



BERNARD BRUNHES INTERNATIONAL

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# **EU-WIDE EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE EQUAL 2000–2006**

**FINAL REPORT**

**VOLUME 3  
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**In co-operation with ICAS Institute and Economix Research & Consulting**

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission.

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## Abbreviations

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|       |   |
|-------|---|
| AS    | Asylum seeker                                   |
| CIP   | Community Initiative Programme                  |
| CSR   | Corporate Social Responsibility                 |
| DP    | Development Partnership                         |
| DPA   | Development Partnership Agreement               |
| ECDB  | EQUAL Common Database                           |
| ECTIM | EQUAL Transnational Cooperation Internet Module |
| EES   | European Employment Strategy                    |
| ESF   | European Social Fund                            |
| ETG   | European Thematic Group                         |
| GL    | Guideline                                       |
| HG    | Horizontal Group                                |
| HRD   | Human Resources Development                     |
| JAP   | Joint Assessment Paper                          |
| JIM   | Joint Inclusion Memorandum                      |
| LM    | Labour Market                                   |
| LLL   | Life Long Learning                              |
| MA    | Managing Authority                              |
| MC    | Monitoring Committee                            |
| MS    | Member States                                   |
| NAP   | National Action Plan                            |
| NMS   | « New » Member States                           |
| NSS   | National Support Structure                      |
| NTN   | National Thematic Network                       |
| OMS   | « Old » Member States                           |
| PCM   | Project Cycle Management                        |
| PES   | Public Employment Service                       |
| R1    | Round 1   |
| R2    | Round 2   |
| TA    | Technical Assistance                            |
| TCA   | Transnational Co-operation Agreement            |
| TLP   | Twinning Light Project                          |
| TN    | Transnational                                   |
| TNP   | Transnational Co-operation Partnership          |
| TOR   | Terms of reference                              |

## Abbreviations for Member States

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|       |                                    |    |                 |
|-------|------------------------------------|----|-----------------|
| AT    | Austria                            | CY | Cyprus          |
| BEfrg | French and German speaking Belgium | CZ | Czech Republic  |
| BEnl  | Flemish Belgium                    | EE | Estonia         |
| DK    | Denmark                            | HU | Hungary         |
| DE    | Germany                            | LV | Latvia          |
| ES    | Spain                              | LT | Lithuania       |
| FI    | Finland                            | MT | Malta           |
| FR    | France                             | PL | Poland          |
| GR    | Greece                             | SK | Slovak Republic |
| IE    | Ireland                            | SI | Slovenia        |
| IT    | Italy                              |    |                 |
| LU    | Luxembourg                         |    |                 |
| NL    | Netherlands                        |    |                 |
| PT    | Portugal                           |    |                 |
| SE    | Sweden                             |    |                 |
| UKgb  | United Kingdom (Great Britain)     |    |                 |
| UKni  | Northern Ireland                   |    |                 |

## Thematic priorities

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

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## 14. CONCLUSIONS

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In this chapter, we present the conclusions of what has been a four years evaluation process. Thus the chapter brings together the lessons of this report, but also draws on our previous evaluation reports. We first seek to respond to the three overarching evaluation questions of the EU-wide evaluation (section 14.1). We then gather the main conclusions by ‘evaluation task’ (section 14.2), in other words, concerning the appropriateness of strategies at CIP and DP level in EQUAL; management and implementation systems; the effectiveness of the key principles and of the transversal approach to equal opportunities; and the effectiveness of networking, dissemination and mainstreaming strategies at the national and European levels. We then turn to conclusions by theme – or rather, as will be explained, by ‘area of intervention’, with a special focus on innovations and potential impacts (section 14.3). Finally we provide a preliminary assessment of potential and initial impacts in relation to the European Employment Strategy, the Social Inclusion Process, the European Social Fund and other European-level strategies and programmes (section 14.4).

### 14.1. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

#### 14.1.1. Overall assessment of the rationales at play in EQUAL. Initial and potential impacts.

The Community Initiative EQUAL was set out as a ‘testing ground to develop and disseminate new ways of delivering employment policies in order to combat all sorts of discrimination and inequality experienced by those seeking access to the labour market and those already within it’<sup>1</sup>.

This overall rationale was interpreted in various ways and can be said, in an *a posteriori* reconstruction, to have given rise to 3 main strategies, or rationales, in the Community Initiative Programming documents and national strategies for the implementation of EQUAL. The 3 types of rationales are not mutually exclusive, and in fact Member States have sometimes resorted to several of them in their CIPs, depending on the thematic areas:

- A first approach to EQUAL was to use it as a strategic instrument for *reforming existing policies*, in order to improve their effectiveness.
- A second approach consisted in *making existing policies more inclusive*, e.g. by exploring ways for strengthening the access of specific groups to existing programmes, and therefore by adapting existing policies and programmes.
- The third approach was to seize EQUAL as an opportunity to strengthen and consolidate recent policy initiatives in line with the European Employment Strategy or to *explore or improve the organisation and structure of fields of practice which had so far received little policy attention*.

The *first strategy* has generally been applied in thematic priorities which correspond to established policy fields, in particular in *theme 1A* (facilitating access and return to the labour

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<sup>1</sup> EQUAL guidelines, par. 9.

market), where changing governance arrangements by introducing more cross-agency collaboration has been a priority in EQUAL, in the field of support to business creation (theme 2C) and more generally in the training and learning area (addressed through theme 3E, lifelong learning, 3F, adaptability, but also through theme 1A and even theme 4G, reconciling family and professional life). Amongst the Member States participating in R1, IT and, to a lesser extent, ES and GR, have been exemplars of this first strategy.

*Implementation capacity* for this strategy has usually been good since there had been previous capacity building under the former EMPLOYMENT community initiative, as well as under national employment policy programmes: indeed, theme 1A was usually over-subscribed, and selection rates have been quite severe in R1.

*Innovation* associated with this first strategy has not been particularly groundbreaking (and was not expected to be), but there is indeed evidence of new or improved collaborative arrangements aiming at enhanced effectiveness in delivery, for example, to rationalise the interface between benefit agencies and benefit recipients; new networks between labour market integration operators and employers, whose sustainability appears to be greater in sectors affected by recruitment bottlenecks; and new networks between labour market integration operators and temping agencies. Logically, as the policy frameworks in the fields of employability and training are already consolidated, the *mainstreaming potential* is usually good, and impacts should be sustained in the future. However documented evidence has so far been scarce.

The *second strategy*, making existing policies and programmes more inclusive, was, by definition, also applied in already established fields of policy intervention. Thus it has been an important objective for development partnerships (DPs) operating under theme 1A (Facilitating access and return to the labour market) and theme 3E (lifelong learning), but also under theme 2C (opening up the business creation process). Amongst the Member States participating in R1, DK, the NL and the UKni have been quite clear exemplars of this second strategy, at least in R1.

*Capacity for implementation* has depended in this case on the capacity of existing partnerships to open up to new partners, especially to small grass-roots organisations.

*Innovation* seems to have taken place through the customisation of existing practices and methodologies to highly specific and well defined groups: in theme 2C (opening up of business creation to all), it is still a question whether this ‘opening up’ has really taken place – indeed the very relevance of business creation by people suffering from multiple disadvantage has been questioned. However, EQUAL has been used to open business creation more to ‘non-traditional’ entrepreneurs (e.g. women in rural areas). The *prospects for mainstreaming* and impacts under such a strategy depend on the will of decision-makers to institutionalise this opening up of existing schemes to new target groups. At this stage, this strategy has brought about some very relevant, though scattered, institutional impacts – such as the changes in the Prison Service Resettlement Strategy in the UKni, and the recognition of a ‘partial’ qualification for young people with disabilities in the AT dual system of vocational training.

The *third strategy* has concerned, depending on the Member States, themes 1B (combating racism), 2D (social economy), 4G (reconciling family and professional life) and 5I (asylum seekers). But it has also concerned, for example theme 3E (Lifelong learning) in IE, or age management measures (under theme 3F, adaptability) in FR.

Such a rationale is demanding for *implementation capacity*: given the lack of former policy attention, suitable applicants may be more difficult to find. Indeed, out of 10 CIPs having chosen ‘reconciling family and professional life’ (Theme 4G) as a priority, 5 experienced an

under-subscription of this priority (few applicants). In some Member States, selection rates have been particularly lenient in R1 in order to have a sufficient number of development partnerships in the theme. This has also been the case in theme 1B (combating racism and xenophobia) and in theme 5I (asylum seekers). However, the lifelong learning theme received many applications in IE and the social economy priority (2D) was also quite well subscribed in AT.

Quite logically, *innovation* has been found to be more frequent and clearer in these themes in these Member States than elsewhere. For example, in AT, the focus of priority 2D on ‘quality in social services jobs’ has stimulated important institutional and organisational innovation in the social economy and social services sector; in FR, the choice to take up priorities or to define actions where experience had so far been limited or scattered (fight against racism and xenophobia; age management; conciliation between private and working lives) has been validated, *a posteriori*, by the fact that these are the areas where national evaluators found most innovation. Limited prior experience is also the reason why the asylum seekers theme has been considered by several evaluators (AT, DE, SE, PT and the UKgb) as one of the themes where innovation has been clearest, although the quality of this innovation has sometimes been disappointing.

*Making an impact* in these themes requires political voluntarism, but can be significant. In IE, where lifelong learning became a national priority, there are good prospects of sustainability for EQUAL projects of job rotation or upskilling. There are several examples of sustainable impacts in the care sector, especially in AT, FR and LU, and in the asylum seekers theme across various Member States.

The table below provides a schematic picture of the links between starting rationales at CIP level, implementation capacity, innovation and impacts.

*Table 14.1 – Rationales, innovations and impacts in EQUAL*

| Rationales   | Examples of themes        | Examples of CIPs in R1                                 | Capacity for implementation  | Innovation   | Mainstreaming/impacts  |
|--|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Reform existing policy fields to make them more effective                        | Themes 1A, 2C, 3E, 3F     | IT, ES, GR   | Good in principle – experienced players. Possible lack of new players.       | Focused on new governance mechanisms                             | Good opportunities. So far limited evidence.                   |
| Make existing policy fields more inclusive                                       | Themes 1A, 2C, 3E, 3F     | DK, NL, UKni   | Capacity building through partnership experienced players/ grass-roots NGOs. | Not ground-breaking but adaptation of existing solutions         | Requires political will. Risks of closure of existing policies |
| Explore new or relatively new policy fields, reinforce recent policy initiatives | Themes 1B, 2D, 4G, 4H, 5I | AT, ES, FI, FR, GR, IE, LU etc. (for some themes only) | Capacity can be at issue: lack of promoters or poor quality of applications  | Much innovation reported. Quality of innovation can be at issue. | Requires political will but can be significant.                |



#### 14.1.2. Added value with regard to existing labour market policies and practice at the national and EU level

Only preliminary remarks can be made on the added value of EQUAL with regard to existing policies and practice. It should be borne in mind that our main source is constituted by the 2005 national evaluation reports, for which fieldwork had usually taken place before the summer 2005, when R1 DPs were still in operation and some had not started Action 3 (transfer to policy and practice).

The clearest added value lies in the *promotion of new, stable, co-operation mechanisms giving rise to integrated and co-ordinated approaches*, in lieu of the piecemeal approaches sometimes prevailing. The requirement, in EQUAL, to operate in partnerships gathering the various stakeholders of a given field of policy and practice, has of course been a key factor underpinning this added value. Co-operation between statutory agencies, as well as the opening up of labour market agencies to partnerships with employers and grass-roots NGOs, has sometimes led to sustainable changes in ways of delivering policies. There are very clear, though still isolated, examples of new sustainable arrangements for the implementation of integrated strategies: the ‘integrated resource centre for restructuring (*reconversions*)’ in BEfrg (theme 3E – lifelong learning), piloted in EQUAL, will be an important instrument for anticipating and accompanying industrial change; the integrated business support centres (theme 2C) have been highlighted as one of the clearest benefits of the programme in ES, as they are supporting the business creation process in an integrated manner, through training and individual tutorship but also through networking, the use of NTIC etc. Further funding has already been secured for some of these. In IE there are various successful examples of wide partnerships between statutory agencies or between employers across sectors for the adoption of new shared strategies for improving the relationship with beneficiaries (long-term unemployed, drug users – both in theme 1A<sup>2</sup>) or for changing recruitment practices (Dublin Employment Pact – theme 3E). In Scotland an important innovation has been the creation of a ‘social economy zone’ model (theme 2D), which has brought together operators and agencies and has led to the design of a new public procurement plan for the promotion of community businesses.

Bringing partners together is not necessarily sufficient for making a difference for combating discrimination. In some cases, however, these collaborative arrangements have allowed for, or have been accompanied by, the design of *new ‘holistic’ approaches to target groups* – considering the individual members of these groups as persons, whilst recognising their belonging to given social or ethnic groups. For example, various FR DPs, targeting ethnic minorities, have addressed both women and men respecting their respective roles in these communities but seeking to transcend the social structure of these groups.

Strategies for combating discrimination are also integrated in the sense that *both the demand and the supply sides of the labour market were targeted*, contrary to what could be feared given the prevalence of the focus on labour market access in EQUAL, which could have given rise to an excessive or even exclusive focus on the employability of the individuals suffering from discrimination. Although this pitfall was not always avoided, there has been an effort, in EQUAL, for addressing factors of discrimination lying in institutional and employer-based strategies, processes, and prejudices in parallel with mentoring for individuals. Thus in DK the most innovative DPs, working on the labour market integration of migrants and refugees (theme 1A) or on access to the labour market for people with disabilities (theme 3E), have targeted both case workers, enterprises, the beneficiaries themselves and the general public. One of the key areas of innovation in the FR programme had been the awareness raising of actors not usually targeted, in order to change their representations and attitudes towards discriminated groups.

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<sup>2</sup> Facilitating access and return to the labour market.

