the sustainability of the integration process in time.

The evaluation of impacts is limited as a result of weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation actions undertaken by the projects. The projects' weaknesses in undertaking monitoring and evaluation hinder the gathering of evidence on the effects and impacts of the projects. This is reflected by the difficulty to obtain aggregate information on project results and quantitative information on their effects. In many cases projects have concentrated on implementation, disregarding follow-up information gathering and analysis.

Personalised and participative actions have had greater effect on final beneficiaries. The most effective actions have been those entailing real participation and involvement of the beneficiary in the action, leading, in some cases, to adapt it based on the user's suggestions. However, although there seems to have been an active involvement of the beneficiary in selecting actions in which to participate and in making his/her own itinerary in order better to adapt it to his/her needs, skills and preferences, it is also true that in most cases there is no prior consultation of the actual target population in the planning and design of the DP working plan, which would have adjusted actions to the reality of such population and of the territory from the beginning, ensuring a stronger link between the beneficiary and the project.

The evaluation team has noted a high effectiveness of the projects and positive impacts obtained, but always within a limited period of time. Effectiveness of the projects has been generally high (exceeding expectations relating to number of persons assisted, especially in the access, business creation and adaptability thematic areas) and positive impacts in all areas (showing differences as to types of impact and intensity). However, there are certain difficulties in actually achieving the practical access to the labour market of such persons, as empowerment actions and the attention to issues affecting target populations require a broader time perspective.

Awareness constitutes an added value of the Initiative, both as a direct and as an indirect impact. In certain thematic areas such as 1.2 (combating racism) or 5.1 (asylum seekers), raising awareness has been a central objective and, consequently, a major impact. In other thematic areas

awareness has been raised on issues which were almost unheard of before (for example, reconciliation) and in rendering certain geographical areas more dynamic, thus boosting local development (for example by business creation in rural areas).

Our analysis shows limited progress on reconciliation and reducing the gender gap. Impact has been positive but limited, faced by the absence of awareness on these issues in the territories in which these projects have been implemented. There is a need to undertake institutionalised awareness campaigns from a broader time perspective, and to concentrate more on men, which is essential to achieve changes in work and family environments and, in particular, in the business community and among policy makers as concerns active employment policies.

SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the recommendations of the Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) for Spain 2000-2006. The evaluation team has made operational recommendations for the remaining implementation period of the Initiative, and strategic recommendations for the following structural programming period, which reflect the most positive features of EQUAL.

CHAPTER 13: OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are a series of operational recommendations supporting the analysis and conclusions from this Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation for the EQUAL Programme in Spain 2000-2006.

13.1. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION 2 (RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHAPTER 4)

13.1.1. Recommendations on the analysis of the implementation of national and transnational work programmes and mechanisms and processes developed

- **Recommendations on internal organisation and co-ordination of the Development Partnership (DP):**

The evaluation team deems it essential to favour communication and exchange of information between partners within every partnership. It therefore recommends encouraging exchanges by setting regular meetings, where information on the state of the actions may be exchanged, also providing the opportunity for each partner to provide information on its own organisation, which may favour stronger links between partners and the sustainability of the co-operation. Fluid communications also allows a broader view shared by all, permitting an easier co-ordination of actions and preventing deviations and fragmentation of actions (and of the actual partnership).

Furthermore, it would be advantageous to ensure that, **in the event that co-ordination or management** is taken on by a company **external** to the partnership or even an internal body, it does not exclude the involvement of other DP partners.

In the evaluation team's opinion it would be useful, at programme level, for **project sponsors in Round Two to exchange information with organisations** (representative and co-ordinating partners) that **have participated in completed projects** in order to share their experiences, particularly in management and co-ordination of the DP, sharing not just best practice, but also "worst practice" in project management.

- **Recommendations on the degree of achievement of objectives**

The evaluation team recommends that all projects **define global objectives** accurately and realistically. For such purposes it would be advisable to **identify exactly** what such objectives purport to achieve, to set **indicators** allowing the measurement of the degree of achievement and setting a clear **schedule** to fulfil it. The indicators should be defined on both a **qualitative** and a **quantitative basis**. It will thus be possible to obtain more accurate information on projects' effect on persons and their impact, especially as concerns more relevant aspects when analysing achievement of the objectives of the thematic areas, such as changes in mentality, self-esteem, or stereotyping on the sexual division of labour, inter alia. This makes it possible to gather information both on *how* the project influences people and on *how many* beneficiaries it has been able to mobilise or have participated, for example, in a training action. This confirms the recommendation provided in the Mid-Term Evaluation that objectives "*must be limited but accurately formulated, and, to the extent that this is possible, perfectly quantified and ranked by order of priority. This is particularly important if the Initiative intends to experiment with different methods: if such tasks are to be effective, it is necessary to accurately define the scope of the experiment*" (page. 361, Mid-Term Evaluation of the EQUAL CI)

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to design a **specific final report template** for all projects, setting out the information gathered by the Monitoring System and/or continuing monitoring and evaluation system used by the projects. This would allow a better analysis of the impact of the Initiative and, at the same time, would advise projects on the type of information to be gathered during their implementation.

Another important aspect of the final report is to include **lessons learned**, not just relating to implementation of actions, but also as concerns implementation of principles in the operation of the partnership, in the management of a European programme, etc. These kinds of lessons are valuable not just for EQUAL, but also for sponsors and partners of other programmes and initiatives.

- **Recommendations on implementation of activities within the national project**

In order to effectively **respond** to **eventualities** during implementation of the projects and to prevent delays in the implementation of work plans, it would be advantageous for DPs to use **flexible decision-making systems, horizontal co-ordination mechanisms and an active and efficient co-ordinator**. A **participative and flexible** work dynamic would allow introducing relevant changes to attend to the needs of beneficiaries, and to adapt the project to changes and to the reality of the territory **for the purpose of optimising resources in order to achieve maximum added value**. This way projects will operate effectively and will contribute to achieve or even exceed expected results.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, although resources allocated to the projects are important and the discrimination issues they seek to combat are complex and require holistic treatments, it would be beneficial to define **project objectives more precisely,** and, in certain cases, to **limit activities** to be undertaken by the projects in order to maximise their effects and impacts, without limiting innovation.

- **Recommendations on the analysis of the implementation of transnational work programmes and mechanisms launched**

The projects are recommended to **invest the necessary time and resources** to ensure a correct implementation of the transnational project. Projects are recommended to **reinforce monitoring and evaluation,** as this allows ensuring proper implementation and management of the Transnational Cooperation Agreement (TCA), helps to evaluate the added value of transnational co-operation and contributes to the validation and mainstreaming of best practices.

It is advantageous to appoint within the DP **a person dedicated to transnationality who is the main reference and contact point**, whose task is to keep the transnational project alive throughout its whole implementation period.

The Support Unit needs to provide **more advice and aid to DPs to start up co-operation,** and encourage the use of tools such as the "EQUAL Transnational Cooperation Guide" (which provides practical examples used by projects in Round One) and exchange of information in seminars and workshops. The SU should take a more active role in the development of transnational projects, making DPs more clearly aware of the advantages associated with transnational co-operation, and show how to optimise such co-operation and advising and controlling DPs with less transnational experience or who are experiencing greater difficulties.

- **Recommendations on financing**

It is important to ensure that the **partnership has the necessary capacity to manage the project,** so it is recommended to include the presence of organisations with the ability to provide "financial buffers", ensuring financial solvency of the DP, as well as contributing their time and experience.

It would also be advisable to **make the submission of partial certifications more flexible,** so that they may be submitted every three months, which, as well as speeding up payments to the DPs would allow the Managing Authority to exercise greater expense control and identify in advance possible problems in meeting N+2 objectives, in order to **apply corrective measures** where necessary.

Awareness of the issues and experience in the subject of the project are essential, but so is **knowledge on the management of European programmes and financial capacity to cover all actions**. It is important not to underestimate the level of resources required, thus **good planning** to cover for all eventualities is needed. Once again, it is essential to choose the partnership well, ensuring that partners have the necessary knowledge and capacities both to deliver the actions and to manage and finance the partnership.

- **Recommendations on monitoring and evaluation of actions**

The evaluation team recommends that the Support Unit exercise **greater control and support on the use by the projects of monitoring and evaluation processes and mechanisms**. Please note the importance of establishing useful mechanisms to monitor actions and beneficiaries of the projects, in particular because they **provide indisputable evidence of the impact of the projects.**

It is also essential to **use both internal and external evaluation** to **influence implementation of the project,** for which it is advisable that evaluation be performed on a continuing basis, and to start-up mechanisms to ensure such feedback. In this regard, the evaluation team deems it advisable for the SU to **recommend DPs to use external evaluations, without excluding self-evaluations by the DP**, to encourage reflection. The level of competence and resources required to perform an evaluation tend to be better in external organisations with more experience, who are better versed in evaluation techniques. Furthermore, the independence of external evaluators makes their results more reliable. However, please note that, when using external evaluators, it is advisable to indicate the purpose of the DP and of the evaluation exercise, which must identify not just best practices but also lessons learned.

13.1.2. Recommendations on support provided by the Support Unit to Development Partnerships

In line with the provisions of the Mid-Term Evaluation, the evaluation team for this Update of the Mid-Term Evaluation feels that a **greater unification of criteria** is necessary, for which **greater institutional co-ordination** of technical personnel would be advisable.

Similarly, it would be beneficial **for SU technicians not only to be better aware of but also more able to exert influence on the general strategy for the Programme**, in order for them to better understand the ultimate goals of the actions, which would result in an improvement of the latter's' utility, and would ensure that decisions were made with adequate knowledge of the reality of the implementation process. Organisation of bi-yearly meetings to inform the technical team of the general guidelines followed by the Programme, advances in fulfilment of general objectives and general strategy being followed, allowing them to give their opinion on such strategy, would facilitate the view of al technical personnel, **resulting in their performing their duties with a greater overall vision, which would therefore result in more homogenous actions.**

It is necessary for the SU to give **the DPs precise instructions on aspects such as accounting for beneficiaries,** in order to apply uniform criteria which guarantee reliability of the data gathered.

In the evaluation team's opinion, although the SU's co-operation may be sought in the search for transnational partners, the implementation of transnational work programmes must be carried out by the DP similarly to the implementation of their national work programme. The SU should thus co-operate to solve queries or requests for advice in the same way as for national programmes. However, having noticed a repeated difficulty in several DPs, it could create some sort of **forum or workshop, managed by the SU, which helps contribute to problem solving for DPs experiencing difficulties with the implementation of their transnational projects.**

Organising and facilitating **DP seminars** on:

- **M**anagement, administration and project monitoring (including how to draft reports in order to unify criteria and standardise presentation of information)

- Regular meetings between the projects as **and information and experience exchange forums** on the implementation of their respective projects, the principles and peculiarities of each thematic area.

