Ongoing Evaluation EQUAL Malta 2004-2006 - First Interim Evaluation

Draft report

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Preface

The Government of Malta has commissioned EMCS and Research voor Beleid with the ongoing evaluation of EQUAL for the 2004-2006 period.

This First Interim Evaluation Report describes the evaluation of the setting up of EQUAL in Malta. It focuses on the following elements:

❑ **Programme Implementation**. Programme management and the national support structure.
❑ **Selection procedure and its results**. Communication strategy, selection, description of the selected Development Partnerships, elaboration of transnational partnerships
❑ **Setting up monitoring and evaluation**. Monitoring structure, monitoring system, evaluation, self-assessment.
❑ **Labour market situation**. A description of the present labour market situation of Malta and its relation to intervention strategies on the programme and DP level.

In most EU programmes, the programme implementation phase is the most important factor for the intervention strategy of the Managing Authority. The way the programme is implemented, the way the intervention mechanisms have been set up and the eligibility criteria for the several priorities decide which projects are being funded. After the assessment of the implementation phase, the most important task of the evaluator of the programme is to assess the output and the results of the projects (while also assessing the programme itself).

EQUAL is somewhat different. EQUAL is directed at innovation and mainstreaming good practices. In this case the results of the projects themselves are not the most important indicators for success of the programme, but it is the lessons and good practices acquired from the projects and how these are being disseminated and mainstreamed into regular policy which is the most important. In this way, bad results at the DP level might be translated into important lessons for mainstream policy and, if subsequently these lessons are turned into a successful approach, this would imply success at the programme/priority level.

For this reason, while the assessment of programme implementation is of course an important part of the evaluation, the assessment of the thematic issues (partnership, innovation, networking and in the end mainstreaming) is maybe an even more important element of EQUAL evaluation.

This report is based on the Terms of Reference for the Evaluation, the Inception Report of EMCS and Research voor Beleid (June 2005), the study of relevant documents (statistical information on the baseline situation), a series of interviews/discussions/meetings held with Maltese officials in the week from the 20th to the 24th of June and some additional interviews held in July 2005.

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Summary and conclusions

The European Commission places particular importance on the evaluation of the Community Initiative EQUAL.

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- ❑ **Selection procedure and its results**. Communication strategy, selection, description of the selected Development Partnerships, elaboration of transnational partnerships
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- ❑ **Labour market situation**. A description of the present labour market situation of Malta and its relation to intervention strategies on the programme and DP level.

The main conclusions are as follows:

The **implementation** has been successful:

- ❑ A well functioning management structure has been set up.
- ❑ A well functioning support structure has also been set up.
- ❑ The MA and the NSS have carried out all activities necessary to prepare for the DP project activities. In fact the TCAs were all singed and all but one DPA are signed. The tender for promotion activities will be ready by the fourth quarter of 2005 and the guidelines manual for EQUAL is at an advanced stage.
- ❑ There has been an information session, which has led to DP applications from a number of potential partners although potential partners, such as the Malta Chamber of Commerce and the GRTU are absent.
- ❑ A Monitoring System (called Structural Funds Database or SFD EQUAL) which fits to the ECDB has been set up.
- ❑ The ongoing evaluation has been set up.
- ❑ There are indicators for the success of each of the measures.

The self-assessment mechanisms have been clarified for Malta by the European Commission, indicating that the provisions already in place within the Structural Funds Manual of Procedures and the Structural Funds Database, are already sufficient in fulfilling this requirement. This evaluation gives some recommendations on this issue.

A small comment on the set of indicators chosen is that for one of the measures, the project will need other types of indicators.

The **application and selection process** and **the elaboration of the DPAs and the TCAs** (**Action 1)** for EQUAL Malta have been assessed positively:

- ❑ There were applications for every one of the measures involved in the CIP
- ❑ Not all of the applications met the selection criteria
- ❑ There were DPs selected for each of the measures
- ❑ The DPs will, once their projects are successfully implemented, exhaust the budget available
- ❑ The selected DPs were satisfied with the assistance of the NSS with regards to the application and selection procedures
- ❑ Action 1 will result in DP Agreements for all of the 5 DPs
- ❑ The 5 DPs will each be part of a Transnational Partnership, 3 of them becoming part of 2 TCAs each
- ❑ In total, 26 transnational partners are co-operating with the Maltese DPs.

These processes took relatively little time, and Malta was the first Member State to have completed all its Action One transnational cooperation agreements, well ahead of the June deadline States:

- ❑ It took one month to finish the selection process
- ❑ The TC Partnerships already were agreed upon in April 2005.

The **strategy of the CIP** is still appropriate, whereas in the period between the socio-economic analysis for the CIP and this ongoing evaluation, the socio-economic situation has hardly changed.

The following table presents in short the answers to the research questions for this first interim evaluation:

Appropriateness of strategies	
Identification of clear priorities	Positively assessed by ex ante evaluation
Addressing real labour market issues	Fitting to NAP's for Employment and Social Inclusion
Accounting regional and socio-economic variety	Not relevant because of small budgets
DPs taking account of the priorities in the CIP	Four out of the five DP agreements have been approved by the NSS. The descriptions point at a positive connection
Management and implementation systems	
Types of organizations involved	PPCD, Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, Ministry of Finance, etc
Criteria for selection	Readiness to set up a project and most importantly, the availability of an organizational structure. Selecting backward target groups
Gender perspective	Number of women participants was also a point of deliberation during project selection. Gender awareness project is one of the biggest in the programme
Monitoring system (SFD)	Has been set up
Guidance from the NSS for self assessment	Has already been provided via the SF MoP and the SF DP (EQUAL)
Core partners in the DPs/ Involvement of partners	Leading partners from public sector, the ETC, social partners, inters groups, NGO's. One surprise leading partner (WasteServe). Most social partners are included
Procedures for a strategy	Target group central factor
Procedures for identification of activities	Based upon the priorities identified within the NAPs
Added value of transnational co-operation	Transnational partners have bigger budgets for developing means, methods, etc. to be used by Maltese partners
Setting up of Transnational Co-operation Agreements	TCAs have all been approved by the NSS
Definition of roles, methods of decision-making and organizational arrangements	Yes. For budgetary reasons the contribution of Maltese DPs is rather small
Thematic issues	
Reason for constructing partnerships	The lead partner is the logical party in Malta and is the public authority responsible for the particular priority theme, while the Employment and Training Corporation is a member of all the DPs except one Natural involvement of interest groups and NGO's