This was especially the case under theme 1B (combating racism) but similar strategies could be found across a number of themes. Similarly, in AT, DPs working for the integration of people with disabilities (theme 1A, access to the labour market) have involved company-based decision makers (works councils, heads of personnel departments) as active multipliers and promoters. Gender de-segregation (theme 4H) has also been prone to such multi-level and multifaceted approaches, with parallel actions in schools, companies, and towards the general public.

*Secondly, and less prominently, added value has stemmed from, as already said in the section above, the exploration and/or further structuring of relatively new fields of intervention.*

EQUAL has made a significant contribution, to start with, towards putting these themes on the political and public opinion agenda. In AT, EQUAL has stimulated public debate on racism and xenophobia in the context of labour market and social policy and has raised the profile of the social economy. As is logical in relatively new fields, awareness raising campaigns formed an important part of the activity of DPs engaged in such themes, especially in theme 1B (combating racism) – such as wide public opinion campaigns on the ‘economic benefits of immigration’ in ES. However, the benefits of such awareness raising activities are difficult to ascertain. What may have brought more tangible added value there has been support to employers, by providing them with equality guides and codes of conduct, and appointing ‘intercultural mediators’ or equivalent roles (e.g. in AT, DE, GR, the UKni). Thus the instruments provided by EQUAL in terms of combating discrimination in the workplace seemed to work best when they were seen by employers as a way to comply with their legal obligations, stemming from the transposition of the anti-discrimination directives: in other words, the added value lies here in *equipping employers with ‘soft tools’ in a context in which legal obligations have already set the basis.*

The benefits of EQUAL in the social economy and the care sector have been manifold and are addressed below in further detail, when we come to thematic results. The added value with regard to existing policies at the national and European levels again lies, in our point of view, in the global approach taken to these sectors. *Thus the social economy is often considered merely as a vehicle for the reintegration of vulnerable people in the labour market, whereas it is also an economic sector per se*, which promotes an alternative approach, not just to employment, but also to the economy as a whole, and which, as such, has an *important contribution to make in the local economic and social fabric*: precisely, by aiming at its professionalisation and greater sustainability, by promoting networking between social enterprises, EQUAL has contributed to equipping the sector for this wider mission and to making this contribution more visible.

In the same vein, the care sector has attracted much policy attention recently for its virtuous circle consisting in alleviating care tasks for women, thus facilitating their labour market integration, and at the same time in providing job opportunities for women as well. However, in such strategies, *the good educational development of the child (in the case of childcare) and the quality of jobs in the sector are often forgotten*: it is remarkable, in this light, that some (not all) EQUAL DPs in this field have sought to address all of these challenges at the same time.

The added value brought about by EQUAL initiatives in the field of the integration of asylum seekers can be seen in the very *modest and pragmatic approach* taken by DPs which were facing innumerable obstacles for the vocational – and even more so, labour market – integration of asylum seekers. As a result, numerous small-scaled but decisive improvements have been introduced, in particular in the reception centres, with the promotion of new outreach methods, new roles for the asylum seekers themselves, and the consolidation of methodologies such as skills audits and portfolios.

Finally it is worth reflecting on the *added value of the EQUAL architecture per se*, as compared with other labour market integration programmes. As comes out clearly from our report, the overall architecture of EQUAL has certainly been extremely complex and ‘heavy’ for those

involved, at all levels. The combination of so many thematic fields with so many ‘key principles’ formed a complex matrix of requirements, which has sometimes diverted operators from their chief goals, and which has created internal bureaucracies within partnerships. However, there have been very interesting programmatic innovations in EQUAL, which undoubtedly constitute an added value with regard to other, national and European, programmes.

First, the idea of the phasing of actions, and especially *the introduction of a ‘preparatory phase’ (Action 1) has proved very fruitful* – even though its implementation in R1 necessarily gave rise to many questions. Giving partnerships time to improve the design of their projects, consolidate as partnerships, set up the procedures for working together, changes the role of selection in the first place (applications do not need to be very detailed but should give an idea of future capacity), and also changes the role of programme actors, who have to take on a more advisory and supportive role. It seems that at least some of the New Member States have been able to fully take advantage of this possibility in R2 and have really constructed Action 1 as a phase of capacity building.

Secondly, the *requirement to form partnerships*, with ‘all relevant stakeholders’, from the beginning or over time, has also been a real added value in EQUAL, even though this was perhaps less new (the concept of partnership in EQUAL is rather similar to the one promoted in the European Poverty programmes in the 80s, in the Territorial Employment Pacts and other previous European programmes). In some countries (especially in Southern Europe), it was the first time that all actors concerned in a given policy field sat at the same table. In other countries, the concept was perhaps less new, but the obligation to take small organisations and representatives of the target groups on board has often been taken seriously and partnerships have thus widened. New ways of working have undoubtedly been learnt, although there has so far been little evidence of dissemination of these new ways of working between these organisations outside the EQUAL framework.

Thirdly, learning has taken place with regard to *experimental and project management methods*, from initial research and diagnoses, to monitoring and self-assessment. Results have so far been mediocre, but awareness has no doubt been raised.

Finally, various strategies and arrangements have been set up for the exploitation of results (*‘valorisation’*) and *‘vertical mainstreaming’*, i.e. for the take up of innovations in mainstream policies and programmes. Such efforts are not only taking place in EQUAL – DG Education and Culture is for example very active on these fronts. But new ways of mobilising policy and decision makers have been explored, with variations in the different countries, and it will be important, at the end of the programme, to compare them, and to highlight their idiosyncrasies as well as their generalisable elements.

### **14.1.3. Good and innovative practice with mainstreaming potential in ESF, the EES and the Social Inclusion process**

In this section, we argue, on the basis of the present report, in favour of a wide conception of the scope of ‘good and innovative practice’: in our view, it would be regrettable to limit EQUAL good practice to project results – this is why we recommend the take up of good practice also in terms of programme strategies, structure and management. This should not come as a surprise since substantial interest has been raised by the EQUAL key principles, for example for their prolongation in the next generation of programmes of the European Social Fund.

In terms of *programme management*, first of all, there has been an original attempt, at the European level<sup>3</sup>, to *provide support to implementation, networking and mainstreaming on two fronts at the same time*: on the *thematic front*, through the creation of European Thematic Groups, and *on the organisational front*, through the creation of ‘horizontal groups’ of voluntary Member States (with the European Commission), with their prolongation into ‘working groups’ on the key principles.

Such an organisation has raised many questions, and has experienced many changes over time. Comparisons have been made, for example, with the former organisation through a Technical Assistance Office for the previous Community Initiatives, with its dedicated team of experts in European programmes and its regular meetings and contact with all National Support Structures. Indeed, the lack of systematic gathering of all support structures, in R1, has been a problem, especially for the management of transnationality. However this was addressed at the beginning of R2, through the creation of a network of transnationality correspondents in all Member States. On the other hand, the first structure set out for the European Thematic Groups was found too heavy, especially as Liaison Groups, which gathered all Member States for the validation of good practice, were difficult to sustain. But this was also due to the fact that there have been, as already said, perhaps too many themes (and sub-themes) to address in EQUAL, and to the fact that these groups were set up very early, when DPs did not have a lot to ‘show’.

In any case, and in retrospect, the double facilitation of the Community Initiative at the European level (treble, if we take into account the country desks), has undoubtedly been a key feature of the Initiative, even though practical modalities could be improved. The organisation of stable teams constituted by Commission officials, external experts of the fields, and various interested Member States, has been and is essential. These reference points have allowed for the organisation of focused encounters between development partnerships at the European level and for their collective production; as well as for the elaboration of policy relevant syntheses of potential good practice, backed up by in-depth studies of the policy and social contexts. Such syntheses (called policy briefs) have proved to be an important step in the mainstreaming process. More generally, the expertise developed over time, not only of the field but also of the practices developed on the ground by DPs, has fuelled the construction of thematic networks between programme actors, which have survived all the organisational changes and are increasingly taking on a policy and lobbying role.

*On the organisational side*, co-ordination at the European level is essential, especially of course for the organisation of transnationality, but also with a view to exchange on practices and tools, to identify differences in the conceptions and operationalisation of partnership, gender mainstreaming, or innovation, and learn from these differences. In this sense, the guides produced at the European level as well as the Learning Seminars have been very important for capacity building at all levels (see below). Clearly the role of the European Commission has not been only one of secretariat or ‘platform’ for Member States to meet – it has also provided direction, not co-ordination in a vacuum.

A second achievement of programme management to be capitalised upon has been the importance given to *mid-term evaluation reports* in the Member States. It is worth noting that many of the recommendations made by national evaluators in R1 informed the changes made in R2, both for the orientation of the programmes and for their organisation. Such result demonstrates a certain degree of maturity in the relationship between Managing Authorities and evaluators, and, incidentally, the formative role taken on by evaluation in EQUAL. With regard

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<sup>3</sup> Important developments for programme management have also taken place at the national level (through the development/consolidation of programme management expertise for guidance to promoters, the setting up of thematic networks, and the on-going development of mainstreaming processes and structures), however it is more for national evaluators to make recommendations for the take up of these in the next generation of programmes, under the European Social Fund in particular.

to the European level of the evaluation pyramid, however, this formative role has been more difficult to achieve, due to the structure of evaluation in EQUAL, even though efforts have been made to inform the national evaluation processes through methodological proposals. However, the decision not to continue EQUAL in ESF 2007-2013 has been taken, for example, before our Mid-term report had been submitted.

Good practice can also be identified in the way in which the key principles of the Initiative were made operational. Despite a sometimes difficult and lengthy learning process, there is indeed a ‘legacy’ of tools and lessons there, which can be capitalised upon in other programmes and which is explored further below.

With regard to *thematic good and innovative practice and project results*, we have selected practices which were identified as innovative by the national evaluators, and, when possible, for which preliminary impacts had also been detected. In addition, we have sought practices which seemed illustrative of the wider results achieved in EQUAL and which could be relevant for the Integrated guidelines and the Social Inclusion process: the results are presented in the table below. A more detailed analysis of the potential and initial impacts of EQUAL at the European level is provided in section 14.4.

*Table 14.2 – Examples of innovative practice with European mainstreaming potential*

| Integrated Guidelines, relevant Social Inclusion objectives & other programmes  | Examples of general thematic achievements in EQUAL   | EQUAL DP illustrations   |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Guideline 15:</b> entrepreneurial culture &amp; supportive environment for SMEs</p>                             | <p>Promotion of 2<sup>nd</sup> level business networking arrangements oriented to innovation:</p>  | <p>Creation of a <b>regional network of one-stop-shops</b> in one DE region, with the participation of the Public Employment Service agencies (<i>Arbeitsagenturen</i>). Capitalisation of benefits for business creation. No analysis of sustainability available so far.</p> <p>Creation of a ‘<b>social economy zone</b>’ by a Scottish DP (for the promotion of community businesses through the revision of public procurement procedures). Further funding by the Scottish Executive secured.</p>                                    |
| <p><b>Guideline 18:</b> lifecycle approach to work and Strategy for equality between men and women</p>                | <p>Development of care services based on the LM integration of LTU and inactive women, paying attention to recognition of qualifications, quality of jobs created, flexibility of services, and sustainability</p> | <p>Creation of a <b>new childcare concept and system</b> in FR, whereby all-day home childcare services become available to parents facing employment ‘inequalities’ (in terms of working time, geographical mobility, and wages). The system has been developed by the DP in 8 local areas as a complementary resource to the existing childcare supply, and works with highly qualified childcare professionals. The Family Benefits Fund has now taken up this experiment with a view to extend it to the whole national territory.</p> |
| <p><b>Guideline 19:</b> inclusive labour markets and European Refugee Fund and Future anti-discrimination actions</p> | <p>Significant &amp; sustainable achievements on mechanisms of integration of AS (partnerships, new roles for staff and AS, skills audits, new methods)</p>  | <p>Enhanced capacity of a Scottish Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) through the <b>training of volunteers drawn from the asylum seekers themselves</b>; further funding by the Scottish Executive for the application of the scheme in other CABs.</p> <p><b>Recruitment and certified training of outreach workers</b> for overcoming asylum seekers’ distrust by an IE DP. This led to a re-evaluation of the existing reception centres and to the setting up of a new outreach project in Cork.</p>   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Guideline 20:</b> Improve matching of labour market needs</p>   | <p>Sustainable employer networks/procedures for anticipation of skills needs, redefinition of recruitment, training and recruitment of LTU.</p>   | <p><b>Workplace co-ordinator scheme in the construction sector</b> in London, for the training, recruitment and retention of long-term unemployed people. Three major developers have chosen to retain and fund workplace coordinators on their sites. Further Regional Development Agency and ESF funding has already been secured for Jobcentre Plus clients to receive training through the programme.</p>   |
| <p><b>Guideline 21:</b> flexibility-security, reduce labour market segmentation, role of social partners</p>  | <p>New institutional cross-sector or sector based arrangements for anticipating and accompanying change. Some sustainable resources</p>   | <p>Transnational partnership in <b>the shipbuilding industry</b>, with FI, GR and IT partners. Results include an e-Forum on Industrial Relations for workers; the development of an Industrial Relation system among all the local institutions (Port Authority, City Council, District Council, Employers' Associations and Unions) for the management of crisis situations and for devising policies supporting Human Resources development in the port, shipbuilding, ship-repair and leisure port sectors; Certification and accreditation systems for worker skills especially in view of mobility; Guides on Safety at work.</p> |
| <p><b>Guideline 23:</b> Expand and improve investment in human capital<br/><b>and</b><br/><b>Guideline 24:</b> Adapt education and training systems<br/><b>and programmes of the Education And Culture DG</b></p> | <p>Some successful examples of enhanced union involvement in improving access to learning</p>   | <p>Use by a UKgb DP of the already established scheme of <b>Union Learning Representatives</b> as a platform for enhancing access to training of workers usually not engaged in learning, through 'brokerage' tailored to individual needs. 21 workplace learning agreements achieved in the retail sector, including national agreements with major retailers and the supply chain.</p>  |
| <p><b>Inclusion process:</b> access to resources, LM participation, co-ordination</p>   | <p>Promotion of local multi-stakeholder partnerships to tackle not only employment issues but also the underpinning attitudes and behaviours of employers leading to discrimination</p> | <p>Examples of various DPs in <b>the media:</b> in GR, adoption of a code of conduct for the implementation of anti-discrimination policies and of an equality audit, aiming at combating the reproduction of racism and xenophobia in the media. In the UKgb, commitment by major television companies to produce 'diverse programming' and to count with the contribution of people coming from Black and Minority Ethnicns.</p> <p>Changes in the Prison Service Resettlement Strategy in the UKni.</p> <p>Inter-agency work with drug users in IE (now institutionalised).</p>  |

## 14.2. CONCLUSIONS BY EVALUATION ‘TASK’

### 14.2.1. Appropriateness of strategies

#### Clarity and focus of CIP priorities

There has been a *lack of differentiation* between thematic priorities in the EQUAL guidelines, and, consequently, in some CIPs, which in turn has contributed to a lack of differentiation between types of activities carried out by DPs across themes. In particular, there has been a tendency to focus on access to the labour market and employability measures. This lack of specification and differentiation may have accounted for the fact that actions at company level, tackling *inequalities at work* (employment contracts, access to training, career paths) have not often been reported: even in theme 3E (lifelong learning) it was possible for DPs to focus on training for access to jobs rather than training for employed workers.