The SU's **attitude** in assisting with the implementation of Action 2 has been evaluated by the evaluation team as "**reactive**", acting only on cases where it has been requested to do so by the DPs. It would be advantageous to **encourage a more "proactive" attitude** relating to projects, which are less likely to co-operate, thus making project implementation more dynamic.

Lastly, it is recommended for **partial and annual reports attached to certifications to include**:

- The number of *present* beneficiaries (persons and businesses) who have take part in the project from the start of the action until certification of the expense. Number who have completed the action, number who are currently taking part in it and number who have abandoned it.

- Partial reports must include an estimation of expenses until end-of-year, as it allows the MA to review progress, in respect of fulfilment of expense objectives for the year.

- Partial reports must also include information on performance of objectives and planned activities, fulfilment of basic and horizontal principles and monitoring, control and evaluation mechanisms, allowing a monitoring by the SU on continuing basis.

It is **recommended to separate technical assistance to the projects from the processing of expense certifications**, i.e., for the technicians to focus on technical support, and to have another team in charge of certifications. This would allow, on the one hand, more active tutoring of the projects, and, on the other, greater control of certifications and thus of expenses. This "financial" team would monitor the number of beneficiaries, reply to queries relating to certifications and eligibility of expenses, deal with the EMS, providing greater support to the Managing and Paying Authority.

13.1.3. Recommendations on the analysis of tools made available to the Development Partnerships to deliver their work programmes

It is recommended to **simplify language** and to use, whenever possible, a **terminology which is not exclusive for stakeholders of the EQUAL Initiative**. This would not only facilitate understanding by the DPs of any instructions received, but would also bring the Initiative closer to the stakeholders which the Initiative intends to influence, and to the general public.

It would be beneficial for the SU **to monitor the application and usefulness of the tools** by projects, and to evaluate them, looking out for any problems and difficulties in their use.

It is recommended to incorporate in the **EMS** specific entries distinguishing foreign beneficiaries by origin. As noted by the evaluation team for Round One, there were certain deficiencies as concerns indicators on specific activities for certain thematic areas (for example in adaptability); it seems that this problem has been solved in expectation of Round Two[48].

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[48] See chapter 8.2

It is furthermore recommended for the EQUAL Monitoring System (**EMS)** to distinguish beneficiaries of dissemination actions of other activities, and to involve DPs in its design.

The **EMS** should allow aggregation of data on a DP level, but also on a thematic area, theme and programme level.

It would be advantageous to incorporate into the **IT Application User Guide** examples of actual cases of entering data by DPs in Round One, allowing the user to understand on a practical basis how to enter data in the EMS[49].

Furthermore, incorporating consultations made during Round One in the **Project management and control guide**, and underscoring issues which have required more advice and information would also provide added value. It would also be interesting to include information on certain processes, such as project selection for Action 3.

It would be advisable to **draft a guide on the application of a gender perspective by themes** or to include an appendix in the existing guide, showing characteristics of themes not covered therein.

Equal Transnational Cooperation Internet Module (ETCIM): It would be very useful to draft a glossary and/or list of key words translated into several languages. It would also be advisable to create an alert in the electronic system if any key data should have been left out (for example, e-mail), which may delay or hinder the performance of the transnational project.

Basic information on the EQUAL Initiative included in the website http://www.mtas.es/UAFSE/equal.htm should **include more information on the results** of the Initiative, and be used as a vehicle for **dissemination and advertising**.

The **website** could be used as an **exchange forum**, allowing **projects** to participate in its **contents**, offering information on the website on **best practice, guides and other products offered by the projects**. It would also be beneficial to make available on the website a **schedule** showing seminars/conferences/events organised by the different DPs (and not just those undertaken within NTGs), to **encourage co-operation between DPs and increase the visibility** of the Initiative.

On the other hand, a series of **issues** have been identified which **could be considered as potential contents for new materials or guides** for the projects:

- Specific advice on how to articulate the principles of the Initiative, including examples on how Round One projects have faced the challenges involved and lessons learned.
- Preparation of regular reports on existing policies affecting each thematic area, using the ministry's existing information, and thus identifying opportunities for the projects, and their mainstreaming potential and participation and contribution of other bodies in the process, such as relevant departments in regional bodies.

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[49] The evaluation team has noted that the use of the **IT Application User Guide** for Round Two was simpler and included some theoretical examples which may provide guidance to the DP.

- "Mailings" for each thematic area allowing exchanging information and experiences between the projects (publications, conferences which may be of interest).

13.2. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF MAINSTREAMING (RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHAPTER 5)

13.2.1. Recommendations on design and implementation of mainstreaming strategy

- **Recommendations pursuant to the analysis of the mainstreaming plan**

The evaluation team considers that it would be advantageous **to draft a mainstreaming strategy or work programme at programme level** which is sufficiently detailed, so as to include **the specific objectives to be fulfilled as a result of dissemination and mainstreaming**.

Said work programme should include **a clear top-down dissemination strategy** addressed to the general public, in order to take advantage of the possibility to reach the greatest number of people from the institutions comprising the EQUAL super-structure (Managing Authority, Monitoring Committee, NTGs).

This effort could be addressed to **increase the visibility of the Initiative**, its objectives and its results, and thus to increase the political returns of the involvement of certain stakeholders.

Thus, major dissemination activities **geared to the national general public** (TV and press advertisements, support statements by policy-maker stakeholders, etc.), could be articulated from the Managing Authority (MA), which has the greatest potential to do so effectively. Furthermore, it could act as sponsor, within the Monitoring Committee, of the "mainstreaming spirit" which should be present in all members of the EQUAL structures.

The mainstreaming work programme should include a division of responsibilities between the EQUAL structures (Managing Authority, Monitoring Committee, SU and NTGs).

The strategy to be designed should feature **a suitable timeframe**; i.e., the evaluation team recommends that creation of products should be done in time to cover needs where required.

EQUAL structures, with the involvement of the Monitoring Committee, are recommended to include among their mainstreaming responsibilities to **identify existing mainstreaming requirements (i.e., identification of stakeholders to whom practices could be mainstreamed)**. Members of the Monitoring Committee could promote the search for possible "mainstreaming stakeholders". This could bring "supply" of best practice subject to mainstreaming closer to "demand" (currently not very motivated).

Such mainstreaming must not be focused exclusively on externals, but rather a part of resources could be allocated to **effective mainstreaming within the bodies involved** (members of the Monitoring Committee, the Managing Authority, NTG members, etc.), so that the Initiative may "soak through" to all national and regional political sectors.

The evaluation team considers that the SU could become even more involved, **providing valuable guidance to DPs in the implementation of dissemination and mainstreaming actions**, and helping them to channel efforts for potential mainstreaming "demand" (pointing out activities and studies undertaken within the NTGs or other EQUAL structures).

It would be advisable for the SU to draft a **Guide on Dissemination and Mainstreaming** which may help to correct deficiencies observed in the DPs' understanding and/or internalisation of the mainstreaming principle.

The evaluation team considers that it would be very positive for the SU to encourage **the creation of links between DPs with mechanisms such as an events' schedule.**

- **Recommendations on the analysis of the Activities of National and European Thematic Groups**

It is necessary to establish working plans for the NTGs and their subgroups for the whole duration of the CIP. Each NTG must draft a mainstreaming strategy indicating how, when and to whom to perform mainstreaming.

It is also necessary to articulate a **mechanism to ensure exchange and co-ordination of activities and products** of NTGs and their subgroups, in order to ensure that results do not remain closed to all but just a few stakeholders.

It would be beneficial for each NTG to include among its members **all DPs and other relevant stakeholders in the sphere in which it is operating.**

The evaluation team recommends the possibility of creating a **permanent horizontal core group for all three NTGs,** to promote the continuity of activities to be undertaken and the performance of its action plans and objectives. This permanent technical core group could articulate mechanisms to perform exchanges between NTGs, especially in order to join mainstreaming efforts, which could be common to all NTGs.

A deficiency observed by the evaluation team which could be covered by the NTGs as part of their strategy of encouraging mainstreaming into policies and practices would be to **measure the effectiveness of the Initiative at a political level,** and not just with indicators at project level. For such purposes it would be advisable to **create an inventory or database of all mainstreamed activities**, which could go further and even evaluate and validate mainstreaming performed, taking as an example the experience of the *Report on conclusions on best practices mainstreamed into general policies within the framework of the activities of National Thematic Group 1,* and making an effort at programme level. It would also be beneficial to draft a **compilation of transnational best practices**.

An effort should be made to **give more visibility and increase dissemination of results of the ETGs' activities.**

It would be advisable for NTGs to provide data both on dissemination on a transnational scale and on enlarged horizontal mainstreaming and vertical mainstreaming. For such purposes the evaluation team recommends a series of ideas which may be put into practice:

- **A strategy of identifying potential stakeholders to mainstream results** could be articulated within the framework of the NTGs' activities, **including an analysis of the "needs"** of such organisation' programmes or structures (as a complement to the work of the CS members in this regard). Thus the circle would be further narrowed down to target-stakeholders. **These would be selected not just because they operate within the same industry in which the results subject to mainstreaming were developed, but because a gap has been detected to be filled by the best practice within their activities and/or structure.** Innovation, as shown in our analysis on the fulfilment of the principle of innovation (see below, chapter 9), means especially innovation within the context of implementation, and it may therefore be that a practice identified as a novelty and as a best practice to be mainstreamed is already being undertaken in other sectors and within the structure of stakeholders invited to take part in dissemination and mainstreaming events, and therefore might not be of particular interest to them.

- In order to encourage interest in mainstreaming on the part of stakeholders with political decision-making powers, the evaluation team proposes to develop **a methodology to perform for a legal and cost-benefit viability analysis of mainstreaming** relating to the incorporation by "target" organisations changes to their structures, programmes or policies to include a best practice developed by EQUAL.

- Either the MA, the NTGs, or pursuant to an ad hoc commitment of the Monitoring Committee members could undertake to perform **advertising and dissemination actions** for EQUAL in the whole national territory, making the Initiative known through actions in the media.

- Furthermore it would be interesting to contemplate the possibility of organising **national events** in which all stakeholders involved in EQUAL could participate, to favour **enlarged horizontal mainstreaming**. Thus the NTGs could help enlarged horizontal mainstreaming by serving as a **forum for DPs and relevant stakeholders.** Such forum should be structured so that it may serve to identify activities developed by the DPs which might be interesting for mainstreaming purposes. After using this forum to join a good practice developed by a DP with an organisation to which it could be mainstreamed, mainstreaming work could continue at DP level. Thus, the DP which created the best practice and the DP or organisation which wishes to study the possibility of its implementation in its structures, programmes or policies could draft an individualised (or joint) Action 3 proposal. This Action 3 proposal could consist of the viability study of the implementation of the best practice in the structures of the stakeholder identified in the forum.

- In respect of **vertical mainstreaming**, the evaluation team proposes that the NTGs serve as a forum for such purposes, articulating some kind of activity (discussion tables or similar), ensuring the participation of policy-maker stakeholders, for example, by making it a requirement in order to take part in these activities to actually be a policy-maker (not just the organisation, but also its representative in the forum).