Organizations in the partnerships	Public entities, ETC, social and economic partners, NGO's
Nature and volume of co-operation	Largest contribution from leading partner, followed by the ETC and the respective NGO, as well as the employers and the Unions
Added value of the partnership	Combination of knowledge of target groups and knowledge of methods of labour market re-integration
Administrative obligations	All but one of the promoters already involved in ESF
Methods to find transnational partners	Existing contacts, seminar in UK, foreign DPs looking at Malta, membership of the Commission's transnational working group
Support to the process	Support of the NSS. Other types of support not really necessary because of fast successful finalization of the process
How many foreign partners	3 to 9 per DP. 26 in total
Intensity of co-operation	Regular meetings, common websites, developing common methods, co-operation on dissemination and mainstreaming, exchange of expertise
Nature of the innovation	All new to Malta or directed at new target groups. Completely new methods are also a characteristic for each project, especially the Headstart, Equal Opportunities Through Empowerment and Asylum Seekers Projects
Operation of the empowerment principle	Only mentioned by one DP, in the context of transnational co-operation, while this has been a fundamental criteria within the Project Application Form, which will be operated within all selected projects
Organization of dissemination activities	Dissemination activities, which are also referred to as Action 3, are in the TCAs and are also a fundamental criteria within the Project Application Form, which will form part of all the selected projects' activities
Mainstreaming activities	A NTN (National Thematic Network) will be created for mainstreaming of the whole of the CIP, as well as of the Thematic Priorities. The national mainstreaming activities will also be complemented by those in the TCAs and the Letters of Offers

Cross cutting themes

The cross cutting themes have been taken into account. All DPs, especially the equal opportunities one, are gender biased. One specific DP (Recycle) with a positive impact on environment has been selected.

Overall conclusion on EQUAL

Small Member States have in the sense of organizational structure, monitoring and evaluation systems and communications, the same obligations as the bigger Member States. While EQUAL (as a separate Programme) will not exist any longer, its principles will become part of the new mainstream ESF Regulation. Malta, as a small Member State, had to put in a relatively big effort in setting up an organizational structure etc. for also organizing EQUAL for a relatively small period. As a consequence of this, not only the authorities within the PPCD, but also the ESF officials within the Ministry of Family and Social Solidarity and several other public and non-profit organizations had to get accustomed to the added complexities under EQUAL, such as working in local and foreign partnerships, as well as policy mainstreaming, although the main principles are still those of the ESF. As far as this concerns the thematic issues, it might be possible to learn lessons for the future, while in relation to the specific regulations for EQUAL these efforts may only be useful should promoters wish to avail of them under future ESF programming periods. This effort may provide an ideal learning experience for the future although some may consider that it stands in no comparison to the fruits gained.

Recommendation

❑ The Annex contains a scheme with the indicators for the (quarterly) self-assessment by the DPs.

1 Introduction and methodology

1.1 Introduction

The ongoing evaluation is directed at EQUAL related activities after the preparation of the *Programme Complement to the EQUAL CIP* in the middle of 2004.[1]

The preparation of the *CIP* and the *PC* are evaluated in the ex ante evaluation which is part of the PC. The conclusions from the ex ante evaluation about the foundations of the programme as laid down in the CIP and the PC are as follows:

- ❑ The ex ante evaluation foresees a suitable (asylum seekers) to high (the rest of the measures) possible impact of the priority themes in addressing the identified weaknesses
- ❑ The ex ante evaluation foresees an "at least neutral impact" of the EQUAL programme on environment (while stressing the need to make efforts in order to make the impact more positive) and a positive impact on equal opportunities.
- ❑ All relevant partners have been involved in the preparatory phase of the CIP.
- ❑ The CIP contains a thorough diagnosis of the socio-economic situation on Malta.[2]
- ❑ The strategy shows synergy and internal consistency.
- ❑ The fact that the measures in the PC cover a wide spectrum of potential; development partners are assessed positively.

This first interim evaluation report covers the first stage of the ongoing evaluation of EQUAL Malta 2004-2006. At the time of this report, in the middle of 2005, project implementation of the Development Partnerships (DPs) (with maybe one partial exception) is still to start. For this reason, this report, elaborates on the preparation phase of the programme and the resulting DPs: in short: the so-called *Action 1* of EQUAL.

In ordinary labour market programmes the question at issue is: Have the interventions and instruments produced the expected effects for the target groups? Although within the evaluation of such a programme individual projects can be interesting, the emphasis is on the impact of all projects together.[3]

This is not the case with the EQUAL programme. This programme is more concerned with the added value of innovations with regard to existing policy. For example, it is not important for the evaluation of the innovative strength of the projects as to how many older workers of the projects, altogether, find a job. It is more important to understand whether these are projects where the chance of finding a job for participants / target groups is better than in mainstream policy. To examine this the emphasis is on the evaluation at project-level. At this level it has to be determined if the innovation concerned is successful, to what extent mainstreaming has occurred and how large the impact is.[4]

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[1] In fact, the PC was approved by the MC in October 2004. At that stage, the communication and application phase of the programme had already started.
[2] The ex ante evaluation added a summary table with context indicators to the PC. In fact there are several tables on the context added to the PC, but no summary and no recommendation.
[3] For example one of the key questions in the ESF 3 is: Does the programme lead to an increased flow of unemployment to actual work.
[4] The Inception Report includes a more elaborated description of the policy-driven characteristics of this ongoing

As requested in the EQUAL Communication, the evaluation of the EQUAL CIP should:

❑ support sound programme implementation and management;
❑ assess the rationale, the potential and initial impact of the EQUAL CIP;
❑ identify and assess the added value of the EQUAL CIP to existing labour market policies and practice;
❑ contribute to the identification, validation and mainstreaming of good practice in delivering inclusive policies;
❑ assess to what extent the EQUAL Initiative could integrate EQUAL results into national policies and actions, notably into future mainstream ESF programmes;
❑ facilitate learning processes amongst all national stakeholders involved;
❑ contribute to capacity building;
❑ and allow to draw lessons for the next programming period.

The TOR identify four research tasks for the evaluation that covers this notion of the complexity of EQUAL well:

1. Appropriateness of strategies - this task seeks to address the issues of how well the EQUAL CIP Malta has responded to the national social and economic environment and the objectives set out in the Commission Communication on EQUAL.
2. Management and implementation systems – this task should include an assessment of management systems, programme implementation dynamics, selection procedures and monitoring systems.
3. Effectiveness of the key principles across the four thematic fields.
4. Identifying good practices.