Thematic priorities have been better defined and focused in R2. However, this enhanced focus has mainly stemmed from a better definition of target groups, and it is unclear whether *types* of eligible actions have been differentiated to a larger extent.

It has to be noted that EQUAL had not initially encouraged a target group focus of interventions. On the contrary, the thematic approach was expected to lead to actions exploring new ways of tackling problems *common* to different types of discrimination and inequality. However some ‘old’ Member States adopted a target group approach from the start. The new Member States have privileged an understanding of inequalities and discrimination by target group over and above the thematic approach. Although a target group focus facilitates effectiveness and monitoring, it can also lead to setting aside more general and structural factors of discrimination and inequality in the labour market.

In 9 CIPs, 7 to 9 priorities have been selected. In 4 CIPs, 6 priorities have been selected out of 9. And in the other CIPs, including all new Member States except CZ, one or less priority per pillar has been selected. Opting for a focused or more spread programme appears as a strategic decision with important consequences for the effectiveness of the programmes, in particular with regard to mainstreaming, as, when there are less thematic priorities, efforts can be focused on the mobilisation of a smaller number of actors.

#### Relevance of CIP priorities and consistency with (former) National Action Plans for Employment and ESF Objective 3

Overall there has been a high degree of relevance of CIPs to structural problems of inequalities and discrimination in the labour market, in both rounds and in most Member States. In ‘old’ Member States, this assessment did not vary between R1 and R2, given the structural character of the problems addressed.

Nevertheless, we had pointed out, early in the EU-wide evaluation process and on the basis of labour market data in EU-15, that some inequalities were not or not sufficiently targeted: in particular, in several Member States, inequalities affecting migrants are not primarily, or not only, in terms of labour market access, but in terms of employment conditions (fixed term contracts and low wages). However there is a lack of actions targeting in-work inequalities, for migrants and more generally, and ECDB data show that this has worsened in R2.

This may have been linked to a problem in the starting diagnoses in the CIPs, which have sometimes tended to be modelled on the National Action Plans for Employment but failed to provide an in-depth analysis of the causes underpinning discrimination and inequalities in the labour market. This lack of in-depth diagnosis was also highlighted at DP level in R1 and has undermined the effectiveness of DP actions and of the programmes in some Member States.

### **Responsiveness to local needs**

In R1 a majority of DPs constructed their projects at a very local level. Indeed, ECDB statistics showed a predominance of geographical DPs (over sector-based DPs). However, this does not mean that geographical disparities between labour markets were tackled – and in fact very few CIPs paid attention to geographical imbalances, although rural and remote areas were adequately targeted in some Member States (Southern Europe). The geographical focus of DPs has decreased slightly in R2, mainly due to the New Member States, which, because of the small size of their programmes, have generally preferred a sectoral, nation-wide focus, even though many partners are located outside the capital cities. Overall, therefore, it can be said that EQUAL has had a very local anchorage, but, even at this stage in the initiative, we lack the appropriate data to assess whether it has been able to address the problems of specifically disadvantaged areas.

### **Consistency between DP objectives and CIP priorities**

Although there has generally been a good level of consistency between CIP priorities and DP objectives in R1, access to the labour market was sometimes an even stronger focus in the DP work programmes than was reflected in the thematic spread of EQUAL.

Discrepancies between CIP orientations and DP work programmes were also noted, in a few Member States, with regard to the profiles of targeted beneficiaries, in particular in themes 2C (business creation) and the two Adaptability themes (3E and 3F), where, as said, workers did not appear as the main target. This finding is reinforced by the fact that the share of enterprises taking part in EQUAL is rather low, all the more so that the statistical category ‘enterprise’ does not only represent employers but could designate any partner with a for profit legal status. However, even at this stage it is difficult to say more, due to the considerable lacks in the monitoring systems at all levels (DP, national and European levels).

### **Role of Mid-term evaluations**

Generally speaking, as said above, the responsiveness of Managing Authorities to evaluators’ recommendations has been excellent, not only for the adjustment of CIP priorities in R2, but also for programme management. There have been examples of significant changes in the weight of priorities, towards priorities where most innovation had been detected by the evaluators (e.g. in GR); of indirect introduction of priorities which had not been targeted in R1 (e.g. the social economy in ES is explicitly included in priority 2C – business creation); of improved links with national policy agendas (lifelong learning in IE, measures targeting prisoners and ex offenders in the UK<sup>gb</sup> etc.). Evaluators’ recommendations have also been taken into account for the improved translation of the key principles into selection criteria (e.g. in terms of partnership size, the clearer justification of innovation, the presentation of mainstreaming plans, etc.).

## **14.2.2. Management and implementation systems at CIP level<sup>4</sup>**

Overall CIP management and implementation systems have improved over time towards greater quality and efficiency.

### **Types of organisations involved in the management of EQUAL**

Various mechanisms have been set up to involve all relevant actors in the design and management of the programme. A number of *government departments or institutions* are

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<sup>4</sup> Conclusions on management and implementation systems at DP level are presented in the conclusions on the effectiveness and added value of the partnership principle. Conclusions on management and implementation systems at TNP level are presented in the conclusions on the effectiveness and added value of the transnationality principle.



systematically involved in Monitoring Committees and have sometimes been involved in drafting the CIPs. However we do not know the actual role taken up by the social partners and by NGO networks in programme management, even if we can assume that social partners are likely to have made a greater contribution in those Member States where they are active stakeholders of the employment policy.

When EQUAL has been implemented in a context of territorialisation of employment policies, regional and local authorities have been involved in programme management, though to varying extents and at different stages. In FR, IT and the UKgb, programme management (selection, guidance and mainstreaming) has taken place at the regional level and in DE and ES regional actors were involved at the selection stage. The close involvement of regional level actors has favoured the regional relevance of EQUAL. Selection Committee members know well the operators and have an overall view of their region. They can thus have a rather precise knowledge of the innovation potential of each DP as well as of the desirable balance between DPs. On the other hand, the involvement of regional actors in DP selection has sometimes 'politicised' selection, in the sense that the regional distribution of funding played an important role.

### **Procedures for project selection, selection criteria**

In some Member States, the most important selection phase was the selection of DPs for entry in the preparation phase. Action 1 was thus used for the consolidation of selected partnerships. In other MS, both selection stages – for entry in Action 1 and in Action 2 - were important. Action 1 was then used as a period to prepare DPs for selection for entry in Action 2. Even though it seemed more rigorous to keep the possibility of de-selecting DPs at the end of Action 1, in practice this caused many difficulties, and thus, it seems more reasonable to maintain this possibility, but as an exceptional case, as has been done for example in LT in R2.

Different approaches were taken to the definition and weight of selection criteria: in some MS, compliance with planned budget spread between programme measures has been determining; in others, technical quality criteria prevailed. Partly as a result, selection rates between MS and themes ranged between 10% and 100% in R1. Both strategies have their relevance: following strictly the planned budget allocation is relevant when new fields are being explored and few applicants are expected – as selection only on the basis of the quality of applications could lead to having very few projects in these specific priorities. This means that important guidance efforts have to be made to enhance implementation. Conversely when the priorities selected in the CIP are not new, an assessment mainly on the basis of the technical quality of applications seems more adequate. Some MS have opted for the reinforcement of the technical assessment of applications in R2.

The involvement of the National Support Structures (NSSs) in the selection process has been variable in the different Member States. Where they have been involved, this participation has raised questions – as NSS staff members usually have a very good knowledge of applicants, especially if they have provided support during the application phase, but for that very reason can be considered to be both judges and parties.

In the NMS, the selection process has generally been assessed positively. Nevertheless, the low quality of applications was pointed out in several cases and led to severe selection rates.

### **Preparation and implementation of EQUAL**

In R1, as said above, the importance of the *preparatory phase* (Action 1) has been demonstrated. However, more intense methodological assistance by the NSSs would have been required. The NMS NSSs in R2 have sometimes provided considerable support to DPs in the preparatory phase, which shows that the lessons of R1 were drawn.

*In Action 2 (implementation phase) of R1, NSSs have focused on administrative assistance to DPs, monitoring and control of DP activities and communication. Indeed the very important administrative burden for DPs has been a major source of dissatisfaction. In addition, the complexity of management sometimes absorbed too much of the energies of R1 DPs and has not been conducive to an optimisation of the innovation potential. Similar and even more serious difficulties have been experienced in the NMS in R2: the heavy administrative procedures (in particular for the verification of eligibility of costs), the payment delays, and the low advance payments have affected NMS DPs' implementation capacity. In CZ, the creation by DPs of a *Council of Final Beneficiaries* has been an original response to these difficulties. Again, more methodological guidance is required, but a precondition for this is the simplification of administrative and payment procedures.*

The phase of transfer to policy and practice (Action 3) has been dedicated to the organisation of networking, dissemination of good practice and mainstreaming activities and has taken place through 3 main mechanisms: (a) individual Action 3 budgets included by DPs in their DPA, along with Action 2 budgets, in which case all DPs could benefit from an Action 3 budget; (b) individual or collective Action 3 budgets accessible through a call for proposals, in which case not all DPs could obtain such funding; (c) Action 3 budgets made accessible, as an option to all DPs that submit an application. At this stage, we do not have enough elements to assess the relevance of each of these three options.

In R2, several changes were introduced which are likely to improve the quality of implementation and of outputs. The most significant changes include the increased flexibility of each Action and of their phasing; the clarification NSSs' role, which also helps to optimise the distribution of tasks between the MAs and NSSs; and more qualitative guidance and monitoring.

### **Monitoring systems**

Programme-level monitoring systems have been a weak point in R1. National evaluators often found that monitoring systems were not user-friendly and sometimes unreliable.

In R2, several MA/NSS improved their management instruments and their monitoring systems. In some MS, more quantifiable and concrete indicators are being designed. The nature of the data required for the information and monitoring system was also adjusted in some MS, to improve simplicity and 'user-friendliness', effectiveness, transparency of expectations, and to pay more attention to confidentiality issues. However some persisting difficulties were mentioned and it could be useful to organise a peer exchange between NSSs on this issue.

In the NMS, the monitoring system has not been assessed thoroughly probably because the evaluation period covered only the beginnings of its implementation. However, when assessments are available, the same criticism has been put forward as in the OMS in R1.

## **14.2.3. Effectiveness of the key principles**

### **14.2.3.1. Equal opportunities**

#### **Evidence of implementation of a horizontal gender perspective and added value**

Overall, the *implementation* of the horizontal approach to Equal Opportunities between men and women has been disappointing, except in the themes of the equal opportunities 'pillar' where it has been more successful. However, even there, implementation has not been completely satisfactory, as DPs have tended to take a 'women focused' approach rather than a 'gender

approach'. However, in many cases, improvements have been made throughout R1 and between R1 and R2. Improved guidance by MAs/NSSs has certainly contributed to an important degree to this progress.

When DPs have implemented Gender Mainstreaming approaches, the *added value* has consisted in awareness raising, capacity building, improving the quality of the projects, tackling new target groups and identifying other sources of inequality and discrimination.

Despite this mixed assessment, it is clear that the *dual approach*, horizontal and thematic, taken in EQUAL has favoured learning in the implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming approaches more than would have been the case if the principle had only been implemented 'horizontally' or only in specific themes.

### **Evidence of 'access to all' in the implementation of the thematic priorities**

Only a few MS have conceived their programmes as addressing explicitly 'Equal Opportunities for all'. In the other CIPs the notion of 'Equal Opportunities' has been used only in the context of 'gender'.

There are some examples of horizontal implementation of 'Equal Opportunities for all' (or, as the SE evaluators name it, '*Diversity Mainstreaming*'). The measures and processes set up by DPs were quite similar to those implemented for Gender Mainstreaming: identifying special needs and tailoring the services (e.g. training) according to these needs. Awareness raising of key actors has been important. This approach has understandably often been identified with the implementation of the empowerment principle, which is a clear illustration of the sometimes unnecessary complexity of EQUAL.

The requirement of 'equal access of all groups to all thematic fields' has not been followed. The main reason for this is the already mentioned prevalence of a target group approach within the different thematic fields. Indeed such a requirement appears as very abstract and is not necessarily relevant for all themes. As a consequence, little is said in the evaluation reports about the added value of the horizontal approach of 'Equal Opportunities for all'.