13.2.2. Recommendations on the design and implementation of dissemination and mainstreaming in Action 2

In the evaluation team's opinion, **it is necessary to include a mainstreaming strategy for the implementation of Action 2 of the projects from the beginning** by setting the mechanisms to identify what the project is offering ("what to mainstream"), which persons with decision-making powers relating to active policies whose participation it wishes to encourage and involve in the mainstreaming process ("to whom to mainstream"); mechanisms and procedures to articulate the mainstreaming process ("how to mainstream") and at what time to identify best practices and initiate such mechanisms ("when to mainstream")[50].

In the light of the results of vertical mainstreaming processes during Action 2 in Round One projects, however, **the evaluation team considers that mainstreaming in Action 2 should be focused on awareness and dissemination within the same level and on horizontal mainstreaming actions** ("self-mainstreaming" to DP partners)**.**

It is thus advisable for mainstreaming activities undertaken within Action 2 to be focused on two kinds of activities:

⇨ Dissemination and awareness activities to the "general public" within the SP's sphere;

⇨ "Simple" horizontal mainstreaming activities (or self-mainstreaming). It would be advisable to include in work programmes within the framework of the DPs' strategy, activities such as analysing the legal and regulatory implications of applying best practices of the projects to other territories or other cases of discrimination or cost-benefit analyses on mainstreaming of services or activities undertaken by the EQUAL projects, inter alia. **All of the above, however, must also include a commitment by the partners and especially policy-maker partners on employment and human resources issues** to effectively undertake such mainstreaming in the event that the aforementioned viability studies should conclude in favour of applying such best practices.

13.2.3. Recommendations on the design and implementation of dissemination and mainstreaming in Action 3 projects undertaken by the Development Partnerships

• **Recommendations on the selection of Action 3 proposals**

The evaluation team recommends for **projects to make a greater use of self-assessment and external assessment, and even to perform studies or analyses** which clearly evidence that the activity, methodology or experience intended to be mainstreamed effectively constitutes a best practice. This would allow the SU **to provide a more objective assessment on whether actions undertaken have been operative**, as one of the factors which hinders mainstreaming is lack of

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[50] Awareness of the moment of drafting budgets, programmes, plans or policies may contribute to the success of mainstreaming activities, by detecting the appropriate time to try and influence such programmes and plans.

evidence, and therefore "requiring" submission of clear evidence would favour the subsequent process.

The proposal assessment criteria provided in the Mainstreaming Plan are suitable and clear. However, **it would be advisable to weight more heavily in the scoring the "potential impact",** as in the end it is the potential of the best practice to be integrated into the action procedures of organisations within the same sphere or in other contexts and policies which should trigger Action 3.

It would be advisable for Round Two **to list successful methodologies subject to mainstreaming, drafting a Guide including indications on how to draft a mainstreaming strategy, how to identify a best practice, how to identify stakeholders to who such practice may be mainstreamed, how to promote DP activities and how to communicate successes in order to attract public interest.** This guide would facilitate the work of both the DPs and the SU in its selection of Action 3 proposals.

The SU, **during the informal guidance stage for potential Action 3, could relate the different Action 3 proposals to each other and estimate which ideas are similar or are addressed to the same stakeholders.** In the evaluation team's opinion, this would prevent the duplication of effort by the DPs and would give greater impulse to actions, by submitting them in a more co-ordinated fashion and by the projects making joint efforts.

It recommends to **review the role or the composition of the Working Group on Mainstreaming in order to avoid a future conflict of interest** by certain members of the Working Group, who may also forma part of a DP submitting an Action 3 proposal.

- **Recommendations on the analysis of the implementation of Action 3**

It is recommended to include drafting a *mainstreaming strategy,* **understood as a plan of action for the DP,** geared towards achieving involvement and a political commitment on the part of policy-makers and organisations. This strategy should contain "what (to mainstream), why (to mainstream) to whom (to mainstream), how (to mainstream) and when[51] (to mainstream), and a definition of partners' responsibilities".

Projects should be **submitted** prior to the start of Action 3, if the **DP, in its current composition, allows and facilitates the achievement of its objectives in Action 3** and if it has the required experience and skills to implement such a project. If not, it would be necessary to reinforce it by incorporating new members.

The evaluation team considers that it is necessary **to extend the submission period for Action 3 proposals**. Activities to be subsequently disseminated or mainstreamed through Action 3 are not always undertaken at the end of Action 2, with the possibility to design Action 3 at an earlier stage on many occasions, provided that there is evidence on the quality of the best practice. In the evaluation team's opinion, having **more time** favours **correct planning** and enables undertaking complementary actions such as creating networks to achieve greater impact.

Awareness of the moment of drafting budgets, programmes, plans or policies may contribute to the success of mainstreaming activities, by detecting the appropriate time to try and influence such programmes and plans.

In line with the above recommendation, it would be advisable in order to reduce the difficulties caused by overlapping in the implementation of Action 2 and Action 3, to **extend the implementation period for Action 3,** allowing DPs to focus on delivering such Action, which would also provide more time to absorb financing provided for the implementation of Action 3.

The SU should take a more active role in the assistance provided for the implementation of projects, by helping to deliver the dissemination and mainstreaming strategy and to select stakeholders to whom to mainstream such experiences.

The evaluation team recommends **encouraging Action 3 proposals consisting of enlarged horizontal mainstreaming**. Also **that such proposals include a self-assessment of best practice, and some kind of evidence of self-mainstreaming undertaken** (or to be undertaken) (basic horizontal mainstreaming), as it is inferred that, having detected a possibility of mainstreaming a certain activity to other organisations and institutions, because of its positive results, the DP partners themselves will have been the first to have self-mainstreamed such a practice.

The evaluation team recommends **encouraging a type of Action 3 project consisting of a (legal and cost-benefit) viability analysis of the mainstreaming of such best practice into the organisation in question, the internalisation of such activity, service or change in its structures or systems**. In order to guarantee to a certain extent that such studies shall result in an effective mainstreaming, the evaluation team recommends **creating forums, within the framework of the NTGs, to favour the meeting of "supply" (best practices) and "demand"** (organisations in which implementation of a best practice would have positive results, whether or not they are involved in EQUAL as part of a DP). This "adjustment between supply and demand of best practices" could also include **a certain mainstreaming commitment (on the "demand" side) in the event of a positive viability study**.

Lastly, the evaluation team suggests the possibility for the Action 3 project to include, among activities to be undertaken, an **assessment of results obtained or being obtained as concerns mainstreaming** (agreements of commitments on the part of political stakeholders, active interest by institutions, etc.).

In the evaluation team's opinion, the **launching of a mainstreaming strategy at programme level geared towards ensuring participation and active involvement of policy making organisations and persons from the start,** together with **lessons learned** by Round One projects could facilitate the success of mainstreaming Actions undertaken by the projects. Such mainstreaming strategy should take into account the specific peculiarities of each theme, which would help projects prepare their own strategy by helping them identify what, to whom, how and when to mainstream.

- **Recommendations on the creation of regional networks**

The evaluation team recommends **encouraging the creation of such regional project networks** and their **articulation as a mainstreaming mechanism at regional level**, covering the broadest possible scopes without being limited to a particular thematic area.

In the evaluation team's opinion, it would be beneficial for such networks to be already in place at an early stage of development of the projects, as they require a certain planning and consolidation period to achieve greater impact. It would also be advisable to establish **co-operation and co-ordination between networks,** involving and exchange of information and practices. This could take place within the framework of the NTGs.

The evaluation team deems it important for this mechanism **to imply a certain mainstreaming commitment on the part of Autonomous Regions** and for it not to be used as a mere mechanism for dissemination to the general public. Furthermore, it is considered especially important for the work of the networks **not to end with the publication of a compilation of best practices and its subsequent presentation in a seminar, but to include a real mainstreaming strategy**, for such strategy to be implemented and to evaluate the results of such implementation.

13.3. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE SELECTION OF THEMATIC AREAS AND THEIR DEFINITION AFTER THE MID-TERM EVALUATION (RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHAPTER 6)

The evaluation team considers that a **more detailed explanation could be provided, justifying the exclusion of thematic areas that have not been selected. Furthermore, it deems suitable to further justify any readjustments in programming.** This would make the process more transparent.

As concerns thematic area 5.1 (asylum seekers) the evaluation team **does not share the need to treat this area separately and grant EQUAL aid to one sole DP**. Inclusion in the call for applications could have allowed the submission of applications of other DPs including stakeholders which could have implemented innovative projects to assist the target population in spite of not having legal jurisdiction over asylum issues.

13.4. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE LAUNCH PHASE AND OF THE SELECTION PROCESS FOR PROJECTS IN ROUND TWO (RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHAPTER 7)

13.4.1. Recommendations on the call and launch phase

It may be necessary to make an effort in the implementation phase of projects in Round Two to **prevent predominance of the core comprising old partners from the DPs** in Round One from resulting in fragmentation of the project. This strength thus requires more direct tutoring by the Support Unit in putting into practice any co-operation mechanisms, to prevent this becoming a risk.

It is necessary for the SU **to make an effort to let all participants in the Initiative learn from past lessons**. This facilitates the work of the projects and the Support Unit, preventing problems and delays, and favouring their impact. It is thus vitally important for the Support Unit to actively emphasise those aspects which must be corrected, in accordance with the conclusions of the Mid-Term Evaluation, and to take the necessary measures to incorporate such recommendations.

13.4.2. Recommendations on the project selection process

It is recommended to publish **a detailed breakdown of the scoring criteria applied**, in order to prevent a misleading impression of arbitrariness in the technical evaluation. The presentation guide for the projects could provide details of the weight given to each aspect assessed, and an **identification of minimum quality thresholds which must be met concerning different aspects in order for the application to be considered for approval.**

In the evaluation team's opinion, it would be advisable to clarify the role played by different stakeholders in the selection process who, as in the case of the members of the Monitoring Committee, are consultants. In particular for **Autonomous Regions, the evaluation team considers that their contribution to the process should be clearly defined, and tend towards consultancy duties, prior to actual selection**, concerning the criteria to be applied to select proposals and relevant "policies" observed from time to time within each territory (i.e. what kind of projects are demanded by policy-maker stakeholders) as, in many cases, the Autonomous Regions form part of DPs which have submitted proposals, or at least do have an interest in approving proposals which shall act within their territories.

If externalisation of part of the selection process or separation of such process from advice to applicants were impossible, it would at least **be interesting to have experts external to the SU participate in the definition of marking scales and evaluation of the projects**, in order to introduce a certain perspective in the objective application of certain criteria **whose interpretation should be sufficiently and unequivocally clarified in a form concerning aspects taken into account in the assessment of each item on the scoring scale.**

It is recommended to **provide information to all projects, both those approved and those rejected, concerning the strengths and weaknesses in each section of their proposal**. This would help approved projects to identify aspects to be strengthened in the project and would allow them to perceive the process as being more open and transparent. For rejected proposals, such an action would support the rejection of the financing, but would also allow them to identify the proposal's weaknesses, allowing them to learn from the experience.