Of course the evaluation of the appropriateness of strategies was also the most important research task for the ex ante evaluation. In the framework of the ongoing evaluation this task is also relevant but should be looked upon from two other perspectives:

1. Developments in the socio-economic environment of the EQUAL programme might make a change of strategy at the programme level recommendable. Therefore, especially in this phase of the evaluation (when it may still be possible to adapt strategies on the programme level) it is wise to analyse this environment.

2. The progress and results of DP activities might lead to conclusions about the appropriateness of the EQUAL strategy. In that case, it is, at first, relevant to analyse in which way problems in this field could be explained by subsequent changes in the socio-economic environment. When this is not the case, it is the task of the evaluator to point out in which way and why ex-ante predictions about the strategy have gone astray.

3. The solutions for problems arising in this field are interesting from the perspective of good practices and lessons to be learnt from EQUAL. At this stage of the evaluation the evaluator should analyse whether it is already possible to draw some first conclusions about the appropriateness of strategies from the selection of DPs and the results of the search for transnational partners.

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evaluation.

This first interim evaluation report focuses on the first two research tasks. Whereas activities still have to start, it is of course not possible to answer the third and fourth questions. It is possible, however, to provide some answers about the implementation of the key principles and the thematic field. On the other hand, it is also not possible to provide for a definitive assessment of the management and monitoring systems, whereas the effectiveness of these systems should be proven by the success of the DP's. On the whole, this evaluation can however assess the programme implementation as such.

The evaluation of the EQUAL CIP should be analytical and policy driven rather than descriptive. It should develop policy conclusions and recommendations. However, for two reasons this first interim evaluation report will be more descriptive than the following reports:

❑ At this stage it is not possible to analyse the process and results of the thematic issues of the EQUAL programme. In relation to themes like innovation, networking, gender mainstreaming, inclusion of minorities, transnational co-operation and mainstreaming at this stage only the "input" (which should be the innovation, which are the partnerships, which instruments should be used for gender mainstreaming etc?) can be assessed. This type of assessment must be mainly descriptive. Even a conclusive analysis of the effects of programme implementation on the effectiveness of the DPs is only possible when the results of the DPs may be assessed.

❑ EQUAL will not be continued in the next EU programming period as a separate Programme. As a consequence of this, lessons for next programming period do not relate to a new EQUAL programme, but mainly to the inclusion of recommendations from EQUAL into mainstream EU employment policy. In relation to capacity building, more general lessons could be drawn at the EU and national level but good practices and solutions for problems in relation to setting up EQUAL specifically might not be relevant any longer

1.2   Research questions

As a consequence of the above, the research questions, which should be answered at this stage, are the following:

1) Appropriateness of strategies

❑ To what extent does the EQUAL CIP identify clear priorities?
❑ Do the EQUAL priorities take forward the key domestic priorities agreed in the strategies outlined in the NAPs for Employment and Social Inclusion? To what extent do they address real policy (delivery) needs and emerging labour market issues?
❑ To what extent does the CIP take account of the variety of regional and national social and economic contexts?
❑ To what extent do the DP work programmes included in the Development Partnership Agreements (first milestone) take account of the priorities set out in the CIP?

2) Management and implementation systems

Management and implementation systems at CIP level:
❑ What type of organisations are involved in the management of EQUAL in Malta?

- ❑ What criteria have been applied for the selection of the DPs? How have these been weighted? How has the gender perspective been taken into account?
- ❑ How has the monitoring system been set up?
- ❑ What guidance have the national management authorities provided for DPs in their self-assessment?

Management and implementation systems at DP-level:
- ❑ What types of core partners are participating in the DP? To what extent have relevant players been involved? Have DP's succeeded in involving non-traditional partners?
- ❑ What procedures have been put in place to agree on objectives to develop a strategy, and to identify key priorities for activity?
- ❑ What procedures for identification of activities have been put in place?
- ❑ Whatuarantees do the monitoring systems provide regarding the quality and timeliness of information?

Management and implementation systems at Transnational Cooperation level:
- ❑ How have DPs ensured that transnational activities provide added value to their strategy?
- ❑ Have the transnational cooperation agreements been set up between DPs working on the same thematic fields?
- ❑ Do the transnational cooperation agreements clearly define the role of each partner, the common methods of decision-making and the organisational arrangements for implementing the common work programmes?

3) Thematic issues

Development Partnerships
- ❑ What is the reason for the construction of the partnership?
- ❑ Which organisations are involved in the partnerships?
- ❑ What is the foreseen nature and volume of co-operation in the partnerships?
- ❑ What should be the added value of the partnership?
- ❑ What is the perception of the project holders concerning administrative obligations?

Transnationality
- ❑ How do the project holders find their transnational partners?
- ❑ How is this process supported by institutions like EU database, EU instruction, Managing Authority etc?
- ❑ With how many foreign partners does the project co-operate?
- ❑ What are the intentions concerning the intensity of co-operation between transnational partners?

Innovation
- ❑ Can we consider the projects as really new approaches?
- ❑ What is the nature of the innovation (process, goal or context orientated)?

Empowerment
- ❑ In what way is the empowerment objective put into operation?

Dissemination
- ❑ How are the dissemination activities regarding the results and experiences organised?

Mainstreaming
❑ How does the programme implementation prepare for mainstreaming activities?

1.3 Methodology

The following methods have been used for gathering the data for this first interim evaluation report.

Desk research project documents
These documents include:
❑ The CIP itself
❑ The Programme Complement
❑ The first Annual Implementation Report
❑ Development Partnership Documents (application forms, transnational partnership agreements, promotion material etc.)
❑ The National Action Plans on Employment and on Poverty and Social Exclusion
❑ Labour Market Statistics from the ETC and the NSO
❑ The Annual Reports of the ETC
❑ Documents from the EC on EQUAL (Equal Guides for DPs, Transnational Cooperation, Gender Mainstreaming, Mainstreaming, etc.; Guides on monitoring and evaluation methods).

Information from relevant meetings
Until now the evaluators have participated in two meetings of the Evaluation Steering Group.