### **14.2.3.2. Partnership and empowerment**

#### **Main features of the experience of partnership and empowerment in EQUAL and conditions of effectiveness**

The implementation of the partnership and empowerment principles, understood as mechanisms for bringing together various relevant actors for tackling an issue, and for working together towards shared goals, has been one of the main successes of EQUAL. It has been key to facilitate access, both to 'target groups' and, though to a lesser extent, to the decision-making community.

The *design of partnerships* has been crucial. Successful partnerships have involved the 'right' partners at the 'right' time and at the 'right' level. Involving the 'right' partners has been understood both as ensuring an adequate representation of all stakeholders active in a given field and/or on a given territory, and/or as mobilising partners with the rights skills for carrying out the tasks set out. Although the two approaches sometimes overlap, this is not necessarily the case: for example, having local authorities on board does not necessarily guarantee that policy mainstreaming will take place as this requires the participation of officials with real decision-making power, commitment and know-how.

The EQUAL experience of partnership has also demonstrated the *relevance of planning and combining different levels of involvement for different partners over time*, rather than requiring continuous commitment. Such a flexible approach is likely to have been particularly suited for the participation of private sector employers, as one obstacle generally acknowledged to the participation of private companies is the time commitment. However, the unequal participation of partners has also been an obstacle to partner empowerment and to collective decision making. Thus, combining ‘fluidity’ or flexibility in the composition of the partnerships over time with the stability of a core of partners has been an interesting and particularly relevant partnership configuration in EQUAL.

*The issue of the optimal size of the DPs remains debated.* Restricted partnerships have been regarded as more reactive, more manageable and therefore more efficient but they tend to be less sustainable, and, in the case of really small partnerships, implementation capacity has been at issue (compliance with all EQUAL principles was for example difficult to achieve). Wide partnerships increase the possibilities of sustainability throughout the DP lifecycle as well as the possibilities for mainstreaming, but there is less scope for active participation.

*Decision-making mechanisms* have been organised on a continuum between two extreme models, centralised decision-making on the one hand, and fully participative decision-making on the other hand. Centralised decision-making has proved quite effective when it was supplemented with adequate consultation mechanisms, whilst fully participative mechanisms have been slower and heavier but have contributed to changing relationships between partners, e.g. between public institutions and third sector organisations. In any case, the importance of these decision-making mechanisms at DP level should not be exaggerated, as the day-to-day decision-making bodies have frequently been project level working groups. This has led to questions around the structure of partnerships in EQUAL, as an additional layer of bureaucracy (for DP management and administration and the co-ordination between projects) may have been created, especially in Member States where DPs oversaw large budgets, many partners and many projects.

*Capacity building* has taken place, with a positive effect particularly for the participation in decision-making by small grass-roots organisations. However it has been found that capacity building was more difficult to achieve in small size partnerships and that financial difficulties (in particular due to the substantial advance of funds required) have hampered the continued participation of small organisations.

Not only the adequate composition of partnerships and decision-making mechanisms, but also the implementation of adequate *project management processes* has conditioned effectiveness. In particular the importance of carrying out precise starting diagnoses has been demonstrated (and conversely the absence of such diagnoses has led to difficulties in contacting the target groups, as constraints hampering their participation were not adequately documented). Although progress on DP level monitoring and self-assessment has been noted throughout R1 and into R2, both have generally been weak points in the implementation of partnerships. The objectives of self assessment have been found to be unclear and not enough resources have been dedicated to this task.

*NSS guidance* to development partnerships has improved over time and has become more qualitative and methodological. This in turn has been a factor in DPs’ progress on capacity building and empowerment as well as in project management techniques.

### **Added value**

The partnership and empowerment principles have made a major contribution to the added value of the programme:

- *The involvement of 'strategic partners'* in the partnerships has contributed to raising the profile of the issues addressed, and in some cases has enhanced the visibility of some forms of discrimination and stimulated public debate around them.
- *The involvement of organisations representing the beneficiaries* has led to an improved knowledge of their concrete life situation and of the effects of discrimination, provided this 'proximity' knowledge was backed up with more systematic research. It has also facilitated outreach activities.
- The fact that *very diverse partners* (working in different institutional contexts, in different disciplines, with different statuses and roles) were brought to work jointly in a context in which day to day competition and power relationships could be, partly at least, left aside, has led to a better mutual understanding of the rationales and practices of each, with possible repercussions in their co-operation outside EQUAL.
- In addition, this *mutualisation of knowledge and know-how* has been conducive to innovation as well as transfers between partners, under certain conditions (i.e. provided the management of the partnership itself did not focus all efforts).
- *Speaking 'with a common voice'* has lent some weight to their activities and results and has contributed to mainstreaming and policy influence, again under certain conditions (clear mainstreaming strategy and planning).

#### **14.2.3.3. Transnational co-operation**

##### **Conditions for the preparation of an efficient and effective transnational cooperation**

On the basis of our fieldwork, we found that the success factors in the formation of a transnational partnership (TNP) include: (a) choosing partners working on common issues and/or with similar target groups, and with comparable transnational (TN) budgets; (b) ensuring that there is a congruency or complementarity of interests and objectives; (c) drafting a precise workplan and involving all partners in this exercise; and (d) taking into account that transnationality requires time.

The process of *validation of the transnational co-operation agreements* by Managing Authorities has tended to be lenient and the quality of transnational co-operation agreements has therefore generally not been very good in both rounds. Such 'leniency' has been a conscious decision by Managing Authorities in R2, as there has been a will to avoid rejections so as not to delay transnational work. This decision makes it all the more necessary to provide substantial guidance and support to DPs for the implementation of their transnational activities.

The *guidance provided at the European level* was regarded as useful in both rounds. The guides and handbooks on transnationality were generally received positively by DPs, MAs and NSSs alike. The ECDB was regarded as a helpful tool for a first screening of potential partners, although the quality and reliability of the information available, which depended on the quality of data entry at DP and Member State level, has been criticised in both rounds of EQUAL.

The *cooperation between MS* was intensified in R2 as it had been found to be insufficient in R1. A network of transnationality co-ordinators was set up and a series of seminars and conferences took place, which has been of considerable help, especially for NMS Managing Authorities and National Support Structures.

##### **Difficulties and barriers to the implementation of transnationality**

The specific architecture of transnationality in EQUAL, i.e. combining systematically a national project with a transnational one, has both been interesting and demanding, as it brought about additional difficulties on top of the difficulties inherent in transnational work. In particular, this restricted the pool from which to select transnational partners. The construction of transnational partnerships was necessarily dependent on the time schedules for the selection of DPs in the

Member States: as these were not sufficiently co-ordinated in R1, this led to a further restriction of the pool of potential partners. Differences in TN budgets were often important and directly stemmed from the different size of DPs in the different Member States and from different guidelines for TN budgets.

### **Geographical patterns of co-operation**

DPs were encouraged to form TN partnerships all throughout the EU. However, in most MS, links are much stronger with 2 or 3 MS. For R2 some OMS are over-represented in partnerships with NMS DPs. On the other hand, NMS partners have been very 'popular' with OMS DPs as these foresaw the possibility of transfer of knowledge, expected to learn from NMS experience, and showed a desire to contribute to the construction of an enlarged Europe. NMS DPs have also been interested in partners from other NMS, due to similarities in language and some common historical background.

### **Type of TN cooperation established and lessons learned**

Many TN partnerships, in R1 and R2, focused their activities on the *structured exchange of information and experience*. This type of activity, when it has had continuity over time, has been quite successful, as it led to a widening of the scope of activity of each partner, to increased professional skills, and to the transfer and adoption of methods. *Exchange of staff* has also generally been a source of high satisfaction, both for the visitors and for the hosts. Structured visits have been an opportunity to see concretely other professional practices, and to reflect back upon one's own.

As TN projects have been developed on the basis of national projects, joint development has been less frequent and more difficult. The testing and adaptation of methods and exchange of beneficiaries have not been frequent activities either.

There have been *3 main models of internal work organisation*: (a) working groups led by each partner in their area of competencies, and involving all partners. In principle, the model favours maximum co-operation but it was hardly feasible economically as the budget of some partners was too limited to allow them to take part in all working groups; (b) working groups led by each partner in their area of competencies, in which other partners participate if they are interested. This organisation proved to be quite efficient and especially favourable for the involvement of DPs' domestic partners; (c) division of labour between partners: each TN partner is responsible for a specific product or activity. One risk of this organisation is that it only provides for limited exchange of experience. However, when common objectives are clear, this way of working can be very effective, especially if the 'products' developed by each partner are then subjected to constructive feed-back by other partners.

### **Monitoring and self-evaluation**

Monitoring and self-evaluation have been weak points in the implementation of transnational partnerships as well. We identified three main formal models of self-evaluation: (a) an external evaluator is contracted for the evaluation of the whole TN partnership; (b) the evaluation of the TNP is organised internally; (c) the TN partners assess transnationality through their self-evaluation at DP level. The combination of a TNP level and of a DP level of evaluation is particularly interesting and consistent with the orientation of transnationality in EQUAL. However, in practice, self-evaluation reports were often delivered at the end of the TN projects, which is of little use for the TNP and its members.

### **Added value**

*Transnational learning* has been capitalised upon by DPs to varying extents and added value has been uneven. In fact, DPs' expectations regarding the added value of transnationality, their

motivation to implement TN activities, and their capacity to capitalise on learning varied quite significantly over the life-cycle of the projects.

The nature of the added value of transnationality logically depends on the type of activities undertaken. ‘Joint development’, when successful, has led to new ‘European products’ (e.g. new tools, new methods which are of interest for users across Europe, e.g. in a specific sector). The added value of the exchange of information and experience and of the exchange of staff and beneficiaries has lied in the direct contribution to innovation – e.g. through ‘imports’ – or, more frequently, in its indirect contribution to the quality of DP projects – e.g. through benchmarking and an increase in the professional competencies of staff. Increased professional competencies are also likely to lead to innovation, although this does not follow a linear process. Transnational co-operation has also sometimes led to more unexpected effects, such as the widening of the scope of activities of partner organisations.

The local organisation of transnational events has contributed to enhance the *credibility* of DPs at the local level and has improved mainstreaming opportunities. There has also been some *capacity building* through the creation of stable transnational networks. However this has mostly materialised in common applications in R2 by existing R1 partnerships. Case study respondents doubted that co-operation could be maintained in the absence of project-related funding.

Finally, the contribution of TN co-operation to the *fostering of a European identity*, and in any case to a better mutual understanding, should not be undervalued. The knowledge of EU policies has also improved. Study visits have helped actors locate their own experience against a wider context – it has to be stressed that there have been cases in which local staff had never travelled outside their frontiers, and had never been exposed to the ‘European reality’.

#### **14.2.3.4. Innovation**

##### **Effectiveness in the development of new methods, new tools or approaches to the delivery of employment policies combating discrimination and inequality**

Overall, EQUAL has been effective at producing innovations aiming at improving existing practices or adapting them to reach out to new groups, which is in line with the stated aim of the Initiative to improve the effectiveness of existing policies.

In addition, in a few Member States, EQUAL was used as a strategic instrument to explore or further structure fields of intervention where policy was not developed and/or there was not much practical experience. The more or less new character of thematic priorities naturally depended on the countries, but 4 thematic priorities were particularly mentioned by evaluators across Member States as relatively new areas of policy/practice developments: the fight against racism and xenophobia (theme 1B); the social economy (theme 2D); conciliation between work and private lives (theme 4G); and the integration of asylum seekers (theme 5I). Conversely, some areas of intervention, such as training in general, have been less prone to innovation, given the long experience in these fields, including the experience derived from previous Community Initiatives.

##### **Obstacles to innovation**

The short time frame for the evaluation of the projects and the lack of clear further funding perspectives have sometimes been brakes to innovation, as DPs hesitated to take risks and ‘experiment’, *especially with particularly vulnerable groups*. This is also an explanation for the ‘incremental’ character of innovation: it appears safer to reform existing schemes, which will continue to attract mainstream funding, than to create new solutions which may then have to be dropped.

Over-meticulous financial controls are also putting a brake on innovation, as is particularly clear already in the New Member States.

Conversely, guidance by the national support structures (for the implementation of experimental methods) and networking between DPs (e.g. through national thematic networks) have proved to enhance the quality of innovation. In that sense it is perhaps useful not to have too broad a programme, and to focus on a few well defined themes on which DPs can exchange.

### **Added value**

The requirement made to Development Partnerships to innovate has progressively led to a greater awareness of, and interest for, *innovation as experimentation*, i.e. for innovation as a concept which can steer project management and procedures. In some MS, an experimentation dynamics has clearly taken place, in the sense that the monitoring of project results led to abandoning some projects and setting up new ones. More attention has indeed been paid by programme actors to experimental approaches, in the last year or year and a half, as National Thematic Networks developed and provided a forum of exchange and capitalisation of experience for DPs and as new guidance was provided to R2 applicants. The importance of initial research and diagnosis on the situation of the target groups, the careful design of outreach activities, the reliance on complementary expertise of partners, and the introduction of monitoring and self-assessment procedures seem to be increasingly recognised both amongst DPs and amongst programme actors. This is important as problems in starting diagnoses and outreach activities had been mentioned in R1 and had led in some cases to a lack of capacity of the programme to reach out to the most disadvantaged or discriminated against.

On the other hand, *only a share of operations or DPs can be considered as having produced innovation with clear added value, relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and/or mainstreaming possibilities*. This, to a certain extent, is intrinsic to any experimental programme. However, this may also be due to what could be called a ‘trivialising effect’, derived from the ‘obligation to innovate’ extended to a whole programme: indeed, evaluators looking at the quality of innovation sometimes found that some projects could have been funded under objective 3, or that they were purely and simply not innovative. Thus, whilst acknowledging that there has to be room for failure or limited results, it also seems appropriate, as will be the case in the future programmes, not to extend the obligation to innovate to all projects and rather to allocate a ‘bonus’ to clearly innovative projects.