13.5. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF RENEWED ACTION 1 (RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHAPTER 8)

13.5.1. Recommendations pursuant to the analysis of the performance of Renewed Action 1

Although from a methodological standpoint reformulation of selected projects' work programmes has been quite satisfactory, it is recommended **to highlight that it is mandatory to essentially maintain such aspects of the project which have obtained high marks in the assessment**, as otherwise they may become less important after changes introduced in Renewed Action 1.

It is recommended to **incorporate** in subsequent rounds of community programmes – to the extent that this is possible – **administrative flexibility factors** such as Renewed Action 1, to facilitate matching at least in part the pace of the launching with the features of each partnership. However, the

evaluation team considers that any attempt at flexibility must be accompanied by an effective administrative simplification.

As concerns the incorporation of the recommendations provided in the Mid-Term Evaluation, it is advisable for the projects to include **suitable and effective continuing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** in order to keep the project actions in line with the needs of the target population. For future programmes, it is necessary to emphasise the importance of **hiring of technical personnel for the projects** (if necessary) **early on** in order to facilitate a better technical and operational co-ordination of the projects and eliminate initial co-ordination problems, which may otherwise drag on throughout the project cycle, as could happen in the event of unrealistic programming. For such purposes it would be advisable not just to incorporate this aspect as a formal requirement, but also to **adopt measures to enable its performance, such as the adoption of one sole "approval resolution"** covering all phases or actions and indicating the amount of financing for each of the different phases or actions, which would be confirmed upon satisfactory performance of the formal requirements. **The intention behind this is to facilitate transition between phases or actions, acting as a "security", allowing to overcome the reticence of certain organisations to begin hiring personnel.**

The main difficulties observed in the consolidation of the TCA (lack of motivation and involvement of the Spanish DPs, deficiencies in the search for partners, high search cost) noted in the Mid-Term Evaluation for Action 1 have continued in Renewed Action 1. This evidences that processes remain ineffective, and that the assistance of the Support Unit in transnational co-operation should have been more active. **It is recommended to generate the necessary conditions to create a real "transnational market" allowing to overcome one of the main difficulties still felt by Renewed Action 1: unequal conditions of access to the partner selection process to create the TCAs**. DPs have said that they face great difficulty in finalising co-operation agreement with a partner that satisfies its expectations concerning transnationality. It should be a priority of any programmes intending to use the potential of transnational co-operation as a source of learning by encouraging and mainstreaming practices between countries to prevent DPs (or their equivalent) from forming part of transnational partnerships with no affinities to their interests and objectives.

13.5.2. Recommendations on the Support Unit's assistance to Development Partnerships in Renewed Action 1

The most positively valued aspect in Round One was the SU's individualised attention, at the same time acknowledging a need to receive continuing support and technical assistance during the implementation stage. In the evaluation team's opinion, this leads us to recommend that the Managing Authority, in view of its experience in Round One and the deficiencies observed in Renewed Action 1, reconsider resources and means of the SU and **reinforce the SU internally or externally in order to serve the support and advice needs which may arise in the implementation of the work programmes**, with the added circumstance that this Round Two includes a greater number of projects, as well as performance of the SU's other responsibilities, such as dissemination activities.

It is recommended for future programmes to organise **"initial programme seminars"**, dealing with different aspects concerning project management and control, priorities of the programme and lessons

learned from other initiatives or programmes. These seminars would allow the provision of technical support, submit available materials and tools and solve general and specific queries, ensuring that all projects start off with the same level of information on steps to be followed and criteria used, and to facilitate initial contact between the projects.

It is recommended to provide **all support information for the formal implementation of the partnerships and working plans further in advance**, in order to render more effective the potential ability of Renewed Action 1 (or its equivalent) to allow each DP to get through stages depending on its capacity and internal operational rhythm.

It would be advisable to perform **monitoring visits in these stages or actions prior to implementation of the projects, not just to control the actions, but also in order to offer support and direction to projects under development**; to ascertain the stage of development the project is at; to identify its needs of support and advice; and to constitute a first contact with organisations comprising the DP and to consolidate the relationship between the SU and the project.

It is recommended to improve the forms and models to be filled in by the applicants/beneficiaries of **future programming**, by including spreadsheets and tools to check contents, in order to prevent, for example, each project from being obliged to create its own sheet and budget check. For such purpose we would recommend drafting **"Project Monitoring Guides"** including practical examples which further allow more uniform data gathering by the projects, so facilitating a better comparison of results.

A special comment should be made on the need to provide DPs or equivalent structures in future programming with **more intense support in the implementation of transnational agreements**. What is required is not so much help in identifying a good partner, but more to facilitate the completion of a TCA with such partner. To achieve such a goal, the Managing Authority must make all possible efforts to provide access to the Spanish projects as early as possible to information exchange tools, as in the EQUAL Round Two there were many instances of DPs which were unable to finalise agreement with suitable organisations, as the latter had already closed their TCA when the Spanish projects were able to begin managing their transnationality.

The evaluation team recommends that the IT monitoring system used in the future for this type of projects pay attention to the deficiencies noted in the EMS. In this regard, it would be advisable for the design of future IT tools to include a **breakdown of beneficiaries** by origin and to prevent double accounting for beneficiaries (distinguishing between beneficiaries of information and dissemination actions from users of certain services). Likewise, they should establish a mechanism allowing to **distinguish between beneficiaries who have abandoned actions** prior to their completion, and a mechanism enabling them to be **monitored** after completion of their participation in the programmes. Furthermore, in order to better use these tools, it would be advisable to enable **aggregation of all data**.

13.6. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF FULFILMENT OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE INITIATIVE (RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHAPTER 9)

13.6.1. Recommendations on fulfilment of the principle of institutional co-operation (partnership) and empowerment

The evaluation team considers that, as concerns Round Two projects, it is necessary to **intensify technical support by the Support Unit, in particular to Development Partnerships (DPs) without prior experience in EQUAL,** in order to uphold the spirit of co-operation practised within DPs in the initial stages of the projects, thus preventing eventual move towards fragmentary or corporatist practices within them. In the evaluation team's opinion, this is essential, especially taking into account organisational models which might suffer from such deviations in practice, for example as a result of excessive control of partners with experience in projects in Round One.

It would be advisable to achieve a higher level of commitment of policy-maker stakeholders at regional level in Round Two, in order to guarantee that their participation in the DPs is not exclusively a formal or co-financing role. In this regard, we recommend **continuing to encourage participation of policy-maker stakeholders in the technical structures of the DPs and in the process of reflecting on the mainstreaming of project results**. For such purposes it is essential that the Support Unit provide a more active and focused assistance to DPs in Round Two during implementation of their strategic plans.

It is recommended to draft a *Vademecum* **on Management of EQUAL Partnerships** in order to optimise accumulated experience in partnership management, to direct future interventions.

13.6.2. Recommendations on fulfilment of the principle of Complementarity

Knowledge by the DP partners of policies and practices developed within the territory and experience in fieldwork are positive factors which favour fulfilment of the principle of Complementarity. However, in the evaluation team's opinion, **it is necessary to establish specific mechanisms allowing the integration of the projects into strategic plans, and which favour the exchange of information and experiences**. This would not only help to ensure real complementarity, but would also favour their innovation and mainstreaming, facilitating identification of existing demand by policy-maker stakeholders as reflected in such plans and programmes, increasing awareness and understanding of the EQUAL Initiative by other stakeholders and encouraging the production of synergies.

In order to favour fulfilment of the principle by DPs in Round Two, the evaluation team deems it advisable for the **Support Unit to provide DPs with access to information on the latest advances on development of national and European, and even regional, policies, and national programmes which affect the area of action of the Initiative**. In this regard, it is necessary to make an effort both at project and at programme level, by mainstreaming information and lessons learned in Community Initiatives and operative programmes. This would contribute to guarantee the fulfilment of the principle of complementarity throughout the life of the projects.

It would be positive for the **Support Unit to actively promote suitable channels to facilitate contacts and information exchange between EQUAL projects,** allowing DPs to know about other DPs who undertake similar actions, or share common problems, in order to take advantage of their experience and knowledge. **Although the Support Unit makes certain information available to the DPs** which would enable the latter to learn from the implementation of similar actions by other DPs (website, directory, EQUAL magazine, activity within National Thematic Groups), the truth is that this did not occur in Round One outside the scope of Autonomous Regions, and to an even lesser extent between projects in different thematic areas. Thus, if this activity were undertaken by the SU to support such exchanges (within or outside the activities of the National Thematic Groups), with the SU guaranteeing such exchange, a real complementarity between novelties experimented by all DPs would be achieved.

13.6.3. Recommendations on the fulfilment of the principle of Innovation

In view of the importance of correctly interpreting the principle and exploiting its potential, it is recommended to provide DPs in Round Two, which are the better disposed and prepared as concerns management of Innovation, with greater coverage by the Support Unit. **Thus, the Support Unit should make available both to partnerships**, in particular those least able to innovate, **and recipients of innovative solutions developed by the projects** (policy-maker stakeholders) **the necessary tools and abilities to analyse and internalise (mainstream) such project innovations**.

In spite of the improvements observed in Round Two as concerns fulfilment of the principle, the evaluation team considers that drafting a **Manual on management of innovation in EQUAL projects** by the Support Unit could reinforce the project's declared experimental purposes, and the innovation and reflection capacities of DPs in Round Two. Said **Manual must contain clear guidelines for projects as regards how to measure innovation and how to ensure innovation throughout the life of the projects**, based on the following considerations:

- *How to measure Innovation*:
    ⇨ It is necessary **to undertake continuing research** allowing the projects to be familiar with latest action developments, to "validate" project innovation and to provide inspiration for future innovation. In this regard, it is important for the Support Unit to promote greater interaction and contact between the projects, allowing them to compare situations and experiences, serving as validation of the innovation.

    ⇨ The **qualitative dimension** is of particular interest in measuring innovation. The opinion of technical personnel, partners and beneficiaries may be very valuable in indicating innovation. Please also remember that EQUAL is focused on experimenting, so that, provided that actions are suitably evaluated and lessons are learned and shared, it must be deemed acceptable not to achieve expected results.

- *How to maintain Innovation throughout the Projects:*
    ⇨ It is necessary for DPs to start up **consultation mechanisms with all stakeholders involved in the projects**, as Innovation is an interactive process in which all must participate.

⇨ It would be advisable to **reinforce projects' transnational dimension** as a source of inspiration for projects to innovate.

⇨ It is furthermore recommended **for the Support Unit to provide more active support** in the use of the projects' internal evaluation or Self-assessment as a suitable means to gather and analyse the necessary information in order to ensure continuity of innovative elements in the projects.

In addition **fulfilment of the principle would also be strengthened if** the Support Unit or the Working Groups in the National Thematic Groups **would draft guidelines facilitating identification of unexpected innovation by the DPs** throughout the life of the project.