Interviews with programme managers EQUAL CIP Malta and with members of the National Support Structure
There have been interviews with the Managing Authority (PPCD) and the National Support Structure (ESF Unit at the MFSS) to get additional information on the implementation and the management programme, on the information provided, the selection process and on the monitoring system and structure.

Interviews with promoters
All five project promoters have been interviewed personally by the evaluators in order to gather information on the way the DPs got into contact with EQUAL, their assessment of communication and selection, their assessment of further preparatory arrangements by the MA/NSS and about the preparation phase of the DPs (especially related to their actions in getting transnational partners).

Interview with non-selected applicants
The research team has also carried out an interview with one of the two non-selected applicants. This interview focused on the communication and selection process and on the reasons why they were not selected.

Telephonic and one to one interviews with key social partners not present in any of the projects chosen
The evaluators have also carried out interviews with key social partners absent from any of the projects chosen. These interviews focused on whether they were aware of EQUAL, whether they were approached to be one of the partners in any of the projects and whether they had an interest in submitting a project of their own.

1.4   Layout of the report

The next chapter of this report will focus on Programme Implementation: the setting up of a management and support structure and communication activities. Chapter 3 describes the selection procedure and the projects resulting from it. In chapter 4 the organisation of monitoring and evaluation is described and evaluated. The last chapter takes a new look at the employment and economic development and assesses the appropriateness of the strategy at the moment of the start of the DP activities.

2   Programme implementation

This first chapter covers the Programme Implementation activities in Malta after the preparation of the *Programme Complement to the EQUAL CIP* in the middle of 2004.[1] It specifically relates to the management structure and the communication activities to promote applications from potential Development Partnerships (DPs).

2.1   Arrangements for management and communication

Managing arrangements

The CIP mentions the following arrangements for managing the EQUAL programme:

❑   *The Managing Authority* within the PPCD is responsible for the CIP, the PC and the Annual Implementation Reports. It ensures the follow-up from relevant bodies to recommendations from the EC and/or auditors. It will ensure investigation and treatment of irregularities. It organises the evaluation and ensures on-the-spot checks. It draws up covenants with the NSS and provides the PA and other relevant bodies with information. It also arranges the financial requirements for the programme (ensuring that all relevant bodies are accounting adequately, establishing a central information system, co-ordinating with the PA and the Internal Audit and Investigations Directorate on financial and auditing issues, co-operating with the PA on the preparation of annual payment forecasts, etc.).

❑   The *National Support Structure* within the Ministry of Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS) supports the MA in tasks and functions like: proposing a draft CIP, PC, and the AIR; proposing actions for funding, ensuring proper financial management, ensuring that schemes are accompanied by an audit trail and quantified objectives and indicators and supplying the MA with monitoring data on outputs and results, ensuring the projects are implemented according to legislation on procurement, state aid, environment and equal opportunities, ensuring the required publicity measures, monitoring technical implementation on the spot, checking requests for payments, reporting irregularities, supplying information for the Annual Implementation Report, organising the call for proposals and the selection of DPs, drawing up guidelines and application forms, providing information to applicants, assessing DPs and Transnational Co-operation Agreements, co-ordinating the National Thematic Network, organising and delivering seminars on Action 3 and preparing good practice guides. It is also responsible for other forms of Technical Assistance and is also responsible for issuing the Letter of Offer of Grant to the selected DPs.

❑   The *Paying Authority* within the Ministry of Finance makes requests for reimbursement to the Commission.

❑   The *Internal Audit and Investigations Directorate (IAID)* within the Prime Minister's Office will be responsible for the independent assessment, examination and reporting on the

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[1] In fact, the PC was approved by the MC in October 2004. At that stage, the communication and application phase of the programme had already started.

adequacy of systems and procedures and also to report irregularities to the Commission. It will carry out ex post expenditure controls (5% controls).

Communication strategy

The communication strategy has been described in the PC. It is aimed at three target groups:

❑ Actual and potential beneficiaries. To inform them about the opportunities provided by the assistance;
❑ Policy makers and key players. To play a role in policy mainstreaming;
❑ The general public. To promote the role played by the EC through the ESF and through EQUAL in particular.

The budget for communication is 25% of the Technical Assistance (TA) budget. The NSS is in the process of launching a publicity tender. The PC sums up potential communication tools and (within Annex IV) provides for an evaluation.

In this first phase, the ongoing evaluation has to focus mainly on the first category. In the preparation stage the most important objectives for communication should be directed at supporting implementation (while maximizing transparency and accountability):

❑ to inform the "internal public" (government ministries and institutions and partners such as EU institutions in Malta and MIC) on regulations, tendering, procedures etc. and to provide them with detailed information on scope, eligibility etc. of the EQUAL programme, so that they can become (leading) partners of applying DPs themselves or can advise and inform other potential DP partners.
❑ To inform the 'professional public" (especially the social partners, trade and professional groups, NGO's, but also the media and other opinion formers, as they might have an intermediate role in spreading information) on the possibilities of setting up potential EQUAL DPs and to advise them once they have been involved in potential DPs.

Of course, there is also the very specific task for the MA/NSS to publish the results of the selection once the DPs for Action 1 have been selected.

During the Action 1 period the communication should be directed at:

❑ the DPs themselves, to give them essential information for success of Action 1.
❑ potential other partners among the "professional public", to exclude that any relevant partner for the DPs might be forgotten to partake in the projects.
❑ potential transnational partners, to involve Malta DPs in Transnational Co-operation Agreements.

2.2 Description: implementation of management structure and communication campaign

Management Structure

The management structure for EQUAL has been set up as figured out in the CIP and the PC. In a chronological sense the following has happened since the launching of the PC and the ex ante evaluation in the middle of 2004:

- In May 2004 a three months EQUAL Twinning Light Project was set up with the Spanish NSS. Spanish experts advised the Maltese administration and potential Development Partnerships on EQUAL programming requirements, the Management Information System, information materials, project management and monitoring and control aspects. The project consisted of six half-day workshops and a study visit to Spain. This project ended on the 12th of October 2004.
- The Managing Authority at the PPCD has been further developed. An important activity was the development of the SFD (EQUAL), which is described in chapter 4 of this report.
- During 2004 a covenant was signed between the MA and the MFSS for the National Support Structure and has been incorporated into the ESF Unit, which has been delegated to carry out functions as the ESF IB.
  - There are five officials working within the ESF Unit, responsible for 30 ESF projects and for EQUAL.
  - The actual five EQUAL projects (excluding TA) have been divided among the officials of the ESF Unit, in the same way as for those of the mainstream ESF projects.
  - As with the mainstream ESF Projects, these officials are acting as helpdesk officers and each has a range of projects.