## **14.2.4. Effectiveness of networking, dissemination and mainstreaming at national level and across the EU**

### **14.2.4.1. Effectiveness of networking, dissemination and mainstreaming at national level**

#### **Networking mechanisms**

National Thematic Networks (NTNs) have been set up in all Member States (except LU) in R1. NTNs have been the main tools for organising exchanges between DPs and have generally worked well in that respect, to the point that they sometimes transformed into ‘communities of practices’. Nevertheless, the intensity of networking has been varied from one MS to the other and NTNs have sometimes suffered from inadequate resources and a lack of clarity in their role. There has been little regional networking, yet when it has been organised, it has been quite effective, including for mainstreaming purposes.



### **Identification and validation of good practice**

This task has mainly been under the responsibility of NTN, with the support of NSSs and of experts in most cases. The identification of good practice took place through specific questionnaires to DPs, visits, meetings and reports. Some NTN and experts used the criteria produced by the European Thematic Groups. Validation has often taken place through peer review, especially when the NTN were in charge. However this has not been an easy process and clear criteria and methodological instruments have been found to be lacking, both for identification and for validation, even though the material collected has been significant.

### **Dissemination and mainstreaming activities at DP level**

Dissemination activities have been diversified at DP level. However they have been hampered by the difficulties faced by DPs in explaining and demonstrating what they do. In addition, there seems to have been some confusion between mainstreaming and dissemination, although this result may be due in part to the national evaluators' methodological instruments for assessing mainstreaming. There has been a general lack of programme guidance and support to DPs with their mainstreaming strategy.

### **Effectiveness of mainstreaming**

Horizontal mainstreaming has been more effective than vertical mainstreaming, both at DP and programme level. At DP level, internal transfers between DP actors, as well as between some DP members and TN partners have taken place, whereas mainstreaming towards the policy community has been more limited. Similarly, at programme level, the National Thematic Networks have played an important role to ensure the transfer of know-how and exchange between participants, the development of common products, active communities of practices, etc. They have faced more difficulties for the mobilisation of policy actors.

The most critical aspect of mainstreaming so far has been the implementation of mechanisms for vertical mainstreaming. Specific mechanisms for vertical mainstreaming have only been set up in a few MS so far. On the other hand, it could be argued that vertical mainstreaming is quite a new way of envisaging policy making, and on which knowledge and practical know-how is still lacking. It is difficult, for example, to identify the 'right' policy makers and to identify the 'right' moment at which they should be contacted.

Mainstreaming has been more effective at the local and regional levels than at the national level in most cases, thanks to the inclusion of local and regional policy actors in the DPs, and, in some cases, to the development of regional networks. However it could also be that DPs more easily identify local or regional impacts than national ones.

### **Added value**

Overall the contribution of the mainstreaming principle to the added value of the programme has so far been limited: in the words of national evaluators, 'most EQUAL achievements remain in the EQUAL Community', 'networking and mainstreaming have worked well inside EQUAL but had little impact outside'.

However important progress has been made since the Mid-term reviews and, following the Commission's second communication on EQUAL, the mainstreaming principle has received considerably more attention in most Member States in R2. As indicated in the European Mainstreaming Guide, 'transfer and incorporation of innovative results into policies and practice is not an automatic process and takes time'.

#### **14.2.4.2. Effectiveness of networking, dissemination and mainstreaming at EU level**

##### **Facilitation of co-operation between National Authorities and the Commission and direct co-operation between National Authorities**

An intense networking activity has taken place at the EU and cross-national level in the last years. This networking has been concerned both with identifying, sharing and disseminating lessons derived from the DP initiatives in the 9 thematic fields and with facilitating the implementation of the EQUAL principles during EQUAL as well as their transfer to the next ESF programming phase. This *double focus of European facilitation* has been essential for the implementation of the Initiative and for the mainstreaming of results.

With regard to *thematic facilitation*, policy fora, conferences, direct contacts with other units and DGs of the European Commission have taken place. In addition, the continued work on specific themes and issues, and the progressive constitution of European networks through chained events has given rise to the constitution of relevant networking and lobbying platforms, especially in the areas of diversity, ex offenders, business creation, the social economy, gender equality and support to asylum seekers. This will hopefully intensify or at least be maintained in the last years of the Initiative.

The schedule of European events planned by the Member States with the support of the European Commission for the years to come is impressive. However, the move away from the former format of the European Thematic Groups (ETGs), which, although heavy, ensured a continuity of work on the main issues of each thematic priority, is not without its risks. We had not recommended such a move, although we had made proposals for the improvement of ETGs. The current system of grants to Member States for the organisation of events could transform the European networking and mainstreaming activities into a 'race for events'. It therefore seems particularly important to abide by the criteria decided for the European funding of these events, and to take into account the findings of the European evaluation: move away from visibility events towards more in-depth thematic events, such as the Madrid policy forum on gender equality (June 2005), as small workshops allow for more active participation; maintain and reinforce the role of thematic experts as effective intermediaries between promoters and policy makers (for example, through the production and update of 'policy briefs'); ensure a continuity between related events.

The *European facilitation of the implementation of the EQUAL principles* initially took place through the creation of 'horizontal groups' in charge of producing guidance materials on the various EQUAL principles and of organising 'learning seminars' (platforms for the regular communication between NSS and MAs). Member States' participation in these groups was voluntary, which ensured strong commitment and a good level of activity, although the production of guides in the national languages was sometimes delayed. The production and translation of 6 methodological guides (two successive guides on transnationality, the EQUAL guide on Gender mainstreaming, the EQUAL Guide for Development Partnerships, the Partnership Development Toolkit, and the Practical Guide to Mainstreaming under EQUAL) is not a small achievement. The Guides have been useful to Managing Authorities and National Support Structures in their guidance to Development Partnerships. Not all of these mechanisms were still active in 2005: the main active groups were the Transnationality Group, the Mainstreaming Group and the Planning Group.

The relevance and direct usefulness of EU-level support mechanisms and tools were stressed with extreme clarity by NMS Managing Authorities, and this is an important lesson for future programming. It is clear, in particular, that the implementation of transnationality has been greatly supported by all the mechanisms set up, from the network of co-ordinators in all

Member States, to the clearing house, including the guide and toolkit and the European Common DataBase (ECDB). In this respect progress has been made between R1 and R2 in the sense that all Member States took part (e.g. through the network of co-ordinators).

Various mechanisms have been put to use by the NMS for *bi-lateral (or multi-lateral) support and exchange*: from twinning arrangements or service contracts with NSSs from ‘old’ Member States through PHARE, to study visits and one-off or on-going consultations and participation in multi-lateral fora such as the Baltic Sea meetings. These co-operation mechanisms have had different purposes according to the time at which they were implemented (design of the Programming Document and Programming Complement; advice for systems implementation, and support for programme management aspects more specific to EQUAL such as the design of the Mainstreaming strategy, DP self-evaluation, transnationality, and product validation).

Advice sought from other Managing Authorities and NSS has been assessed as crucial at all stages by the Managing Authorities in the NMS – and could probably only be provided by national programme actors which had passed through the same processes and asked the same questions. Nevertheless it was also suggested that more systematic support (e.g. through monitoring visits) and training could be organised by the European Commission on technical and administrative management issues.

Finally, considerable effort and work has been put in by Member States and the European Commission in 2005-2006 for *informing the next ESF programming phase* with the lessons derived from the implementation of the EQUAL principles. The working documents prepared and the workshops held for that purpose have generally been well assessed by the national ESF co-ordinators<sup>5</sup>.

### **Thematic reviews for the identification and dissemination of good practice at EU level**

One of the functions of the European Thematic Groups in 2003, 2004 and until mid 2005 had been the collection and validation of good practice in view of their further dissemination and mainstreaming. ‘Good practice’ has been understood alongside various dimensions, including effectiveness (or potential effectiveness) and a capacity to illustrate the key principles of EQUAL. Gathering evidence of good practice often proved a difficult exercise, as DPs had not completed their activities, and as National Thematic Networks had often only started. Validation of good practice, according to reliability of the evidence provided and policy relevance, lacked the appropriate mechanisms, and Liaison Groups (now dismantled) faced many difficulties in carrying out this validation function. However the work carried out by thematic experts for the identification of policy issues and their mapping of DPs according to these issues partially offset these difficulties.

This led to the production of 29 ‘policy briefs’ by mid-2005, presenting policy challenges and developments as well as EQUAL solutions. But policy briefs were prepared at a time when DPs still could not document results and impacts, and they therefore tend to present potential rather than actual good practice.

Since then, no more policy briefs have been prepared and the focus of expert work turned to the identification of ‘success stories’, of which 30 are now available. However, contrary to the policy briefs, which located transversal lessons of EQUAL against European policy agendas, these individual success stories serve more a dissemination purpose than a pro-active mainstreaming strategy.

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<sup>5</sup> The results so far of this exercise are presented in section 14.4 below and our recommendations for the mainstreaming of the EQUAL principles in future programmes are presented in Chapter 15 (section 15.3.3).

It should be pointed out that there is a gap between the overall impression stemming from reading the policy briefs and success stories, on the one hand, and the (more limited) impacts identified so far by national evaluators, on the other hand. This could easily be remedied by updating the policy briefs on the basis of an analysis by thematic experts of the evidence now available on results at DP level.

### **Added value and influence**

Despite the problems associated with an at times heavy structure, despite the difficulties caused by the various changes in orientation and organisation over time, and bearing in mind that activities are still on-going, European networking and facilitation mechanisms have already proved their relevance and added value, both for the constitution of thematic networks across Europe and the cross-national mainstreaming of results as well as for the facilitation of implementation.

In particular, the policy briefs have already proved their usefulness, as testified by high level policy or decision-makers, who, even at that level, can be unaware of developments both of policy and practice in their own field in other countries. They are also keen to network, yet networking tends to take place with representatives of neighbouring countries, or even, of one's own country: hence the demonstrated importance of focused events, fostering active participation, and with continuity over time.

EQUAL has given rise to the formation of some stable European groups, pursuing a range of aims – from exchange of experience to lobbying, including peer reviews, thematic analyses and policy proposals. These achievements could not have been arrived at without a conscious, purposeful effort from the start and over time, for gathering programme actors at various levels and backing them up with expertise.

Similarly, European-level co-ordination and facilitation for the implementation of the programmes in the Member States has been and is essential. This is of course particularly the case for the implementation of transnational partnerships and networks. The improvements in the organisation and validation of transnational partnerships in R2 has clearly demonstrated the added value of a common schedule, common validation approaches, of a common database for searching partners, and of regular encounters and on-going contact between all Member States and the European Commission. But this is also true for the implementation of other organisational principles: regular exchanges between Managing Authorities on the concrete issues raised by the implementation of experimental and project management approaches, of monitoring and self-assessment, of gender mainstreaming, and, above all, of the mainstreaming of innovative practices, have provided programme management actors with concrete tools and solutions. This work needs to be consolidated and sometimes to be made more operational but the need for such exchanges, on a regular basis, between all concerned, and with a European facilitation, is beyond doubt.

## **14.3. OVERALL RESULTS BY THEME AND AREA OF INTERVENTION**

Programme results are available by theme concerning innovation and to a lesser extent, concerning impacts. However, as already explained, the overlaps between thematic priorities in the types of actions funded have sometimes been substantial. This is why results are presented below by area of intervention (interventions, sectors, or target groups) rather than by theme, although, as will be seen, there are overlaps between this empirical classification and thematic priorities<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> This classification has been put forward by the DE evaluators in their 2005 report. It has proved highly relevant for our synthesis work across Member States.

## **Innovations in interventions (new methodologies and new arrangements), sustainability and impacts**

### ***New approaches to labour market integration pathways***

Labour market integration pathways have been on the agenda for a long time now; however, methodologies and networking have progressed under EQUAL.

Increased attention has sometimes been paid to support to beneficiaries once in employment. Gateways to employment have been diversified, for example through the creation of new temping arrangements for specific groups (low qualified people, people with disabilities). New trade-specific labour market integration pathways have been developed, with high involvement from employers. A few initiatives have also taken place to improve the interface between the unemployed and the institutions and agencies in charge of delivering employment policy and benefits.

At this stage, the *sustainability and impacts* of these new methodologies and initiatives appears to be rather modest, or at least uncertain, across Member States. The only clear areas of sustainable impacts are the networking with employers in sectors facing recruitment bottlenecks, and institutional co-ordination mechanisms between statutory agencies, where the potential users of the approaches developed are the very institutions involved in the Development Partnerships.

### ***Integrated approaches to tackling labour market discrimination and discrimination at work***

Labour market discrimination has not only been tackled by supply-side measures, as could have been feared. Mentoring and coaching of the beneficiaries has often only been one of the measures developed by DPs, alongside awareness raising campaigns and advice and support to employers. *Multi-level and multifaceted strategies against discrimination* (in particular, but not only, racial discrimination) have thus been developed, targeting, in parallel and at the same time, a range of different actors who had not necessarily been targeted before (parallel training or awareness raising of public services officials, social workers, company managers, employees and their representatives, and final beneficiaries). New or relatively new roles were developed, such as that of 'intercultural mediator', in various countries, and concrete tools were provided to employers to help them in their 'diversity' or 'equality' strategies (equality checks, codes of conduct). The media sector was particularly targeted in some Member States, both as employer and as dissemination channel.

Given the long-term ambition of such strategies, it is by definition difficult to identify impacts, especially on employers. However two examples in IE (changed recruitment procedures across public and private sector employers, for the recruitment of low-skilled unemployed, and the adoption by an employer federation of a self-diagnosis tool on equality policies) show that strategies starting from employer concerns and interests as a gate of entry for actions against inequality and discrimination are effective. They also show that recent equality legislation has been a key factor raising employer interest in equality strategies and tools.

The same kind of multifaceted approaches and similar tools can be found in awareness raising concerning *gender equality*, with the production of guides (e.g. on equal pay), the appointment of 'gender equality consultants' and 'equal opportunities agents', actions in the education system, and campaigns targeting public opinion as a whole in order to address the distribution of gender roles.