Taking into account the **sparse evidence of mainstreaming** of innovative elements in the projects to policy maker stakeholders in Round One, coverage and support by the Support Unit and the NTGs is essential in order to favour effective mainstreaming in Round Two. In view of the existence of certain factors in this Round Two which may contribute to a higher rate of success as regards mainstreaming, it is necessary, in the evaluation team's opinion, to develop suitable mechanisms to **ensure that there is a mainstreaming of innovative solutions tested by the projects** to stakeholders with decision-making powers. Otherwise, the impact of the innovations generated by the projects would be nullified. Furthermore, it is advisable to encourage projects to justify the utility of their innovation.

Lastly, it would be very advisable for future interventions within employment and human resources policies to have a *Guidebook* **of Innovative Practices** successfully applied during the EQUAL projects in all thematic areas and in both Rounds, as well as partial compilations by the NTGs, so that the EQUAL inheritance may be successfully exploited in a broader context from a more global perspective.

13.6.4. Recommendations on fulfilment of the principle of Thematic Approach and Concentration

It is necessary for the Support Unit to establish mechanisms to **ensure the technical capacity** of the DPs, in order to guarantee updating of diagnoses during implementation of the projects. As lack of quality of the diagnoses seems to persist in Round Two in certain thematic areas, it is essential at this stage in the projects' development to emphasise the **need to articulate continuing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms allowing constant review and update of diagnoses** forming the basis of the projects' strategies. Although experience of key stakeholders in the filed guarantees knowledge of the sphere of action of the project, in the evaluation team's opinion these mechanisms remain indispensable.

Furthermore, it is recommended to articulate consistently **the updating of such diagnoses and the resulting review of action strategies and work programmes, preventing an eventual disconnection between both tools, which are essential to develop the projects**. Thus it can be guaranteed that the project actions consistently and fully address the causes of the inequalities detected in the labour market in a specific territory or industry in respect of a certain target population. Use of more rigorous methodologies, such as the Logical Framework Approach applied by some projects in

Round Two, should be generalised. For such purposes it is essential for the Support Unit to provide proper support and encouragement.

Based on positive trends identified in Round Two relating to a better definition of beneficiary profiles and their respective needs, so that strategy may be adjusted as much as possible to particular situations of discrimination, the evaluation team recommends **establishing specific and rigorous control mechanisms on beneficiary selection and recruitment processes, and referral channels, whenever these processes are initiated by DPs**.

DPs' willingness to fulfil the principle of Thematic Approach and Concentration and the effectiveness of the mechanisms provided for such purposes shall be tested after the start-up of the DPs' technical structures and implementation of the work programmes. In this regard, it would be essential**,** in the evaluation team's opinion, for the **Support Unit to provide direct and active tutoring in order to uphold this spirit, and to prevent eventual deviations from to during implementation of the work programme, such as absence of co-ordination or compartmentalisation of the partnerships, or extension of services to persons who do not respond to the specific profile,** inter alia, which may weaken initial fulfilment of the principle by Round Two projects.

Lastly, it would be beneficial **for the management bodies of the Initiative to make Spanish public authorities, particularly at local level, more aware that strict performance of the principle of Concentration does not contradict the Administrations' desire to provide public services which, as such, must benefit the whole community**. This could contribute to countering the weak internalisation of the principle detected in Round Two in certain thematic areas, such as 2.1 (business creation).

13.6.5. Recommendations on fulfilment of the principle of Equal Opportunities between men and women

In the light of the main conclusions reached by the projects, especially those within thematic areas in Theme 4, it is necessary to **maintain as a priority the promotion of the principle of Equal opportunities between men and women in future programmes,** whether or not they depend on Structural Funds. The positive evolution observed in the EQUAL projects as regards Equal opportunities, in respect of gender equality, in how to deal with different issues and practices developed within DPs, confirms the advantages of the **horizontal incorporation of the principle as a method to encourage changes in practices and attitudes**.

In view of the absence of awareness actions addressed to men in the projects in both rounds, the evaluation team deems it beneficial to generalise these kinds of awareness actions in projects. **It is advisable to ensure the participation of men in awareness actions** on aspects of the principle of Equal Opportunities, such as sharing out of family and domestic responsibilities and the joint responsibility of social and economic stakeholders (business community and trade unions) for the elimination of barriers causing inequalities suffered by women, etc. It is thus **recommended** for the Managing Authority and/or Support Unit **to promote the establishment of participation quotas for men in these kinds of activities**, which are most frequent in projects to incorporate the principle in

the work programme, both in the performance of Action 2 for projects in Round Two, and for future interventions within new Structural Funds' programmes.

Similarly, it would be advisable to **undertake particular awareness actions concerning aspects of Equal Opportunities addressed to policy makers on employment and human resources issues at all levels**, from local to national level, and at regional and provincial level. It would thus be beneficial to include such awareness actions as mandatory for future interventions within new programmes in the next Structural Funds' programming period.

Likewise, **it is recommended to apply joint-responsibility structures among partnership members as regards Equal Opportunities,** which structures have been formed spontaneously in projects in certain thematic areas in Round Two, as an effective mechanism to incorporate the principle of Equal Opportunities in such partnerships and other more informal co-operation.

13.6.6. Recommendations on fulfilment of the principle of Transnational Cooperation

The persistence of deficiencies identified in Round One as concerns the theoretical interpretation of the principle and its assessment as secondary by the DPs, requires, in the evaluation team's opinion, **more direct and intense support of DPs by the Support Unit during implementation of transnational work programmes** in Round Two. More active tutoring could prevent or avoid apparently effective transnational groups to gradually lose potential as a result of external factors, relating to the implementation of national programmes or difficulties in transferring such affinity into work programmes.

Support Unit assistance would also be beneficial to favour projects' articulating Transnationality as a horizontal component of the national project and not as a separate or isolated element thereof. In this regard, it is recommended for groups or committees (or technical personnel) within DPs in Round Two in charge of transnational areas to participate in the remaining working groups, and to maintain fluid and close communication with the latter concerning the transnational project, in order to encourage an exchange of experiences and the common sharing of lessons learned.

In order to prevent the problems involved in the implementation of a transnational programme, it is advisable for **the transnational relationship to be supported by clear planning, distribution of responsibilities and continuing monitoring and evaluation**. The secondary importance given to transnationality may entail a negative trend towards "conformism" on the part of the project, leading to a failure to achieve expected objectives. Each DP must therefore have in place a monitoring and evaluation system from the start of the co-operation, with suitable indication of progress and allowing an analysis of any problems. Such continuing monitoring and evaluation would facilitate the proper performance and management of the transnational programme, validating its results and therefore enabling mainstreaming. At the same time, improvements in project monitoring and evaluation would facilitate identification of the added value of transnational co-operation at programme level. For such purposes, it is necessary for DPs to provide active and continuing advice as concerns the management and practical operation of these kinds of projects.

In spite of the many benefits of transnational co-operation for these kinds of projects, **problems encountered during their implementation and the difficulties in identifying their added value has led the evaluation team to recommend that in future programming transnational co-operation be considered a priority in itself**, so projects may be seen as truly "European" projects and not as two projects, a national and a transnational project, as at present. This would allow co-operation on different levels (at project level, on a network level, at national level), and types of eligible activities would be decided at national level, which would provide a greater flexibility, allowing maximum exploitation of the potential of such co-operation depending on the needs identified in each country.

13.6.7. Recommendations on the fulfilment of the mainstreaming principle

Greater advice needs to be provided by the Support Unit, from the start of the projects, **in the interpretation of the principle and in the better performance of the DPs' obligation to define veritable mainstreaming plans to be implemented during implementation of the projects**. Highlighting the differences between dissemination and mainstreaming and between mainstreaming activities and mainstreaming objectives would further contribute to encourage the performance of more mainstreaming activities in Round Two projects.

In order to ensure that mainstreaming plans contain a real strategy, mainstreaming plans must provide different approaches and mechanisms, including "what, to whom, how and when (to mainstream)". This would allow putting the strategy into practice whenever required. In the evaluation team's opinion, proper mainstreaming planning would allow dissemination and mainstreaming activities to respond to a more co-ordinated approach, which would contribute to increase their impact to a great extent.

In this regard, it would thus be advisable to provide DPs in Round Two **with advice on how to develop and apply such mainstreaming strategy based on a Mainstreaming Plan**, as required by the EQUAL CIP, through a **Practical Guide on the Drafting and Implementation of Mainstreaming Plans**. This would allow correcting persistent errors in interpretation in certain projects in Round Two in several thematic areas, and to reinforce the initial **strategic willingness to mainstream** results by the projects, based on advanced, accurate and focused planning of mainstreaming processes and activities.

Encouraging active participation of policy-maker stakeholders, in particular at regional level, is a key element of mainstreaming. The mere fact that DPs in Round Two include a greater and more intense presence of policy-maker stakeholders does not ensure the latter's' commitment to undertake a reflection on the project results and their eventual mainstreaming into general policies. It is necessary for DPs to be able to involve policy-maker stakeholders from the start. This is where **the Support Unit's, the NTG members' and the Managing Authority's assistance can play a key role** in determining the potential of the projects, by submitting contributions and results on a joint basis.

13.6.8. Recommendations on the fulfilment of horizontal principles: Information Society, Environment and Local Development

It would be advisable to **favour the sustainability of local development initiatives developed during the implementation of the EQUAL projects at local level**, in order to encourage or maximise synergies relating to co-operation and the mobilisation of resources generated after completion of the projects.

13.7. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS AND RESULTS OF THE PROGRAMME (RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHAPTER 10)

Based on the calculation of the percentage of financial performance on the total programmed cost and total implemented cost, it has been evidenced that effective financial implementation real of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) has not yet reached 100%. In order to prevent remaining amounts and potential rejection of commitments, it would be beneficial **to adopt measures to guarantee the total absorption in the following years of expected financial commitment for projects in Round Two.**

The evaluation team deems it advisable to **promote the use of available financial resources to undertake activities within the framework of Theme 6 (Technical Assistance) and activities within Action 3[52] by DPs, Autonomous Regions and EQUAL structures (mainly NTGs).** This would improve real financial implementation and guarantee total absorption of expected financial commitments, thus preventing remaining amounts and potential decommitments as a result of applying the N+2 rule at the end of the present programming period.

In order to promote Action 3 activities by the DPs it would be advisable to **extend the implementation period of Action 3 projects** by the DPs further than the date of completion of Action 2, so that DPs may concentrate their efforts on the former.

The major differences observed in **accounting for beneficiaries** evidence the **need to homogenise data** *and provide clear and unequivocal information* to DPs in this respect.

Please note that with the implementation of the projects in Round Two **financial allocations increased considerably as a result of the indexation of ESF grants** and, therefore, **absorption efforts by the projects must be more intense** in order to prevent remaining amounts and potential decommitments in the next few years. The foregoing, added to the absence of 100% real accumulated financial implementation, **also evidences the potential to undertake improvements identified hereunder, which involve a major increase of the SU's and NTGs' activities and a repositioning of Action 3, which would involve allocating new responsibilities to all management bodies of the Programme and an increase in the activities of the DPs**[53].