- On the 1st of October 2004 there has been a presentation of EQUAL by the NSS to the EQUAL Monitoring Committee. At this meeting the Monitoring Committee adopted the PC.
- The ESF Unit and the PPCD have prepared an Annual Implementation Report for 2004, which also describes the indicators for the five projects selected (see Chapter 3).
- An ESF Consultative Working Group has been set up. It includes some members of the Monitoring Committee and additional representatives from public institutions, social partners and NGO's that are also involved in the field of human resources, labour market and social inclusion. This Committee also caters for the Community Initiative EQUAL. The ESF CWG is the steering committee responsible for mainstreaming EQUAL. There will be one National Thematic Network for the whole of the programme, with sub-groups overseeing the respective Thematic Priorities.
- The application and selection procedure took place during the last months of 2004 (See Chapter 3).
- During the first half year of 2005 the NSS supported the DPs in making up their DP Agreement and the Transnational Co-operation Agreements.
- The Manual of Procedures for EQUAL, based on the structural funds manual, is to be published during the 3rd quarter of 2005. The DPs get a small allowance for project staff to fulfil their administrative requirements.

Communication

- ❑ The first communication efforts, inspired by the Twinning Light Project with Spain, were aimed at raising awareness, providing training, and preparing all the stakeholders to present project proposals.
- ❑ Most of the potential DPs are already involved in the Twinning Light project.
- ❑ Some of the potential DPs were also involved in ESF projects.
- ❑ A consultation process was also undertaken within the Maltese government and also served as an important source of information for potential DP partners.
- ❑ The Websites of the Managing Authority at the PPCD and that of the ESF Unit provided information on ESF, at first specifically oriented at potential DPs.
- ❑ A press release on the launching of the official call for proposals for the EQUAL CIP was issued on the 15th of October 2004.
- ❑ The official launching of the EQUAL call for proposals were held on the 18th of October accompanied by a ministerial press conference.
- ❑ Information sessions on the EQUAL Programme and the submission of EQUAL project applications for all prospective applicants and the media were held on the 25th of October 2004 in Malta and on the 9th of November 2004 in Gozo.
- ❑ The promotion of Malta DPs with DPs from other Member States to develop Transnational Partnerships consisted mainly of visits to other Member States. Especially a visit to a UK congress on transnational partnership for EQUAL provided several opportunities for co-operation.
- ❑ Two calls in the field of EQUAL promotion have almost been finalised, one concerning the launch of information and publicity activities to (potential) participants and the general public and another to appoint a service provider for the implementation of the national mainstreaming requirements.

2.3 Evaluation of the implementation of the management structure and of the communication campaign

There is in fact only one research question and one indicator related to the implementation of the management structure for EQUAL. This is the question/indicator about the organisations involved in the management and support structure the CIP. Because of its importance as a prerequisite for the implementation of EQUAL in Malta, the evaluators have decided to elaborate this further in a separate chapter.

Management structure

The main conclusions about the management structure are that it has been successful:

- ❑ A well functioning management structure has been set up.
- ❑ A well functioning support structure has been set up.
- ❑ The MA and the NSS have carried out all activities necessary to prepare for the DP project activities, once the last remaining DPAs and the TCAs are signed, the calls for promotion activities are finalized and the guidelines manual for EQUAL is published.

❑ There has been a press release which has led to DP applications from a number of potential partners although some key social partners are absent.

Of course in such a small Member State, much will depend on the officials involved in the structure. The way EQUAL projects have been divided among the staff of the ESF Unit (instead of making one person within the Unit responsible for EQUAL) seems to guarantee a certain sustainability of support activities, because all staff shadow each other and may therefore take over or fill in for each other's activities in the case of departures or illness.

Specific elements of the activities of the MA and the NSS will be the subject of Chapter 3 and 4.

Communication

The main instruments to reach the target groups for the proposal stage of EQUAL were the Regional Policy Twinning Project and the EQUAL Twinning Light Project, together with internal government consultation. Moreover, the MA and the NSS presented information about EQUAL on their website and a number of meetings for possible applicants were held.

This means that the leading partnerships applying came from a small group of directly involved governmental organisations. One should wonder, however, whether there could have been many other alternatives. In a small country such as Malta, for activities directed at target groups such as women, asylum seekers, the homeless and the disabled, there are almost in all cases only very low potential leading partners available. It is a good thing to involve these partners early in the process, as they could get accustomed to EQUAL (adding the positive aspect that all of them, with one exception, were also already involved in ESF projects).

All DPs selected expressed their satisfaction about the communication activities of the NSS. One of the non-selected projects expressed its dissatisfaction stating that they were informed very late (by a e mail from the NSS) after enquiring about the possibility of submitting an application.

This gave the potential leading partners the time to look for other potential members of partnerships. In this sense the DPs have been successful, involving some 30 of them in total.

The NSS targeted its communication activities at all potential stakeholders, but as not all chose to participate in the training events, other partners may have also participated had this not been the case. The PC already mentions that a budget of 10% of TA is not enough to spread all the information to all possible target groups, and the NSS has now increased this figure to 25%, with the approval of the MA. Moreover, VAT should also be payable on publicity and information measures. Of course, this limits the means to set up a comprehensive communication campaign. Therefore it seems to be a good choice to focus the communication activities.

For this reason, the communication activities of the partners in the DPs should also be part of the tender process to obtain best value for money.

Although there is, other than in the ESF programme, no specific attention for Gozo (defined as a backward region in the sense of economic development) because of the small size of the EQUAL programme, there has been a separate information meeting on EQUAL in Gozo.

The website of the Ministry of FSS starts with a description of all the ESF Measures chosen for the current programming period as separate clusters, including one for the EQUAL programme, which in turn list the Thematic Priorities and Measures for EQUAL and provides a brief description of each EQUAL Project chosen.

A last consideration

Malta has put in a lot of effort into setting up the EQUAL programme. For a small country this effort is relatively speaking, always more comprehensive than for the bigger Member States, because, whatever the amount of projects, this structure has to be organised anyway.