The main *impact* signalled there has been amongst partner organisations, in terms of raised awareness and through the adoption of new procedures. It is also an area in which professionals have become more organised, and in which some new sustainable institutional resources have been created (e.g. resource centres on women in scientific and technical professions). However the impact on employers is again uncertain, as few assessments are available.

### ***Support to business creation***

Innovations in services of support to business creation have sometimes consisted in paying more attention to the preliminary steps of the schemes ('profiling') as well as to advice for 'consolidation' once the business has been created, with individualised coaching and mentoring throughout. Such 'integrated' services are considered as amongst the most successful innovations in the ES EQUAL programme, and also feature high in DE. The formation of new support networks (rather than single structures) has been important. Innovation has also consisted in detecting new sectors for business creation and in supporting entrepreneurs in these new fields and there are interesting examples in GR and PT especially in 'environment friendly' activities.

The objective set out by the EQUAL guidelines to DPs operating in this field (which here corresponds to a thematic field, 2C) was to 'open up the business creation process to all'. The capacity of the innovations detected to effectively open business creation 'to all' remains, however, at issue, although there has indeed been a mobilisation of 'non-traditional' entrepreneurs (e.g. women in remote rural areas and women more generally).

*Evidence of sustainability and impacts is scarce* at this stage. However, there are good prospects for the sustainability of the new integrated business support centres in ES, given the current policy emphasis on support to business creation in that Member State.

### ***New learning facilities and arrangements***

NTIC have often been used for the design of new learning arrangements (e-learning, distance training). However the assessment of the effectiveness of this type of innovations is mixed – or pending, as the use of NTIC has sometimes been wrongly deemed sufficient to break the barriers impeding access to learning and training, e.g. for low-skilled workers, and there can be a tendency amongst DPs to consider that the use of technology itself is innovative without paying sufficient attention to the usefulness of this innovation. However, significant examples show that technology can be a powerful tool, when used for the customisation of training to the needs of well-defined, specific and homogenous group (such as people with disabilities or young people having dropped out of school).

Whilst innovation in this area is not ground-breaking, the mainstreaming potential is usually good, since the funding channels for training and learning are developed. Thus much small-scale innovation, such as new modules in basic skills and literacy, has found or is finding ways for sustainability.

## **Innovations in sectors: new structures and systems in the social economy and care sectors, sustainability and impacts**

### ***The social economy***

The strengthening of the social economy advocated in the EQUAL guidelines has given rise to important innovations and developments at the national level, especially in countries in which the sector was relatively new and/or unstructured. New support structures, such as offices of social entrepreneurship and social franchising systems, were developed. New statuses were

introduced, e.g. ‘social co-operatives’ (an Italian institution) in GR and SE. Governance arrangements were improved, particularly with regard to the place of social enterprises in public procurement. Networks of social enterprises have been constituted, regionally, nationally as well as cross-nationally. Many of these innovations have good sustainability prospects – indeed some of them are already institutionalised. However, there is little information on the improvement of the quality of jobs in the sector, which was one of the objectives of theme 2D. And the sustainability of job creation for vulnerable people in the sector has been questioned.

### ***The care sector***

The care sector has been an important sector of activity for EQUAL DPs, especially those funded under theme 4G (reconciling family and professional life), but also under the adaptability themes, theme 2D (social economy) and theme 1A (access to the labour market).

This is due to the fact that the sector is well suited for the opening up of new training, accreditation and employment pathways for people who face difficulties for entering the labour market at the same time as it provides services which help with balancing working and private lives. What is more, it is one of the few areas in which some progress has been made on the question of the quality of employment, which, as already said, has tended to be forgotten in EQUAL.

Sustainable developments for the structuring of the sector have been particularly notable in AT, the UKgb, LU and FR, due to the number of DPs involved, to the scale of the innovation developed and/or to the fact that funding and regulatory authorities were amongst the promoters. Thus the degree of innovation, but also of institutionalisation, has been high in this sector.

### **Innovations for specific target groups**

There has been a wealth of innovations in the support to asylum seekers, both aimed at equipping the providers and professionals working with this target group, thus reinforcing the infrastructure (for example through the training of outreach workers in IE, the appointment of asylum seekers themselves as volunteers in reception centres in Scotland, the constitution of pools of mediators in PT; of a cross-regional network of specialised consultants in AT etc.); at changing asylum seekers’ position in society by addressing prejudice; and at improving the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers (tailoring of reception handbooks, skills audits, language training, integration pathways, to the situation and needs of this specific target group). Insofar as the very reception centres have been participants in the EQUAL partnerships, the methodological innovations are likely to be ‘mainstreamed’ in these organisations themselves. In addition, EQUAL DPs have in some cases been successful at mobilising further funding, e.g. for the training of volunteers and workers.

A share of DPs, variable in the different countries, chose to address multiple or highly specific discriminations affecting some more specific groups, e.g. people with disabilities, prisoners and ex offenders, the traveller community, the Roma and Gypsy communities, people discriminated against for their sexual orientation, etc. At this stage the body of evidence on the impacts of these initiatives is very limited. However there are some highly relevant examples in some evaluation reports (e.g. the changes in the Prison Service Resettlement Strategy in the UKni and the institutionalisation of inter-agency work with drug users in IE).

### **Areas of insufficient progress**

There has been a lack of initiatives aimed at improving access to training and working and employment conditions for employed workers, especially in private sector companies. This may be due to the usual difficulties to involve private sector employers in programmes which can be

experienced as generating too many administrative constraints and time, and (especially in some Member States) to the lack of familiarity of Development Partnerships with the world of work. However we also pointed out that there had been a lack of clear requirements, in the definition of thematic priorities, for promoters to target employers and workers, as initiatives aimed at increasing the employability of the unemployed and inactive could be funded under almost all thematic priorities.

Although there have been some significant examples of interventions on work organisation, especially within public (local authority) employer organisations, for an improved work/life balance of employees, the issue of 'reconciling family and professional life' has not often been dealt with as an employer issue – it has been addressed more through the creation of new care facilities.

There has also been a lack of initiatives addressing in-employment inequalities and discrimination, in particular in terms of employment contracts and conditions. More could have been expected on these issues especially with regard to migrant and ethnic minority workers. As suggested above, this lack of initiatives may have been due to an initial lack of diagnosis of these issues at CIP level, as well as, again, to the focus on labour market access.

#### **14.4. POTENTIAL AND INITIAL IMPACT OF EQUAL ON THE EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY, THE SOCIAL INCLUSION PROCESS AND OTHER COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES**

Drawing on the work of the European Thematic Groups, on our review of national evaluation reports as well as on our own fieldwork, we have identified innovations and their potential or initial impacts in areas of relevance for the European Employment Strategy, the Social Inclusion process and other Community strategies and programmes. Many of these achievements have already been described above in our thematic review. However here we have included a cross-national analysis where possible and have sought to relate the impacts identified to the Integrated Guidelines where we thought they made a contribution, as well as to the relevant Social Inclusion objective and other European strategies and programmes.

*Potential and initial impacts on Integrated Guideline 15 (Promote a more entrepreneurial culture and create a supportive environment for SMEs):*

- *Reinforced support mechanisms and access to finance in existing business support centres and creation of new integrated support centres:* 'non traditional' entrepreneurs, especially women (e.g. in remote rural areas) have been drawn in the business creation process. In some Member States (ES, UKgb) there is evidence that some of these initiatives have secured or are in the process of securing mainstream funding. However, the 'opening up of the business creation to all', which was supposed to be an important added value of EQUAL with regard to the Guideline, has not been well documented so far with regard to access of marginalised and vulnerable people, and questions have been raised as to the relevance of such an objective.
- *Creation of second level networks,* i.e. networks between business support centres or between social enterprises, which have contributed to the professionalisation of their members.
- *Recognition of the social economy as an economic sector* rather than only as a vehicle for the labour market reintegration of vulnerable people: new support structures, such as offices of social entrepreneurship and social franchising systems, have been developed. The status of 'social co-operatives' (an Italian



institution) has been taken up in GR and SE. Governance arrangements were improved, particularly with regard to the place of social enterprises in public procurement. Many of these developments have good sustainability prospects – indeed some of them are already institutionalised.

*Potential and initial impacts on Employment Guideline 18 (Promote a lifecycle approach to work) as well as for the European Strategy for Equality between Men and Women:*

- *Integrated strategies and mechanisms for gender equality and occupational desegregation:* there is some evidence of cross-national impacts. For example the NL campaign on gender roles ('Wie doet wat?'), which has been presented in various international fora, has already attracted the attention of other Member States and the BE nl ministry of Equal Opportunities is due to launch a similar campaign in 2007. Impacts of such integrated strategies on employers, however, have so far not been well documented.
- *Resource centres on women's training and employment in scientific and technical professions:* EQUAL has given rise to the creation and institutionalisation of such centres in GR and the UK gb.
- *Creation of new integrated and quality approaches to care:* EQUAL has contributed a number of initiatives achieving the virtuous circle recommended at the EU level in terms of support services in the care sector – i.e. providing more flexible care allowing for the labour market participation of women and at the same time creating employment for women in particular. However, some (not all) EQUAL initiatives in this field have made a difference in that they have also qualified the staff recruited (for example, to the level of care assistants) and sought to improve the quality of employment in the sector (e.g. new collective agreement in AT). Many of these initiatives have now secured mainstream funding.

*Potential and initial impacts on Employment Guideline 19 (Ensure inclusive labour markets, enhance work attractiveness, and make work pay for job-seekers, including disadvantaged people and inactive) as well as for the European Refugee Fund and future anti-discrimination actions:*

- *Take up of new methodologies and new roles in existing centres of support to asylum seekers* – paying particular attention to outreach activities, the stability of staff, and language and skills upgrading methodologies. In many cases these initiatives are sustainable as the reception centres concerned participated in the development partnerships (significant examples have been documented in Scotland and IE).
- *Integrated strategies and new resources targeting employers for the integration and retention of migrant workers and members of ethnic minorities* (Corporate Social Responsibility campaigns, codes of conduct, self-diagnoses, creation of roles of 'intercultural mediator'): evidence of significant and sustained results at employer level has so far mainly been provided in the media /creative sector (GR, UK gb).

*Potential and initial impacts on Employment Guideline 20 (Improve matching of labour market needs):*

- *Multi-agency approaches* to improve the interface between the (long-term) unemployed or other benefit recipients and the institutions and agencies in charge of delivering employment policy and benefits: significant sustainable

examples of such institutional co-operation mechanisms have been provided in IE.

- *Diversification of gateways to employment*, for example through the creation of new temping arrangements for specific groups (low qualified people in BEfrg, people with disabilities in AT), through the promotion of self-employment (for people with disabilities in AT), or through the promotion of telework (for people with disabilities in DE).
- *Creation of sustainable networks involving labour market integration agencies, non profit organisations and employers* in sectors facing recruitment difficulties (e.g. construction) for the upskilling and recruitment of long-term unemployed people. Examples have been provided in FI and the UKgb.

*Potential and initial impacts on Employment Guideline 21* (Promote flexibility combined with employment security and reduce labour market segmentation, having due regard to the role of social partners):

- *New forms of work organisation allowing for a better ‘work/life balance’*: there is some evidence of such schemes and of their effects with public or semi-public employers, although evidence is still lacking on the impact of such schemes in the private sector. What is remarkable about some of the schemes highlighted by the national evaluators (e.g. in FR) is that work-family balance is not used as a device to introduce more employer-led flexibility (part-time contracts which increasingly contribute to forming a stratum of working poor, especially amongst women) but can be arranged and combined with full-time employment.
- *Initiatives for anticipating and accompanying industrial change* both through local regeneration partnerships, economic actions, and upskilling and qualifying mature workers: the shipbuilding industry, for example, has benefited in 3 Member States (FR, GR, IT).

*Potential and initial impacts on Employment Guidelines 23* (Expand and improve investment in human capital) *and 24* (Adapt education and training systems in response to new competence requirements) as well as for the *programmes of DG Education and Culture*:

- *Dissemination of new methodologies for encouraging low skilled workers’ participation in training*: innovations and impacts have been scattered but some of them are significant (take up of the job rotation methodology in IE for upskilling both the unemployed and low skilled workers, workplace learning agreements in the retail sector in the UKgb with the participation of unionists as ‘brokers’ of learning).
- *Use of ICT to increase access to learning for people considered as ‘disengaged learners’ or facing physical barriers to traditional learning*: there is evidence of an institutional sustainability of such schemes, through their accreditation.

*Initiatives informing the Social Inclusion process*:

EQUAL has promoted local multi-stakeholder partnerships to tackle not only employment issues but also the underpinning attitudes and behaviours of employers leading to the discrimination of employees or jobseekers. New co-operative mechanisms for tackling social exclusion have also been set up. This has probably been one of the major areas of achievement:

- *Design of multilevel and multifaceted strategies to counter discrimination* (especially racial and gender discrimination), involving actors located in different institutional and organisational settings.
- *Multi-agency work for an improved interface and ‘empowerment’ of people suffering from social disadvantage and discrimination*: these initiatives are promoted by the very institutions concerned, which is a guarantee of sustainability and institutionalisation.

### **Take up of good practice at the European level**

It is still too early to identify areas of take up of good practice at the European level – although the instruments are in place (see above and next chapter for our recommendations). However it may be regretted that the mechanisms for informing the future review of the European Employment Strategy are lacking and, what is more, no step seems to be taken in that direction.