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[52] In both cases, furthermore, accumulated implementation in respect of the whole period is not very high as of the date hereof, (31.24% and 78.09% respectively).
[53] As mentioned above, acting upon many of these recommendations would in many cases entail internally or externally increasing available human resources.

13.8. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF INTERMEDIATE IMPACT AND COMMUNITY ADDED VALUE (RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHAPTER 11)

13.8.1. Recommendations on impact on policies

- **Recommendations for improving "top-to-top" impact on policies**

It is beneficial to achieve the progressive internalisation of EQUAL ideas into national and regional policies and in Operative Programmes. It would be advisable for national and regional programming to gradually include financing facilities dealing with projects which share the EQUAL philosophy (innovation, networking, mainstreaming, etc.), and **not to condition the existence of this kind of projects to *ad hoc* European financing**. To guarantee this happening, **it would be desirable to incorporate these requirements into Structural Programming in Spain, and to publish guidelines in this regard to draft regional employment policies and programmes**.

It is beneficial to encourage the participation of **policy-maker stakeholders in incorporating the lessons learned within EQUAL to their own activities**.

It is advisable to encourage the influence of EQUAL by raising **awareness on its positive aspects and by disseminating any best practices developed**.

It would be advisable to **establish an exchange forum or official communication channel to organise the influence of the EQUAL Initiative** (for example, giving a voice during consultation processes in the stage of designing policies to officers who may provide information on lessons learned within EQUAL, as valid social players).

- **Recommendations for improving "bottom-up" impact on policies**

The evaluation team considers that National Thematic Groups (NTGs) should contribute more effectively to achieving an impact of the Initiative on employment and social inclusion policies, acting as a forum in which to perform vertical mainstreaming of project innovations into employment policies (see chapter 5 above).

It recommends making **an effort to monitor impacts** achieved by the Initiative at all levels and, within the framework of thematic networks and NTGs, making **an effort to draft a complete compilation** thereof.

It is essential to **improve mainstreaming processes and mechanisms to motivate the involvement of stakeholders con political decision powers** in order to guarantee optimisation of potential impacts and added value contributed by the projects (see chapter 5 above).

It is advisable to make an effort to **provide evidence of the usefulness of transnational co-operation** in order to strengthen and enrich employment policies pursuant to this perspective.

13.8.2. Recommendations on impact on businesses

It would be beneficial for future programmes based on priorities such as those observed in EQUAL to take the following into account:

Access projects evidence a need for **greater involvement of employer associations in the project actions**. This would permit the raising of awareness of the industries the project purports to affect, to adjust supply and demand and, especially, to raise their awareness by eliminating barriers and stereotypes.

In projects relating to **combating racism and xenophobia,** project managers must ensure the **enforcement of agreements made with businesses**. Businesses which incorporate new positions such as mediators must be subject to medium to long-term monitoring by the sponsors of the actions in order to ensure their implementation.

Most businesses created by the target groups in EQUAL within the framework of the projects are either sole proprietors or have two employees. Future projects addressed to **business creation** should favour competitiveness of the businesses, **encouraging the drafting of joint business plans between several entrepreneurs** so that, even if a lower number of businesses are created, these may be larger in size and better consolidated into the entrepreneurial fabric of the territories. In order to ensure **sustainability** of the businesses, it is necessary **to reflect on the size of the businesses** which the projects help to create, in order to reduce such percentages. A way to achieve this could be to encourage training and advice to create businesses of slightly larger size than at present.

In projects focused on **adaptability** it would be advisable to **continue working with small pilot projects seeking to achieve a demonstration effect**, although the principle of concentration should be considered more when selecting such pilots.

In projects addressed to encouraging equal opportunities between men and women it would be advisable to **increase the number and intensity of actions addressed to the business community** in projects, in order to maximise impacts on a key group in the process of achieving cultural changes in the workplace and in reducing the gender gap in the labour market.

13.9. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF FINAL IMPACT (RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHAPTER 12)

The evaluation team concluded with a series of recommendations leading to encouraging final impact of EQUAL:

They recommend **designing interventions to feed of the processes developed by EQUAL**. The EQUAL Initiative has been a great laboratory for the creation of processes, methods and methodologies which have led to positive impacts on beneficiary groups. Future interventions must take into account this experience to develop projects which take the impacts obtained to the next level,

job creation. In this regard, social inclusion achieved by EQUAL is considered to be an intermediate step, however necessary, to find a job.

It is deemed advisable to make **monitoring of the projects in the medium and/or long-term compulsory**. A frequent problem is the lack of follow-up data on the sustainability of the employment of persons who were beneficiaries of the DP. This does not help when assessing the impact of the Initiative. Its success must not only be measured on closing, but on a more long-term basis. In this regard, the evaluation team considers that such follow-up should be mandatory, and should be taken into account in the design of the programme, allocating funds for such purposes.

Taking into account the positive effects of "collective empowerment", observed, for example, in the thematic area on access, and the acknowledgement (inherent to the EQUAL design) of the need for participation of social organisations in the projects (because they have a closer awareness of the issues and greater access to the target populations), the evaluation team **deems it suitable for both EC and national, regional and local programmes to foster a greater development of associations** by undertaking actions relating to awareness and networking skills in order to create social networks to provide special support to different groups.

In view of the practical difficulties encountered in achieving access into the labour market, the evaluation team **deems it necessary to design actions in the longer term, and to achieve greater co-ordination with specific services** which work with the EQUAL groups in order to improve the results of the Initiative.

Impacts achieved by the EQUAL projects are due not just to actions undertaken but also to the work methodology used. The **EQUAL work methodology may therefore serve as an example for economic development programmes and for active employment policies**. In the evaluation team's opinion, this methodology deserves to be considered in order to achieve broader objectives within the territories. Only if effective mainstreaming of successfully tested formulas into existing practices to combat inequality and lack of competitiveness in the labour market, and into active employment policies is achieved, may more relevant impacts be obtained in quantitative terms, further than the necessary, although insufficient, qualitative impact of awareness achieved to date by the EQUAL projects in Round One.

As regards areas relating to reconciliation and reducing the gender gap, there are beginnings of a change in attitudes and behaviours in key persons, in particular, in those who previously were completely unaware of these issues. However, we seem to have a long way to go as regards changes mentality and attitudes of key players as concerns reconciliation. **We need not just awareness and knowledge, but also political willingness and resources to provide continuity to work performed by the projects** in Round One. A part of resources could be allocated to education, as this is an effective channel in which to internalise the issues relating to the gender gap.

As concerns immigration and asylum seekers, the evaluation team appreciates the need for greater co-ordination with public bodies with jurisdiction on education issues in order to achieve formal recognition of qualifications obtained in third countries.

CHAPTER 14: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

EQUAL is a programme which purports to test and mainstream new methods to combat certain problems relating to the labour market. However, certain methodologies and lessons learned may be applied to European Social Fund (ESF) programming for the new programming period.

In this chapter the evaluation team has compiled recommendations affecting the design, management and implementation of programmes for the future programming period for 2007-2013.

In order to contribute in a more structured manner to the creation process for future programmes, the present chapter has followed a logical structure which, on the one hand, formulates recommendations on the contents to be taken into account in future programmes (with reference to principles and types of actions) and, on the other hand, recommendations relating to the definition of the next programming period (the design, management and implementation of future programmes). The result is a change in structure compared to the rest of the report.

14.1 CONTENT TO BE INCLUDED IN THE FUTURE PROGRAMMING PERIOD

14.1.1 Types of actions depending on needs to be covered

The evaluation team has listed the most effective activities as shown in the implementation of the Initiative[54].

- **Actions relating to access and return to the labour market**

The following activities have achieved the best results in achieving the objectives on access and return to the labour market in the EQUAL Initiative and so are recommended by the evaluation team to be included in future programmes:

Flexible training actions

The evaluation team recommends these kinds of actions **to achieve the objectives of access and return to the labour market, as they adapt to the needs** of the beneficiaries and have achieved greater impact than traditional training actions. The following impacts may be highlighted:

- They have contributed to improving access to education and training, managing to improve the employability of beneficiaries, and therefore their chances of gaining access to the labour market.
- They have encouraged beneficiaries to demand more training, managing to stimulate an interest in training in persons who have traditionally been left out of training programmes.

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[54] It is necessary to take into account, when reproducing lessons learned in EQUAL in future programmes, that EQUAL is addressed to a very specific group, and therefore actions undertaken require personalised tutoring and monitoring. At the same time, actions to achieve access into the labour market of the EQUAL groups usually require an integral treatment of issues, which often exceed the scope of the labour market.

- They have improved beneficiaries' self-esteem, their social skills and, in particular, have contributed to developing positive attitudes to active job-seeking.

Training actions linked to work experience

The evaluation team recommends maintaining in future programmes the links between training actions and work experience in businesses, oriented towards professional diversification of the target population. This training methodology in real environments, together with continuing support and complementary basic training, has obtained interesting results, which validate it as an effective method when working with socially excluded persons, and which is not being used in standard training processes. It ensures a more practical training, adjusted to the demands of businesses and, at the same time, raising employer awareness on the reality of these groups and their potential.

Personalised integration actions: integrated access plans

The evaluation team recommends providing in future programmes **individualised and personalised treatment** to deal with the difficulties faced by a population facing multiple difficulties, allowing more in-depth tackling of such issues and overcoming difficulties. This treatment must include the following actions:

- Prior actions, so that technical personnel may assess the degree of employability, motivating beneficiaries and encouraging their participation and acquisition of basic skills.
- Encouraging employment stability through monitoring during the stage in the plan where beneficiaries are in their new job, adjusting such monitoring to personal needs.

Complementary actions and measures

The evaluation team recommends establishing **complementary support and services allowing access and participation of all interested parties in the activities.** Such complementary actions take into account family situation and difficulties encountered by beneficiaries within their own environment, such as care of dependants, transport subsidies and day-care services with flexible schedules.

Awareness raising and dissemination actions

It is advisable for both EC and national, regional and local programmes to **foster greater development of social fabric** by undertaking actions relating to awareness and networking skills in order to create social networks to provide special support to different groups

Of all actions observed in practice in the EQUAL evaluation, those which have achieved the best results were those where there was **effective participation and involvement of the beneficiary in the action.** This is both in selecting actions in which to participate and in making action plans in order to adapt it to their needs, skills and preferences. In certain cases this has lead to adaptations, based on beneficiary feedback after completion of the actions, and it is therefore recommended to take this into account in the configuration of future programmes.

- **Actions relating to combating racism and xenophobia**

Personalised social-labour access plans

The evaluation team has observed that actions which have achieved the greatest impact in gaining access into the labour market of immigrants and ethnic minorities are **personalised action plans,** which evolve with the needs of the beneficiary. They therefore recommend their use in future programmes addressed to these groups. These plans involve **developing a whole network of integrated and complementary services,** from information, guidance and advice, training, literacy and Spanish language courses to job advice and job-seeking.