The cost-effectiveness of setting up the structure for EQUAL is rather low, but for most this should be considered as a highly useful learning experience which will sustain the great amount of knowledge that has, in the process, been acquired by all ESF stakeholders. EQUAL aims at delivering lessons which could be applied in mainstream ESF policy in the future. One should question, however, whether there should have been other ways to set up specific projects for combating discrimination and inequalities on the labour market (out of which maybe the same – innovative - good practices and the same solutions for problems encountered could be learned) without the complexities which surround EQUAL, especially in this case, where in the end EQUAL consists of only five projects with a relatively small budget for Technical Assistance.

3 The selection procedure and Action 1

The selection procedure is anticipated by the choice of four of nine priority themes for the Malta EQUAL programme. The main reasons for this choice, as stated in the EQUAL CIP, and justified by the ex ante evaluators are budgetary (it is not possible to fund projects of a reasonable size for each of the priority themes of EQUAL at the EU level) and the fact that the mainstream Maltese and EU social policy which is funding many projects in the sphere of the other EU level EQUAL priority themes. This has already been justified by the ex ante evaluators, so it is not the task of the on going evaluation to look at the justification of this choices again.

Following the adoption of the CIP and approval of the Programme Complement the Maltese government set up an application and selection procedure. This led to the choice of 5 DP proposals for the so-called Action 1: the setting up of the Development Partnerships, the development of a joint strategy and action plan, the agreement of a work plan for transnational co-operation.

These two stages of establishing the partnerships for carrying out activities in the framework of EQUAL are presented in this chapter.

3.1 Arrangements for the selection and Action 1

Priorities and eligible actions and their budgets

The CIP defines the Priority Themes in which the EQUAL programme for Malta 2004-6 has been divided:[1]

- 1A Employability
- 2C Entrepreneurship
- 4G Equal Opportunities
- 5I Asylum Seekers.

Only DPs defining projects falling under one of these four Priority themes are eligible for funding. The PC further elaborates on which actions should be eligible. Moreover, it defines the budget for each priority, including the contribution of EU (75%), Malta government (25%) and private actors (in all cases 0%).

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[1] There is also a priority for Technical Assistance, for which 10% of total budget has been allocated.

The following table shows the division of budget:

Thematic Priority	% of budget	ESF €	Malta €	Total €
1A Employability	25%	310,291	103,430	413,721
2C Entrepreneurship	25%	310,291	103,430	413,721
4G Equal Opportunities	25%	310,291	103,430	413,721
5I Asylum Seekers	15%	186,174	62,059	248,233
6J Technical Assistance	10%	124,116	41,372	165,488
5 Priorities	100%	€ 1,241,163	€ 413,721	€ 1,654,884

The TA consists of 62% for preparation, implementation, monitoring and publicity, 18% for studies and 20% for information to the public.

Application and selection procedure

The CIP proceeds on the single selection procedure to be followed in the framework of the programme. The basis is an application procedure in which potential DPs submit a joint application. This should identify:

❏ the partners and the arrangements for (financial) administration
❏ an outline of the (relevance of the) problem to be solved and the objectives of the partnership
❏ an assessment of the solution to be tested (especially how discrimination and inequality will be tackled) and an outline of the dissemination of results
❏ the expectations from transnational co-operation
❏ an outline of activities and budget for development of the innovative approach
❏ a detailed work plan and budget.

Development partnerships

The CIP states that all DPs will be led by an organisation which will administer the public funds.
According to EC Regulation I, in the framework of Action1, a formal contract between all partners in the DP must be concluded. The NSS is responsible for assessing the contract of the DPA to confirm the DPs participation into Action 2.

Transnational Co-operation
In the framework of Action 1 the partners in the DP must also conclude a Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA). The TCA will also be assessed by the NSS on behalf of the MA to confirm the participation of the DP in Action 2.

3.2 Description: from application and selection to the conclusion of (transnational) partnerships

Chronology

- ❑ The official call for proposals was planned to take place during the last week of June 2004.
- ❑ Because the PC was only approved by the Monitoring Committee in October 2004 the call for proposals was actually launched on the 18th of October 2004.
- ❑ On the 25th of October (Malta) and the 9th of November (Gozo) there were information sessions for potential applicants.
- ❑ The EQUAL call for projects closed on the 18th of November 2004.
- ❑ In mid December the results of the selection were communicated to the DPs who had applied.
- ❑ In the first half of 2005 the DPs, assisted by the NSS, were busy finding additional partners, agreeing on the Development Partnerships and making up the DP contract.
- ❑ At the same time, also assisted by the NSS, the DPs were looking for transnational partners, and, having found them, drew up the TCAs. The process of looking for partners was finished in April 2005.
- ❑ Four of the five DPAs and all the TCAs have been approved by the NSS in July 2005. A grant letter by the NSS will formally finalise Action 1 of EQUAL.

Description: application and selection

All potential DPs, with one exception, had experiences in applying for ESF, which meant, they also had some experiences in filling out applications.[1] The DPs stated that filling in the application forms was not easy. The one exception without ESF experience got some (impartial) assistance from the NSS, as did all the interested entities that requested this assistance following the Information Sessions that were held specifically for this purpose. All DPs expressed their satisfaction about the assistance of the NSS. One of the non-selected DPs however complained about the information given about the budget and not having the possibility to scale down their project afterwards.

There were in total 8 applications, from which one was the TA. This leaves 7 thematic applications, of which 4 were applying for measure 1A, and 1 for each of the other thematic measures. Out of the 4 projects under measure 1, only the two with the highest scores were selected. Major factors considered during selection were the readiness to set up the project and the fact whether there was already a basis for an organizational structure. Background to this is that the programming period is only 2, 5-3 years which implies the DPs have to secure a quick start of activities. The selectors also paid attention to the fact that projects should choose not only potential participants with the best chances on the labour market, but should select on needs rather than chances once there could be more potential participants than places in the projects. Another point of deliberation was the amount of women participating in the projects. The eligibility and selection criteria used in the evaluation and ranking of the application forms are clearly

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[1] The evaluators have not studied the application forms, which the NSS for obvious reasons did not provide.

specified within the Programme Complement, which was adopted by the Project Selection Committee.

For the remaining two projects, the budgets could be reduced as they were within the financial allocation provided for the Measure, thereby preventing Measure 1A's budget from being exceeded.

All DPs went through an interview for clarification by the PSC. This included some discussion on the amount of participants and the expected success rates of the projects. The final approval of the projects was obtained from the Cabinet.