Mainstreaming at the European level has so far taken place mainly concerning the take up of the EQUAL principles in the programming of ESF programmes for 2007-2013. As said above, considerable support has been provided to the Member States in order to inform their choices for the organisation of the principles. However the interpretations of the legacy of EQUAL are multifarious, and the options discussed at the national level (by April 2006) were quite different from one Member State to the other, which is a matter of particular concern for the organisation of transnationality:

- *Take up of the principle of Partnership/empowerment*: not all MS are considering implementation at project level. For those which do, implementation is generally foreseen as an option available in all measures, which can be favoured in the weighing of selection criteria. It is also sometimes organised as a distinct measure<sup>7</sup>.
- *Take up of the principle of innovation*: here the main debate concerns the take up of the principle as a cross-cutting principle<sup>8</sup>, or its implementation in specific measures/actions. Some Member States are considering both.
- *Mode of implementation of Gender Mainstreaming*: here most MS are considering cross-cutting compulsory implementation; but there are also MS considering requiring implementation only in ‘relevant measures’ or considering both cross-cutting implementation and the promotion of a dedicated priority<sup>9</sup>.
- *Take up of the principle of transnationality*: as could be expected this is the principle for which the diversity of options is greatest. Not all MS are considering taking the principle on board, and amongst those which do, not all will implement it at project level. Most MS are considering organising it as an option for projects, which may be available in all priorities, or through a dedicated priority, or both<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> We recommend its implementation especially in those programmes and measures aiming at reforming the governance of the policy fields concerned. See Chapter 15.

<sup>8</sup> This is what we recommend. See Chapter 15.

<sup>9</sup> This latter option is the one we recommend. See Chapter 15.

<sup>10</sup> Whatever the choice made for implementation at project level, we recommend a different link between national and transnational projects to the one organised in EQUAL. See Chapter 15.

## 15. RECOMMENDATIONS

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In this chapter we first present recommendations for the remainder of implementation of EQUAL under R2. We have focused on implementation in the New Member States (section 15.1), as most NMS only started their participation in EQUAL in R2 and we felt this might be helpful in a capacity building perspective. We also provide recommendations concerning future evaluation activities (section 15.2), on request by the European Commission since evaluation at Member State level will continue until 2008. Finally we seek to draw the lessons from the implementation of EQUAL for the orientation and management of future programmes (section 15.3).

### 15.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUAL IN THE NEW MEMBER STATES IN R2

We first see a need for *clarification in management roles*, through:

- Improving the co-ordination between the MAs and the NSSs: the respective roles and assignments of MA and NSS, especially with regard to their relationship with DPs, need to be clarified and made more explicit.
- Joint training of NSS and MA staff both to reduce the share of inexperienced people, contribute to reducing staff turn-over (although other measures may be required) and increase the mutual understanding and the quality of the cooperation between NSS and MA.

There is an important need to *simplify administrative procedures and processes*, and in particular to:

- Ensure that they are transparent and understood by all. Simpler procedures could also limit the delays in implementation.
- Rationalise payment procedures and clarify the rules concerning eligibility of expenditure. The objective is to simplify the decision-making chain and thus to speed up payments.

Our recommendations also concern *programme guidance and support* to DPs especially with a view to promote innovation and mainstreaming:

- Increase the training effort, and by paying more attention to technical issues. The focus of NSS support has so far tended to be too administrative.
- Hire external experts on specific issues to provide the technical assistance needed.
- Organise seminars, in situ visits to DPs and regular contacts between NSS and DPs to improve the quality of the projects, the quality of programme outputs and mainstreaming.
- Support self-assessment, through guides, training and one-to-one guidance.
- Maintain and strengthen the ‘twinning arrangements’ with OMS or other forms of bilateral co-operation agreements for support on a number of institutional and organisational aspects of programme implementation, including TN.

In order to consolidate implementation in the NMS, it is worth noting that NMS Managing Authorities have asked for *more EU-level facilitation* for the last years of implementation of EQUAL. In particular, they put forward demands for more support on the following issues:

- Monitoring and evaluation of added value of transnationality;
- Organisation of the call for proposal for Action 3, best practice of OMS for mainstreaming (especially vertical mainstreaming) and for thematic networking, bilateral co-operation with other MS in thematic networks;
- Mechanisms and methodologies for the capitalisation of EQUAL results in the new programmes;
- Capacity building on evaluation, including self-evaluation; and
- Methodologies and indicators for project monitoring.

Some European support is being organised on evaluation. Other issues would need to be looked at. Our findings lend strong support to the demand concerning exchanges on monitoring systems and indicators.

Finally, the *evaluation process* in the NMS could be strengthened by:

- *Adjusting the scope and the objects of evaluation.* The evaluation by an external evaluator should be an opportunity for analysing the ‘systems of actors’ in the programme and its efficiency. The ToR could include a set of questions concerning:
  - The extent to which and how the programme communication strategy and selection process have contributed to shape the implementation of the programme. This would be useful in an ex post perspective, for the preparation of the future programmes.
  - Facilitating factors, obstacles and problems in programme management.
  - The distribution of roles between programme actors and the performance of the NSS.
- *Giving more emphasis to qualitative evaluation methods:* for example carrying out case studies including interviews with all partners, with external stakeholders/potential users of DP lessons, and including focus groups with beneficiaries.
- *Adjusting timeframes and budgets to the evaluation objectives, scope and methods,* as too limited budgets and timeframes are not conducive to quality results. It could be useful to organise exchanges with OMS evaluation coordinators on these issues and more generally on the relationship between the ‘client’ (the Managing Authority) and the evaluators as well as on the place and role of evaluation in the management of European programmes.

## **15.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EVALUATION OF INNOVATION, MAINSTREAMING AND IMPACTS IN EQUAL R2**

Although the evaluation of EQUAL at the national level is no longer a requirement by Regulation, the European Commission has strongly encouraged the continuation of national evaluation so that evaluation results can be available for the whole period of implementation of EQUAL. In this context, it is important to ensure the comparability of national evaluation results. Thus the EQUAL Unit, in co-operation with the Evaluation Unit of DG Employment and Social Affairs, worked together with a number of Managing Authorities in order to prepare a common evaluation approach during 2007-2008. They recommended focusing evaluation during 2007-2008 on the quality of innovation, mainstreaming processes and intermediate impacts. In this context, we provided recommendations for evaluation in each of these areas.

The approach was discussed and validated by the Partnership Meeting organised by the European Commission with the Managing Authorities on 16 June 2006.

### 15.2.1. Evaluation of innovation

The following recommendations are based on the lessons derived from the synthesis of the findings of the 2005 national evaluation reports on innovation. We found that the focus of assessment had been quite varied (from assessing whether there has been innovation or not, to assessing the more or less radical character of this innovation, or assessing the quality of innovation), with different criteria in each case. Levels of depth in the analysis also differed: in some cases, a global assessment of the level, type and quality of innovation at programme level and/or by theme was provided. In other cases, concrete innovations were described. However explanations as to why they had been regarded as innovative by the evaluators were often lacking. Finally, assessments based only on surveys of DPs (and thus on DPs' own opinion of the extent to which they had 'innovated') were rather poor, especially if they were the main evaluation instrument.

On that basis, we would recommend a common approach, with common evaluation questions, common criteria, and common instruments.

First, an assessment of the incidence of innovation (i.e. whether or not there are new developments with regard to the state of the art in a given area of policy intervention, sector or territory) and of the conditions of emergence of innovation is required. But these two dimensions of the evaluation need to be complemented with an assessment of the quality of the innovation produced.

In particular, attention should be paid to:

- *Potential relevance*: Is the identified innovation based on a convincing and rigorous analysis of the causes of discrimination, orientation of the project to tackling the causes and potential capacity of the designed project to tackling the causes?
- *Effectiveness*: What is the effective contribution of the identified innovation to tackling the identified causes of discrimination?
- *Added value* as compared with existing policies and practices: to what extent and how are the new solutions proposed more suited to tackling the identified problems than prior policies and practice?
- *Feasibility/sustainability*: to what extent are the solutions proposed feasible in resource terms once the EQUAL funding comes to an end?
- *Mainstreaming potential/capacity*: to what extent is there an interest amongst stakeholders within and outside the partnership to take up the proposed solutions and what mechanisms have been set up so as to encourage this take up (documented practice and results, analysis of conditions for transfer and take up, design and implementation of a strategy for materialising this strategy)?

In carrying out this analysis, we would recommend that evaluators relied not only on DP sources (applications, DP work programmes, monitoring reports, case study interviews with coordinator, partners, beneficiaries), which are indeed important, but also on interviews with experts of the fields concerned.

The quality of innovation should not only be analysed at programme level but also by theme. Concrete illustrations of innovative practices should be provided by theme, and the choice of these illustrations should be justified on the basis of the above criteria.

## 15.2.2. Evaluation of mainstreaming

The following recommendations are based on the lessons derived from the synthesis of the findings of the 2005 national evaluation reports on mainstreaming. We found that national evaluation reports tended to focus on the *description* of networking and dissemination mechanisms, which was logical at the stage of the programme at the time of fieldwork for the 2005 reports. However, there is now a need to go beyond this description of mechanisms in order to capture the factors facilitating and hampering actual transfer and take up of innovations both at programme and DP level, and thus to contribute to the on-going improvement of mainstreaming mechanisms. In addition, national evaluators found it difficult to identify the concrete results of networking and mainstreaming activities, largely due to the lack of monitoring of these activities at programme and DP level. Our recommendations below are thus dependent on progress being made on that front as well. Finally evaluators have sometimes limited their investigation of mainstreaming activities at DP level to an identification of dissemination activities and events. There is a need to move forward and consider actual transfer of practices and the conditions of that transfer – hence our suggestions below to interview potential users of DP results.

More specifically, the following evaluation questions could usefully be addressed:

- How has the concept of mainstreaming been *interpreted* by programme actors and by DPs?
- *What mechanisms have been set up to make the concept operational?* To what extent is the programme level mainstreaming strategy relevant, comprehensive in scope (i.e. addressing vertical and horizontal mainstreaming, as well as pull and push mechanisms), feasible, and sustainable over time? What tools have been developed at programme level to monitor the implementation of mainstreaming strategy? What is the relevance and reliability of these tools?
- *How has the ‘transfer to policy and practice’ phase (former Action 3) been organised?* If there has been a call for proposals, to what extent have the preparation of the call and the selection criteria favoured and promoted the quality of DP mainstreaming strategies?
- *What mechanisms have been set up to support DPs* in their horizontal and vertical mainstreaming strategies, how effective have they been? To what extent have these mechanisms favoured and promoted the quality of DP mainstreaming strategies?
- *What do DPs’ mainstreaming strategies consist of* and to what extent do they go beyond dissemination?
- *What National Thematic Networks (NTNs) have been set up*, what is their composition, role and organisation? How effective have they been in the implementation of their role? What have been the facilitating factors and obstacles?
- *What mechanisms have been set up at programme level to assess and validate DP good practice?* To what extent has the assessment and validation of good practice been based on reliable evidence? To what extent does it ensure policy relevance?
- *What mechanisms have been set up to disseminate this good practice* to policy makers and other stakeholders of employment and inclusion policies (vertical mainstreaming at programme level)? Who has been targeted and how? What is the relevance of these mechanisms for making an impact on policy makers and

to what extent have they been effective so far? What are the obstacles and facilitating factors?

- *What have been the results of vertical and horizontal mainstreaming so far (evidence of transfer and take up of good practice)?*

In order to address these questions, evaluators could consider carrying out not only interviews with programme actors and DPs but also with policy makers, multipliers and key potential users of EQUAL results and lessons identified at programme and DP level. It is important to carry out these analyses both at the overall programme level and by theme, and to provide concrete illustrations of mainstreaming actions and results.

### **15.2.3. Evaluation of impacts at Member State level**

We had been asked by the Evaluation Unit of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities to develop a methodological framework for the analysis of impacts in EQUAL, which was shared with national evaluators and the evaluation correspondents of the Managing Authorities in two ‘partnership meetings’ (April 2004 and 2005). The proposed approach focused on intermediate impacts, i.e. the take up and sustainability of new EQUAL practices, products, lessons at the policy level or at the institutional or organisational level. It was also suggested that the analysis of these intermediate impacts should be carried out bearing in mind their ultimate contribution to the overall aim of EQUAL.

The review and synthesis of the national evaluation reports showed the difficulty of looking at intermediate impacts, especially at that stage in the programme (fieldwork took place before the summer 2005), but also due to, perhaps, to methodological problems. Thus, whilst impacts on policies are relatively easy to document (by pointing out new laws or studying the national policy documents), institutional impacts (such as new co-ordination mechanisms between existing agencies) and organisational impacts (i.e. the actual take up by organisations of new methodologies or new concepts and their concrete translation into changed organisations and processes) cannot be assessed without interviewing users of EQUAL results.

The analysis of final impacts, i.e. of the implications of policy, institutional and organisational change on the actual reduction of the discrimination targeted, requires much more complex evaluation methodologies (specific to each area of impact), and also means that sufficient time has passed to observe the effects. However it is possible to make hypotheses as to the *likely* effects of these changes on the discriminations and inequalities targeted.

We therefore propose to maintain this approach, and recommend common evaluation questions and methods.

Evaluation questions on *policy impacts* should include the following:

- To what extent have EQUAL results informed changes in employment, inclusion and anti-discrimination policies at the national, regional and local level (e.g. new target groups for existing policies, adjustment of existing policies, new legislation promoting new support measures in specific areas)? What is the concrete evidence, for the overall programme and by theme? To what extent are these changes likely to make a difference in the fight against discrimination and inequalities in the labour market and what are their possible limits? To what extent are these changes sustainable?
- To what extent have EQUAL results informed changes in policy making processes at the national, regional and/or local level (e.g. new co-ordination



mechanisms within policy departments and with civil society actors, new observation and diagnosis mechanisms, etc.)? What is the concrete evidence, for the overall programme and by theme? To what extent are these changes likely to make a difference in the fight against discrimination and inequalities in the labour market and what are their possible limits? To what extent are these changes sustainable?