Awareness campaigns

Awareness campaigns addressed to the population, to the business community and to immigrants, to encourage the positive effects of inter-cultural contributions and the "economic" contribution of immigrants accessing the labour market have proved to have a positive impact, and therefore the evaluation team recommends their inclusion in future programmes.

Cultural mediator

The position of cultural mediator as a link between the immigrant, the employer and/or the home population has been very positive in activities targeted at immigrants, and therefore its use is recommended for future programmes aimed at these groups. Where the mediator belongs to the immigrant community to which the actions are targeted has also proved to be a positive measure which should be maintained in the future.

- **Actions relating to promoting business creation**

Integral Follow-up Centres for the Entrepreneur.

The evaluation team has noted that the action which has achieved the greatest impact on the objective to promote entrepreneurship and business creation is to **create centres where the entrepreneur receives an integral service providing the necessary support to start-up a business from the beginning of the business idea until actual creation of the business**. It thus recommends maintaining such centres in future programmes promoting business creation.

These centres' success is based on a holistic approach with its services covering awareness and information on "entrepreneurial culture"; training addressed to teaching basic concepts of business creation; advice and support in drafting a business plan to ensure economic viability of the project; follow-up by the Centre's personnel to provide support in legal and administrative proceedings necessary to create the business and to provide tutoring or mentoring. And lastly, after creation of the business, fostering participation of the entrepreneur in groups or "Entrepreneur Clubs", where they may share any problems and challenges with peers in similar situations.

- **Actions to promote adaptability**

New systems of access training, based on new technologies

The evaluation team has identified the impact of these actions as positive, and therefore recommends that they be used in future programmes. They consist of training methodologies which provide equipment such as laptops, so that employees may continue training at home and follow more beneficial schedules. These actions bring training closer to groups who generally do not have access to training better than e-learning platforms, which have proved less effective in this programme.

These actions, which include very different training contents and which may be used with many types of workers in different industries, bring workers, who previously were not familiar, closer to information technologies. This includes workers in training who are usually excluded due to their low educational levels (fear of ridicule) and allow reconciliation of family and professional life.

Technological co-operation between SMEs and knowledge-generating centres

The evaluation has evidenced the appropriateness of undertaking actions to bring SMEs closer to technological centres or university research groups. The goal is to favour the creation of mixed working groups with employees of the business, researchers and technicians in the knowledge and technology-generating centres. Results have shown small-sized businesses undertaking R&D projects which they were unable to develop by themselves, thus allowing them to adapt to the competitive requirements of their environment through innovative processes.

Furthermore, a collateral result of such projects is usually job creation, as a good part of young engineers/technicians who join the businesses, thanks to the financing of the projects, to implement the R&D developments end up joining the workforce of the businesses to provide continuity for the new processes.

This is an particularly good way to put small-sized businesses on the road to innovation, and therefore the evaluation team recommends its inclusion in programmes for the next programming period (2007-2013).

Bringing SMEs closer to business support

The evaluation team has noted **the success of activities addressed to helping small businesses obtain access to support for business development** managed by the regional or central governments and which, many times are only exploited by medium or large businesses. Their inclusion is therefore recommended for future programmes.

There are two main ways to achieve this; on one hand, promotion of business associations to achieve sufficient critical mass to allow successful access to grants and support from the administration. Another critical element is the creation of trust between the closest administration and the business community (Town Council, county) to achieve an understanding enabling them to maximise the benefits of potential of aid programmes available in their area.

Entrepreneurial empowerment based on cascade training

Cascade training methodologies have proved very effective in achieving adaptability objectives, and thus we recommend their inclusion in future programmes featuring such objectives. They consist of training technical personnel in one project in methodologies to implement new business management processes geared towards improving business competitiveness and adapting to the productive environment. Such technicians transfer any necessary knowledge and skills to implement such management systems to the workforce of SMEs within the territory, and such employees in turn train their colleagues, thus allowing for an effective implementation of such processes in businesses.

This methodology favours the existence of training processes in the workplace, in order to provide employees with qualifications in business management techniques, and to improve the competitive position of businesses, thus optimising the use of resources within the territory by this cascade training system. This methodology boosts improvements in business management in the productive fabric of the territory and has as target group small-sized businesses which need to adapt their management systems.

- **Actions relating to promoting reconciliation of family and professional life**

Specific actions addressed to men

These activities, which have included varied actions (from promoting domestic abilities for men, to participation in debates on equal opportunities), have proved **very effective in trying to stop stereotyping in the division of labour between men and women.** It would be useful in future interventions to generalise actions addressed to men, and to diversify such actions to address specific groups within them (policy-maker stakeholders, business owners and employers, social and economic stakeholders, trade union delegates, etc.).

Training, guidance and advice actions for job searching and/or business creation:

Training actions have been essential to achieve impact by projects whose objectives are the reconciliation of family and professional life. As well as improving the qualifications and skills of the target population, they have also achieved an "intermediate" objective: **improving beneficiaries' self-esteem**, thus facilitating their willingness to participate in initiatives to improve their situation. The evaluation team recommends their inclusion in future programmes.

Integrated access plan

Labour market access plans adapted to the needs of beneficiaries have been **essential to eliminate the different barriers affecting women and preventing reconciliation of family and professional life,** and therefore the evaluation team recommends their inclusion in future programmes.

Complementary Actions

These actions (day-care centres, flexible schedules, etc.) **have been very positive**, letting beneficiaries attend activities programmed by the projects (courses, seminaries, forums, etc.), and allowing businesses to participate, which is essential to eliminate barriers. It is recommended for future programmes to continue promoting this type of action.

Awareness and Dissemination Actions

The evaluation team considers that **these actions are essential to eliminate barriers and stereotyping and favouring job segregation on the basis of gender** and thus recommends they be maintained in future programmes.

- **Actions relating to reducing the gender gap and supporting desegregation**

Actions addressed to businesses (pilot programmes with flexible formulas on work schedules, services to care for dependants, etc.):

Although their impact has been limited, the evaluation team highlights **the importance of these activities as a complement to others interventions combating unemployment**, incorporating the objective to combat discrimination in the workplace, rooted in certain attitudes and behaviours. It is thus recommended to include them in future programmes.

Training and advice actions concerning job searches and/or self-employment:

Training actions, particularly in entrepreneurial skills and professional qualifications in traditionally male industries or jobs have proved to have a positive impact in reducing gaps and segregation in the labour market, and therefore the evaluation team recommends that they be maintained in future programmes. Especially relevant are **personalised access plans**, especially those geared towards promoting self-employment of target beneficiaries of the projects.

It is also relevant to mention training actions on Equal Opportunities to key groups in the process of transforming attitudes which favour the persistence of inequalities in the labour and business environment, in particular, for trade union delegates and human resources managers in businesses.

Awareness and Dissemination Actions

The evaluation team recommends including these kinds of activities in future programmes, but focusing particularly on the participation of men.

- **Actions relating to integration of asylum seekers**

Personalised access plans and complements.

These personalised access plans **have contributed to improving this group's employability** and include information, training (literacy, Spanish lessons and training to qualify beneficiaries to access the labour market). Their use is recommended for future programmes addressed to this group.

Awareness campaigns.

They are addressed to the domestic population and to the business community to achieve future access into the labour market after asylum has been granted to the applicant. It is recommended to use them in future programmes addressed to this group.

14.1.2 Internalisation of principles

- **Transnationality**

The EQUAL evaluation team suggests that **transnationality** be articulated as **prior co-operation** (conceived to develop common methods or to exchange ideas), **or subsequent co-operation** (to disseminate best practices or as a continuation of the national project by providing it with a transnational dimension). Thus, transnationality may constitute a **voluntary addendum to a project or even a separate project (i.e. a project created around the transnational element).**

- **Innovation**

The evaluation team deems it advisable to create, in future programmes, a space for innovation, which requires **fostering experimentation**. Such experiments must be addressed to searching for and testing the usefulness of the innovation, and therefore future programmes must be defined in line with clear experimentation objectives (rather than in terms of impact on beneficiary populations).

The evaluation team recommends for future programmes to establish a line, theme or programme to foster **innovation,** ensuring that such innovations are useful and that the results of such projects are properly disseminated and mainstreamed.

The evaluation team suggests **linking innovation and transnationality** (transnationality as a source or destination of the innovation) **and mainstreaming** as a vehicle for the dissemination of innovations inside Spain and abroad.

It is also recommended to create **exchange and dissemination mechanisms for innovation in order that they may be applicable in other contexts.**

Lastly, it is recommended to define *ad hoc* **evaluation mechanisms** to validate the innovation.

- **Equal opportunities**

The evaluation team considers that, on the one hand, future programmes must include a **horizontal articulation of the principle of equal opportunities between men and women** in all their programming. On the other hand, future programming must also include **specific lines of action**

geared towards raising awareness (of the general public, of different industries in the business world), **and towards encouraging systems enabling integration of women in the labour market.**

It is recommended, in order to ensure incorporation of the principle of Equal Opportunities into future programmes and interventions, in the evaluation team's opinion, **for the principle itself to be introduced among selection criteria required to obtain financing within the framework of such programmes**, as has been the case in EQUAL. Thus the principle constitutes an element in respect of which projects must reach a minimum quality threshold for the application to be admitted to the selection process.

The evaluation team deems it **necessary for future programmes to extend the concept of equal opportunities to include aspects such as religion, ethnic origin, age, etc.,** allowing to deal directly with the multitude of factors determining inequality within the target group of actions incorporating the principle of Equal Opportunities. This **would allow activities to reflect changes in society** both in Spain and in Europe. Elimination of barriers causing the inequality of women in the labour market involves the need to achieve, in the first place, their social integration. In this regard, experiences in other countries in our environment show that effective integration requires respect and **acknowledgement** of "diversity" and the barriers involved in such diversity.

- **Mainstreaming**

In order to guarantee success of mainstreaming of project results into general policies in future programming, the evaluation team **deems it advisable to include experimental actions seeking to influence the evolution of policies, businesses and systems.** For such purposes it would be positive to concentrate implementation of these actions on environments including a combination of the following essential factors: on one hand, proximity to beneficiaries, and on the other hand, access to policy makers, in particular in the administration (local, regional, and national) most directly concerned with the projects' processes and results.

- **Information society**

The evaluation team recommends **taking advantage of the opportunities and potential offered by Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and the environmental sector, in order to find new approaches and ideas** to eliminate barriers preventing access to the labour market, in particular for the most disadvantaged persons (long-term unemployed or those in age groups with high unemployment, immigrants, people with disabilities, etc.), and to find new ideas to improve issues such as adaptability, reconciliation of family and professional life, or elimination of barriers preventing participation of women in the labour market.