One of the DPs not selected asked for clarification. The IT project directed at people with disabilities will take place anyway, now completely covered by funding from the Maltese government.

As stated above, in total 30 partners are involved in the DPs selected. In all cases except one, the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), is involved as an important partner responsible, in some projects, for providing advice and experience on the training activities and the unemployment data in the framework of the DPs.

Results of the selection: the Development Partnerships
As a result of the selection the following DPs were accepted for Action 1:

Measure	Name of the project	Final Beneficiary	Target Groups	Financial allocation
1A	Headstart	Housing Authority	Unemployed, Youth, People in Institutional Care, Homeless	€ 263,721
1A	Recycling	WasteServ Malta Ltd	Disabled, Addicted, (ex)offenders	€ 150,000
2C	Encouraging entrepreneurship among the unemployed in Malta	Malta Enterprise	Unemployed, Women, Youth	€ 413,721
4G	Promoting Equal Opportunities through Empowerment	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality between men and women (NCPE)	Inactive Women and Men	€ 413,721
5I	Integration of Asylum Seekers into Maltese Society	Foundation for Social Welfare Services	Asylum Seekers	€ 248,233

The activities of the selected projects are as follows:

- **Headstart**. The project is directed at training youths leaving institutional care in a variety of trades/skills. After the training these youths will be provided with a work placement. After that the trainees will be assisted in finding a regular full-time job. The project will also cover housing facilities for the trainees after being certified.
- **Recycling**. This project is directed at training rehabilitated drug-abusers, people with disabilities and (ex)offenders in methods of small-scale recycling. At the next stage these trained participants will be placed at the recycling centre.
- **Encouraging entrepreneurship among the unemployed in Malta.** After an awareness raising campaign, potential candidates for setting up their own business are selected. These persons will get an intensive training course, after which they can apply for a grant to implement their business idea.[1] They will also be supported by a mentor and will take part in a study trip abroad.
- **Promoting Equal Opportunities through Empowerment**. After extensive preparation (work plan, compilation of information, identification of role models) a communication campaign will start promoting public seminars for women (and men) at the regional level in order to enrol the participants into training that will lead to their employment. A questionnaire, the data of which will be put into a database, will be spread among the participants in order to match skills to employment opportunities. At these seminars, meetings will be organised for the social partners and the employers with the aim of employing the potential candidates. After analysis of the data, further activities at the individual level and at the policy level will be identified.
- **Asylum seekers**. Asylum seekers will be offered a training course. It will consist of a course in basic English, a "life skills" course, training in writing a C.V. and preparing for a job interview, information sessions on various topics concerning Maltese society. The second phase consists of vocational training combined with traineeships.

The targets for the several projects can be found in the indicator table in paragraph 4.2. It is important to note, however (we will come back to this later), that the actual targets for the 4G are different than the indicators do suppose.

Innovation

The innovative strength of the projects and the programme as a whole will be evaluated during the next interim evaluation. At this stage it is relevant to quote which are the innovative aspects of the projects. In all cases, the main innovation seems to apply to the characteristics of the target groups, most of which have never been the target of any specific employment policy action in the past on Malta:
- Youth in institutional care and homeless in the Headstart project
- (Ex) offenders and people with addictions in the Recycling project
- Inactive women in the Equal opportunities project
- Asylum seekers.

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[1] The five best ideas will get a grant of € 10.000.

Only in the Entrepreneurship project the target group as such is not new, but the kind of activity (promoting self-employment) has not been directed yet at the target group of the unemployed.

Some of the projects also involve new methods for Malta in the field of employment policy:

- recycling activities (Recycling)
- the use of a nationwide communication campaign directed at changes in role models (Equal Opportunities).

The information available about the non-selected DPs suggests that their approach might have been a little more innovative than the ones selected. It consisted of setting up 15 centres across the island which would provide free internet and e-mail facilities to disadvantaged people as well as free tuition for their usage.

Essentially, the Project exceeded substantially the funds applied for under the Measure causing it to be considered as too ambitious to remain functional within the funds allocated. Moreover, while the overall purpose of the project may be in line with the national priorities, the proposed activities were considered to be weak in terms of immediate and direct linkage with the labour market objectives of the ESF.

Critical success factors

The critical success factors of the projects are as follows:

- The support structures for youths during the training and work placements (Headstart)
- Co-operation between the partners (Recycling and Asylum Seekers)
- Quality of the 8-month training course (Entrepreneurship)
- Quality of the TV campaign and the follow-up seminars, as well as the partners offering employment opportunities (Equal Opportunities).

Two of the projects focus on the quality of (the most essential) the actions themselves, three of them on the role of the several partners in the DP. All DP's have met several times now. In most cases project managers have been selected. There are therefore ready to commence their activities. Two specific situations should however be highlighted:

- The one DP without experience in EU programming was progressing a little bit slower than the other ones. Training in EU programming would have helped. At the moment this DP is tendering activities, so it is not really lagging behind.
- Another DP depends on the school semester for its activities. This means the project has to start in September. As a result a lot of preparatory work has to be done in the summertime. This implies some financial difficulties, although the DP's letter of Offer was the first one to be signed under the EQUAL Programme, however, to date, the DP has not yet started processing its request for payments.

Transnational partnerships

The process of finding transnational partners started at the beginning of 2005. Malta, as the smallest Member State, also has the smallest budgets for transnational co-operation. Nonetheless, resulting from the promotion activities already pointed out in Chapter 2, and, according to the DP promoters, the fluency in English of the Maltese promoters and the attractiveness of Malta as a place to visit ensures that, all Maltese projects found transnational partners by April 2005. This resulted in 8 TCAs for the 5 projects. The characteristics of the transnational partnerships are the following:

Project	Transnational Co-operation Partnership	Amount of Partners	Nationality of Partners	Objective of partnership
Headstart	Munin	4	LT, NL, SE, UK	- Development of methods directed at specific target groups - Influencing policy levels
Recycling	SerraNet	5	AT, ES, FI, FR, IT	- Exchange (and transfer) of information and good practice, esp. in the field of recycling - Mainstreaming
	Hugin	4	DE, NL, PL, UK	- Best practice model for projects providing training to young (ex) offenders - A website hosting a radio station, a virtual competence centre, a DVD
Equal Opportunities	Empower	4	ES, IT, LT, UK	- Transfer of information and good practice about educational and cultural awareness campaigns - Development of new ways of working with the target groups, esp. lone parents - Mainstreaming
	Agender	2	FR, PT	- Transfer of information and good practice in the field of gender and ageing related projects
Entrepreneurship	ME BCP P2E	2	IE, UK	- Transfer of information and good practice about enterprise creation by disadvantaged people - Mainstreaming (developing a set of principles)
	When the want means can	1	SK	- Development of a scheme for promoting reintegration into the labour market of the disabled - Dissemination (website)
Asylum seekers	PASSI	4	DE, GR, IT, PT	- Design of a common methodology for validation of competences of Asylum Seekers - Identification and exchange of good

				practices on the integration of Asylum Seekers into the labour market

In all cases the Maltese financial contribution is necessarily small. In the "When the want means can" project the financial contribution of Malta for instance will only be € 800. Because of the small contribution none of the TCAs have a Maltese promoter as the secretary of the transnational partnership.