Evaluation questions *on institutional impacts* should include the following:

- To what extent have EQUAL results informed changes in labour market intermediation structures and processes (e.g. improved organisation of employment services, improved co-ordination with other actors, catering for new target groups etc.)? What is the concrete evidence, for the overall programme and by theme? To what extent are these changes likely to make a difference in the fight against discrimination and inequalities in the labour market and what are their possible limits? To what extent are these changes sustainable?
- To what extent have EQUAL results informed changes in the education and training system (e.g. new officially recognised qualifications and curricula; new officially recognised modes of access etc.)? What is the concrete evidence, for the overall programme and by theme? To what extent are these changes likely to make a difference in the fight against discrimination and inequalities in the labour market and what are their possible limits? To what extent are these changes sustainable?
- To what extent have EQUAL results informed changes in structures, processes and measures for the support to business creation (e.g. new, sustainable, mechanisms for supporting entrepreneurs who were not supported before)? What is the concrete evidence, for the overall programme and by theme? To what extent are these changes likely to make a difference in the fight against discrimination and inequalities in the labour market and what are their possible limits? To what extent are these changes sustainable?
- To what extent have EQUAL results informed changes in the regulatory work arrangements (e.g. new collective agreements or new clauses)? What is the concrete evidence, for the overall programme and by theme? To what extent are these changes likely to make a difference in the fight against discrimination and inequalities in the labour market and what are their possible limits? To what extent are these changes sustainable?

Evaluation questions *on organisational impacts* (especially on employers – whether public, private for profit or private non profit) should include the following:

- To what extent have EQUAL results informed changes in Human Resources policies including recruitment, access to training, career advancement, pay structure, type of employment contracts? In the structure of jobs and access of different groups to these jobs? In anti-discrimination policies and monitoring? What is the concrete evidence, for the overall programme and by theme? To what extent are these changes likely to make a difference in the fight against discrimination and inequalities in the labour market and what are their possible limits? To what extent are these changes sustainable?

As suggested above, intermediate impact assessments require interviews with key users (policy and institutional users as well as employers or employer representatives and employee representatives) identified by the Development Partnerships and the National Thematic Networks, focused on the nature of their contacts with programme and project actors, the lessons derived, and their concrete actual or future use of the results. Interviews with experts of the fields addressed can help putting the results into perspective. It is important to provide specific illustrations, and not just thematic trends.

### **15.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINSTREAMING OF EQUAL LESSONS IN FUTURE PROGRAMMES**

#### **15.3.1. Recommendations for the orientation of future strategies and programmes**

As argued in Chapter 14, EQUAL has started to make an impact across the Member States in a number of policy areas directly relevant for the European Employment Strategy (and more generally the Lisbon strategy), for the Social Inclusion process, as well as for the European strategy for equality between men and women, the programmes of DG Education And Culture, the European Refugee Fund, amongst others. The main thematic impacts concern the support mechanisms and access to finance in existing business support centres and new integrated support centres, second level networks, the social economy, integrated strategies and mechanisms for gender equality and occupational desegregation, resource centres on women's training and employment in scientific and technical professions, the take-up of new methodologies and new roles in existing centres of support to asylum seekers, integrated strategies and new resources targeting employers for the integration and retention of migrant workers and members of ethnic minorities, multi-agency approaches for better matching of labour market needs, diversification of gateways to employment, creation of sustainable networks involving labour market integration agencies, non-profit organisations and employers, new forms of work organisation allowing for a better 'work/life balance', initiatives for anticipating and accompanying industrial change, new methodologies for encouraging low skilled workers' participation in training, use of ICT to increase access to learning, design of multifaceted and multilevel strategies to counter discrimination and multi-agency work for an improved interface and 'empowerment' of disadvantaged persons. We recommend, already on this basis, and in any case on the future basis of enhanced evidence, that the stakeholders of these strategies and programmes gave due consideration to these results with a view to decide of the appropriateness of taking them forward. We refer the reader to section 14.4. above for an account of the practices which should attract attention in our view, and, for more specific illustrations, to table 14.2.

*In the meantime, we would strongly recommend the update of the existing EQUAL 'policy briefs' in order to take better account of the project results now available and thus further document existing results.*

On the other hand, important areas of labour market and in-work discrimination and inequalities have not been given sufficient attention in EQUAL, and will require more efforts in future European programmes. Thus we recommend:

- To consider setting up dedicated programmes and/or measures directly targeting employers and employed workers, especially the most vulnerable, and to be proactive in seeking to attract suitable promoters with a good knowledge of and good links to employers. This recommendation is based on the finding that the

limited achievements in EQUAL so far with employers (especially with private sector employers) were in part linked to the lack of sufficient targeting of the CIPs on measures addressing in-work inequalities and, in some MS, to the (related) fact that a majority of promoters were drawn from organisations used to working with unemployed and/or disadvantaged people more than with employed workers;

- In particular, to consider setting up dedicated programmes for tackling in-work inequalities, especially in terms of employment and work conditions and for promoting quality of employment; and
- To encourage initiatives improving work/life balance in the workplace, with due regard to the quality of employment contracts and wages.

### **15.3.2. Recommendations for the management and evaluation of future programmes**

The recommendations below are likely to be relevant for future European Social Fund programmes (2007-2013), but more generally for any programme encouraging the implementation of partnerships and innovation, transnational cooperation and gender mainstreaming.

- Carefully design the launch of the programmes in order to attract suitable applicants - suitable meaning with the right mix of skills over time and/or with a clear capacity building strategy (especially if relatively new areas of intervention are selected);
- In the calls for innovative projects, consider the following selection criteria: potential relevance, added value, feasibility and mainstreaming potential. These criteria are valid in our view for any priority or measure with dedicated funding for innovative projects;
- Consider imposing requirements concerning starting diagnoses, monitoring systems and self-assessment procedures, especially for innovative projects, and to review compliance at selection stage;
- Consider organising an 'Action 1' (preparatory phase) in the future programmes and to organise guidance and support accordingly;
- Organise support structures and prepare staff so as to ensure administrative and financial support; ongoing support on demand; and systematic proactive actions aiming at professionalisation of project teams;
- Organise distinct programme level monitoring systems for innovative projects and for mainstream projects:
  - In particular, in innovative projects, it is important to have much more detailed indicators on actions targeting structures and systems than what is the current common minimum. For example, indicators could monitor changes in work organisation, the opening of new support structures, new institutionalised collaboration mechanisms between existing agencies etc.
  - Indicators on assistance to persons are important to maintain, but are less relevant in the case of innovative projects. In any case, indicators of 'exit' (within indicators of assistance to persons) should allow for the monitoring of the type of 'exit', and in case it is employment, for the monitoring of the quality of employment (employment contracts, working time, pay levels).

- We recommend the formation of working groups for the design of the monitoring systems for innovative projects, involving the European Commission, Managing Authorities, statisticians *and* promoters of innovative projects (including EQUAL promoters, but also, for example, promoters of 'Article 6' projects). This would be a good basis for ensuring the relevance, user-friendliness, feasibility, usefulness and reliability of future monitoring systems. In particular it is important to ensure that the systems are sufficiently simple to allow for regular update and for the exploitation of results by project promoters and partners as well as by external evaluators.
  - Training and support should be provided to project promoters and partners, not only on the use of the monitoring software for data entry and update, but also on how to exploit results.
- Organise the identification and assessment of the quality of the innovation implemented in future programmes around similar criteria as those used for the selection of innovative projects in the first place, so as to measure effectiveness and understand the dynamics of innovation over time. Thus recommended criteria include: actual relevance, effectiveness, actual added value by comparison with state of the art programmes and mainstreaming (actual and potential). The identification and assessment of innovation is highly dependent on adequate monitoring systems (see above recommendations).
  - The European Commission should consider taking over a coordinating role for the different types of transnational cooperation within the Programmes.
  - Consider when designing programme sections or sub-programmes on transnationality that transnational projects can be planned by project applicants as own project or simultaneously with national projects.
  - Consider to ensure sufficient resources for transnational cooperation.
  - Consider to dedicate priorities to equal opportunities between men and women as well as ensure that Gender Mainstreaming is implemented as a crosscutting horizontal principle in the Programme as a whole.
  - Organise programme level monitoring systems that include indicators for Gender Mainstreaming

In terms of *evaluation systems*, we recommend to maintain the three levels of evaluation experienced in EQUAL (European, national, project level) and to learn from their strengths and weaknesses:

- Cross-national evaluation should focus on specific subjects and fields of intervention; European evaluators should have the possibility to conduct their own field work in the Member States; exchange on evaluation methodologies and results should be organised at the European level; twinning and multilateral exchange between national authorities should take place on evaluation issues;
- At the national level, the scope of evaluations should include all dimensions and phases of programme management; the formative role of national evaluators should be maintained and reinforced; the evaluation timeframe has to be planned to allow for an evaluation of impacts;
- At project level, it is crucial to require project self-assessment and monitoring and to train project managers and partners accordingly.

### **15.3.3. Recommendations for the mainstreaming of the EQUAL principles into future programmes**

Concerning the *mainstreaming of the EQUAL principles* in the next generation of European Social Fund programmes as well as other programmes, we recommend:

- *For the organisation of the partnership and empowerment principles:*
  - To clarify whether partnerships are a means to achieve a project or whether they are an objective per se as well (creation of new governance mechanisms): we recommend the latter.
  - Ensure a good skill mix over time – with possibly different partners at different phases; in the case of partnerships oriented to the creation of new governance mechanisms, a good representation of all stakeholders has to be ensured as well.
  - Make sure that the planned involvement of each partner is based on a documented, credible and feasible assessment of their potential contribution, skills and availability, especially with regard to private sector employers.
  - Promote the idea of differentiated involvement for different types of partner over time, so as to avoid deterring private sector participation.
  
- *For the organisation of transnationality:*
  - Transnational projects should be planned directly as such or simultaneously with national projects, rather than as an ‘added-on’ once national projects have already been designed.
  - Structured exchanges between local actors should also be made possible.
  - Ensure adequate resources.
  - Organise close co-ordination between all the Member States funding transnational partnerships and co-operation, so that there may be a minimum number of common issues, co-ordinated time schedules for the calls, and common instruments (partner search database).
  
- *For the organisation of innovation:*
  - Plan a ‘laboratory function’ in all programmes, which will allow for a clear distinction to be made between innovative projects and more ‘mainstream’ projects.
  - Clarify the rationales for organising an innovation function in the programmes (making existing policies more effective, making them more inclusive, exploring new policy fields) so as to draw the implications in terms of likely applicants and needs for project guidance.
  - Organise training and guidance on experimental approaches (research, monitoring, evaluation etc.).
  - Partnerships working with highly vulnerable people sometimes hesitate to pilot experimental schemes and prefer to innovate ‘on the margins’ in order not to take the risk of having to face an absence of further funding with dramatic consequences for the beneficiaries. A clear positioning of innovation in the future programmes on policy areas where there is an explicit demand for new developments will help reduce that risk. In addition, Managing Authorities may decide to grant support to experimental projects targeting highly marginalised groups even without clear policy take up perspectives: increased support and direct help by programme actors to accompany such projects in their mainstreaming strategy has then to be foreseen.
  - The categories used in EQUAL to describe the scope of innovation (innovation in goals, processes and contexts) have been difficult to understand for promoters and partners and have not proved to be very useful to discriminate

between types of innovation. A possible alternative, based on our empirical classification, could be: innovations chiefly aimed at improving methods of intervention (support to business creation, anticipation of industrial change, new labour market integration pathways etc.); innovation chiefly aimed at structuring and organising specific sectors (e.g. the social economy, the care sector, etc.); and innovation chiefly aimed at improving support and provision to specific target groups. Overlaps are of course still possible, but this typology can incite promoters in clearly setting out their priorities.

- *For the organisation of equal opportunities:*
  - Maintain the dual approach taken in EQUAL (dedicated priorities and cross-cutting horizontal principle).
  - Indicators should be developed for monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming.
  - Organise training on gender mainstreaming and the appointment of gender mainstreaming specialists at project level.
  
- *For the organisation of national mainstreaming:*
  - Programme actors should clarify their expectations with regard to the mainstreaming of innovation and define early comprehensive mainstreaming strategies, including 'horizontal' and 'vertical' mainstreaming and the 'pull' and 'push' dimensions.
  - Organise regional networking and mainstreaming mechanisms.
  - Develop the monitoring of mainstreaming activities and results at programme and project levels.
  - Organise the training of programme actors, so that they can adequately support project promoters.

#### **15.3.4. Recommendations for the organisation of networking and mainstreaming mechanisms at the European level in the future programmes**

The recommendations below are likely to be relevant more particularly for future European Social Fund programmes (2007-2013).

- *Maintain the double focus* (thematic and organisational) of networking adopted in EQUAL (in addition to the country desks).
  
- *For thematic networking:*
  - To agree with Member States on a limited number of policy issues for which some or all of them are interested in mutual learning, networking and, possibly, lobbying.
  - To organise networking at various levels (between national authorities, other stakeholders, project promoters, as well as between the members of national thematic networks), with continuity over time and with clear purposes (preferably common production and/or pushing a policy agenda).
  - To back this up with stable European expertise in the fields concerned as well as with dedicated co-ordination and follow-up in the European Commission. The appointed experts should be asked, as in EQUAL, to produce policy analyses and cross-national thematic analyses of project practices and results on the basis of agreed criteria and with sufficient resources for carrying out their own field assessments.

- *For organisational networking:*

- Networking on the implementation of the principles in the Member States will be made more difficult given the lack of common definitions and modes of implementation. It will be all the more important to organise cross-national exchange on the interpretation of the principles and on their concrete translation into selection criteria, so as to compare models of implementation and inform the Mid-term reviews.
- Facilitation at the European level is required, also with a view to capitalise on the know-how and knowledge acquired in the previous Community Initiatives.
- *A co-ordination role for the European Commission in matters of transnationality is absolutely essential.* The Commission and the Member States will need to agree on common selection or validation procedures and criteria, a common timetable, common tools, and common guidance. It is very difficult to see how there can be any meaningful transnational dimension without these basic requirements. Member States need to agree on a minimum set of common issues on which transnational projects can be funded.