In general, based on the positive influence observed in some projects, it is recommended to promote **greater awareness by organisations and technical personnel on the importance of ICT**, as both co-ordination and communication factors, and their role in putting into practice the thematic approach, in favouring that organisations which used to work separately create networks and share resources which allow them to improve their strategies.

Promoting the use of ICTs is essential to encourage access of beneficiaries affected by different barriers, and to make them familiar with key components of job search processes and adaptability.

- **Environment**

A **greater exploitation of new employment possibilities relating to the environment** is recommended, and also exploitation of the potential of business initiatives in the environmental industry. This could favour pilot actions on environmental management in businesses, in actions delivered by future programmes and initiatives to promote employment and human resources development.

14.2 DESIGN OF ESF PROGRAMMES IN THE NEXT PROGRAMMING PERIOD

Based on the lessons learned from EQUAL, the evaluation team suggests taking into account the following recommendations to draft new ESF Programmes:

- The evaluation team deems it advisable to include a justification in the programming document selecting the themes, expressly linking the latter to **national/regional realities**. Also that the existing relationship between priority spheres of action of future programmes and the diagnosis of the situation be presented as evidence. This could be articulated by a **description of the existing labour market for the new Programmes, structured into sections corresponding to each of the themes or measures provided in the programmes**.

- It is deemed advisable to justify actions to be financed by the new community programmes in accordance with **the community principles of concentration and subsidiarity.**

- It is desirable to provide details on a **clear division of responsibilities** between bodies responsible for the design, management and implementation of the project.

- In national programmes, it is advisable to condition budgetary allocations between regions and/or between priority areas to the quality of the proposals. Thus there would be a **greater flexibility of budgetary allocation between different areas** (Objective 1 and non-Objective 1) which would allow for transfers based on the quality of submitted proposals, preventing the approval of applications which do not exceed a minimum quality threshold.

- The evaluation team recommends including in future programming documents a **description of the project selection process**. This should include a **description of the role of the different stakeholders or bodies involved** in the selection process, distinguishing between consultants and those who must be informed on the process and stakeholders who actually decide on the process. Furthermore it recommends **establishing a system of feedback on the justification of the selection or rejection of the projects with** quantitative information offered to all applications as a matter of course.

- The evaluation team deems it advisable to **maintain financing of innovative pilot projects on a mainly regional or local basis,** to serve as engines to change mentalities, structures and progressively policies, by applying a series of basic principles, achieving a multiplier effect of investments in a particular area, industry or activity.

- It is recommended to **systematically consolidate financing** within the framework of active employment policies allocated to **making diagnoses of the situation.** Thus strategic planning of the actions can be ensured.

- If **mainstreaming or dissemination of best practices** is an objective of future programming, the evaluation team recommends clearly defining a **Mainstreaming Plan**, setting general and specific objectives, allocation of responsibilities and a plan of actions. Furthermore, in the event of dissemination and mainstreaming obligations undertaken by programme executors, the latter should be obliged to draft a mainstreaming or dissemination plan.

14.3 PARTICIPATION STRUCTURES TO BE MAINTAINED IN FUTURE PROGRAMMES

Participation in Programme Design

- The evaluation team recommends creating a **mechanism to consult programme beneficiaries** on its design.

- The evaluation team recommends creating **bodies or measures to foster joint co-operation between administrations** (national, regional and local), in order to bring together different perspectives, and so that they may co-operate in the whole planning, programming and monitoring of the programmes.

- The evaluation team recommends articulating a **system allowing those responsible for technical assistance for the implementation of the Programme to contribute to programme strategy**.

Implementation relating to the structure of the partnership

- The evaluation team recommends **encouraging the partnership structure as an implementing unit** for (certain) themes and measures within future programmes. These partnerships could be responsible for designing or implementing **integral actions on all issues affecting a certain group**. Thus **projects may be conceived as "groups of projects"** or sets of integrated actions tackling all aspects of the problem to be solved. A key factor for the success and sustainability of such structures is not just the incorporation of all kinds of organisations, but mainly their active participation in the network, enabling effective fulfilment of the principles of empowerment and thematic approach, as specialisation by the different partnership members allow treating issues as a whole.

- In order to use working in partnership in different contexts and within the framework of other programmes and projects to promote employment and human resources development, it would be beneficial to have the capacity to involve policy-maker stakeholders at all levels, so as to involve all key social and economic stakeholders. Team efforts by organisational structures result in improvements in existing systems in the labour market and in the education and training systems. Therefore it is advantageous to promote **working in networks and partnerships for the implementation of employment and social inclusion policies, including different types of organisations in order to maximise resources and to take advantage of each organisations' expertise.**

14.4 MANAGEMENT OF FUTURE PROGRAMMES

Assistance to the start-up of the projects

- It would be advisable to articulate some sort of "infodesk" or "helpdesk" system for the start-up of programmes in the future, providing information on how to participate in implementing the programme themes, measures and the objectives.

- If future programmes attach a similar importance to the fulfilment of basic principles in assessing proposals, it would be advisable for support materials made available to applicants to include **explanatory guides for a correct interpretation and application of such principles.** It would also be useful to prepare Guides for the submission of applications providing a clear explanation of the process and the support provided by technical assistance, and also indicating the type and degree of information expected to be provided in reply to each question.

- It is likewise recommended to **maintain and even encourage presentation visits** in subsequent rounds, to bring the Programme closer and to clarify it to key stakeholders in different Autonomous Regions.

- It is recommended to **improve forms and models** to be completed by applicants/beneficiaries of future programming, with **spreadsheets and checking tools** of the contents, in order to prevent, for example, each and every project having to create a spreadsheet to provide and check over their budget. It is also recommended to **simplify the language used** to take into account the differing degrees of experience in European projects by the different participants.

- In order to **facilitate the participation of partners without many resources,** the Payment Authority could provide advances at the start of each stage of action within the project.

- In order to ensure maximum support for projects, it is recommended to **separate areas relating to processing and certification of expenses and checking expense eligibility from the technical functions** within the responsibilities of Technical Assistance**.**

Assistance to transnationality

- It would be beneficial for future programmes incorporating a transnational element to admit **greater flexibility,** so bureaucratic and administrative obstacles which have hindered the creation of transnational relationships in EQUAL projects in Spain in both rounds can be more easily overcome.

- It is recommended to articulate a more focused and intense support system to search for transnational partners.

- It is necessary to make suitable tools available to projects, setting up forums allowing to select suitable transnational partners and performing a close monitoring of the selection process for transnational partners.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Persons responsible for control, monitoring and evaluation of future programmes should define, prior to the start of any actions, the tools to be used by the projects and the methodology to be followed to cover monitoring and evaluation. It would thus be advisable to design **templates for reports and to establish a minimum list of indicators.**

- Future programmes must include **clear and definite criteria on the methodology to account for beneficiaries** (accounting for beneficiaries of individualised actions and dissemination activities, accounting for beneficiaries of access plans, accounting for beneficiaries who do not complete activities, etc.), in order to ensure homogenous data gathering.

- It is necessary **to provide the projects with information on data to be gathered prior to the start of the project and to provide clear criteria** on how to do this and on any monitoring to be undertaken. It would be advisable to provide practical information on how to act in different situations.

- It is essential to articulate an **IT monitoring system** including more general and other more specific indicators (i.e., broad-based indicators (for example beneficiaries) and other more precise indicators (for example men and women)), so that the project may gather data on beneficiaries broken down by gender, but also complement the data relating to the more general indicator (beneficiaries). All of the above shall be within the framework of indicators defined as relevant by the European Commission.

  o The IT monitoring system must allow aggregation of data to facilitate continuing evaluation of the programmes.

  o Data included in the monitoring system must be controlled on a regular basis to ensure reliability.

- It would be advisable to design a **specific template for the presentation of initial and final reports** on projects, providing details on all aspects, from its extension to the need to include specific objectives, schedules, management mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation, etc. This initial report should include an analysis of the requirements of the context in which the project is to act, to ensure that the project responds to a real need. Furthermore, it would be advisable for the final report to follow a similar structure to the initial report, and for it to present a clear view of the degree of implementation of any actions planned.

Financial capacity of the projects

- To avoid problems concerning certain organisations' lack of financial capacity to start up projects prior to the first certification, the evaluation team recommends **providing a system of advances** (which could amount to 20% of the ESF amount for the project corresponding to such action), acting as a "buffer" to start-up the actions.

- In order to prevent problems associated to decommitments it is recommended, as in the chapter on operative recommendations (above), to establish **a flexible system of partial certifications** to speed up payments and to identify in advance any problems relating to financial absorption.

- It is recommended to set up a system allowing **the dissemination of results, best practice and lessons learned in the implementation of projects** to project managers.

14.5 MEASURES CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF FUTURE PROGRAMMES

The following lessons may be taken into account concerning programme implementation:

- In the evaluation team's opinion, it is beneficial to provide clear information on objectives, requirements and implications of projects under this programme, upon opening of the period to submit applications.

- It is advisable to provide all information to the project managers on a timely basis, and for it to be brief, clear and accurate, and to monitor any deficiencies detected in tools or guides provided in order to amend them.

- In the event that the implementation structure chosen is based on partnerships, the following lessons relating to their operation are extracted from the implementation of the EQUAL programme:

  o The **selection of the partnership** is a key element of its success, with more inclusive partnerships being more effective. This requires not just good internal organisation and co-ordination, but also maintaining the motivation of different organisations with different interests and motivations. For such purposes, we recommend **clear planning and distribution of responsibilities** between the partners, in order to maximise their participation, in accordance with their areas of expertise, capacities and contributions, also to be **clear about each**

organisations' expectations. It is essential to show each partner the **benefits of its participation in order to ensure its commitment.**

o **Accurate definition of objectives and setting of schedules** will provide the partnership members with a clear idea of where and how to channel their resources

- The evaluation team recommends establishing as a requirement **to put in place beneficiary consultation mechanisms** in the project's design phase, and establishing a feedback mechanism for consultations as part of project monitoring and evaluation. The results of these consultations should be fed back into project activities.

- The evaluation team recommends forming the **transnational partnership** with carefully selected partners on the basis of their complementarity and affinities with national partners, with similar objectives and similar spheres of actions, or actions that require similar methodologies to the sphere of the project.

As a result of the experiences of Spain in the development of Community Initiatives such as EQUAL and other co-financing programmes relating to different European Funds, **certain organisations have learned a lot**. The experience gained by such organisations guarantees the correct use of the funds in accordance with the ideas underlying the projects' design. The evaluation team considers that this should be capitalised and used to maximise the use of resources in future structural programming. This could be by **valuing such experience positively in future proposal selection processes** (provided that the principles of competition, innovation and complementarity are complied with, which would be effectively distorted in the event of continued repeating of beneficiaries). Or by **drafting a Vademecum of best management practices**, following criteria such as optimum composition and organisation of partnerships, best internal co-ordination approaches, exploitation of the transnational dimension, etc. This guide must go further than classic compilations of best practice which include final products but not the processes which have made them possible