One of the research questions, which could be answered already at this stage, is whether the TCAs are covering different priority themes. For most TCAs (Munin, Hugin, Empower, Agender, ME BCP P2E and PASSI) this does not seem to be the case.

Exceptions are:

❑ In "What we want means can" it seems that the other partner is not only involved in entrepreneurship-related activities, but also more general in the field of the employability of the disabled.
❑ In "SerraNet" some of the other DPs involved are active in the theme of social economy. Also almost all partners in this TCA are involved in projects in the field of Objective 2 or INTERREG.

The workings of the TCAs will be evaluated during the next stages of this ongoing evaluation.

3.3 Evaluation of the selection procedure and the foundation of partnerships

Research questions

The larger part of the research questions laid down in Chapter 1 relate to these subjects. Hereunder we will try to answer them on the basis of the information available.

1) Appropriateness of strategies

❑ To what extent do the DP work programmes included in the Development Partnership Agreements (first milestone) take account of the priorities set out in the CIP?

The DPAs are not yet available at this moment. From the project descriptions, the DPs and the information given by the promoters during interviews it can be concluded that the DPs cover the priorities set in the CIP.

2) Management and implementation systems

Management and implementation systems at CIP level:

❑ What criteria have been applied for the selection of the DPs? How have these been weighted?

Major factors considered during selection were the readiness to set up the project and whether there was already a basis for an organisational structure. Background of this is that the programming period is only 2.5-3 years which implies the DPs have to secure a quick start of activities. The selectors also paid attention to the fact that projects should choose not only potential participants with the best chances on the labour market, but should select on needs rather than chances once there should be more potential participants than places in the projects.

❑ How has the gender perspective been taken into account?

The amount of women participating in the projects was a point of deliberation during interviews in the framework of project selection. The Selection Committee not only looked at the amount of women in the original applications, but also asked the applicant DPs to heighten the rate of women participating, where this may have been possible.

Management and implementation systems at DP-level:

❑ What types of core partners are participating in the DP? To what extent have relevant players been involved? Have DPs succeeded in involving non-traditional partners?

The possibilities to form a DP in Malta are limited but possible as evidenced by the applications received. Due to constraints on financial and human resources, in most cases there were almost no alternatives for the leading partner of the DP's foreseen. There was already a general picture of which kind of projects to expect. In fact, there was only one "surprise", a project not envisaged by the NSS. This was the Recycle DP, which was led by a party very active in other EU Funding schemes, but not traditionally involved in Employment Policy.

❑ What procedures have been put in place to agree on objectives to develop a strategy, and to identify key priorities for activity?

For most of the DPs the central factor was the target group. The characteristics of the target group determined the strategy: an awareness campaign for inactive women and for men regarding co-responsibility, low level training activities for asylum seekers, an intensive training for prospective entrepreneurs, combinations of training and work for youth in institutions and for ex-offenders and disabled persons.

❑ What procedures for identification of activities have been put in place?

Although there are no formal procedures, much of the identification of the activities was made on the basis of expertise, experience and networking between the DPs at the design stage of the application process.

Management and implementation systems at Transnational Cooperation level:

❑ How have DPs ensured that transnational activities provide added value to their strategy?

A study of the TCAs indicates that the Maltese DPs will have added value from the transnational activities, especially when co-operating with partners with much more extensive budgets, and are able to put more effort in activities like developments of methods and means, dissemination, mainstreaming, evaluation, etc.

❑ Have the transnational cooperation agreements been set up between DPs working on the same thematic fields?

For the most part this is the case, although there are some exceptions (see above).

❑ Do the transnational cooperation agreements clearly define the role of each partner, the common methods of decision-making and the organisational arrangements for implementing the common work programmes?

All this information can be found in the TCAs. Of course, because of budgetary reasons, the actual role of the Maltese partners is comparatively small, in terms of the financial contribution, but this is offset through other non-financial contributions such as knowledge and results sharing.

3) Thematic issues

All these issues will be studied more extensively in the framework of the next stages of this on going evaluation.

Development Partnerships

❑ What is the reason for the construction of the partnership?

In most cases the leading partner is the party which is the most logical one to initiate activities for a certain target group. In all cases it is logical to involve the ETC as one of the parties most experienced in organising labour market related training. For the rest, the involvement of partners specializing in some of the target groups and also of social partners does seem natural.

❑ Which organisations are involved in the partnerships?

The leading partner is a public entity (sometimes a former state organization, having become a state-owned company). The ETC is in all the partnerships. For the rest there are NGO's, interest groups and social economic partners involved in the DPs.

❑ What is the foreseen nature and volume of co-operation in the partnerships?

As the DPAs are not yet available, it is not possible to define the volume of contribution of each party. In most cases the leading partner will provide the largest contribution, followed by the ETC and the employer organisations, while the other partners would have minor roles also related mainly to training, placements and policy mainstreaming.

❑   What should be the added value of the partnership?

In most cases organisations specialised in the characteristics of the target groups might contribute to the approach and methods to substantially, (re)integrate these groups into the labour market by helping promoters and workers in the projects to keep the specific situation of the target groups in mind. The socio-economic partners can provide employment opportunities and can assist new entrepreneurs in making their new business sustainable.

❑   What is the perception of the project holders concerning administrative obligations?

At the moment there seems to be no strain on administrative procedures. With one exception, all promoters have been involved in ESF procedures. For the most part, there is not yet any experience (as project activities still have to start up) with the specificities of EQUAL. At the other hand, the EU obliges promoters to really fulfil all their responsibilities, which was not the mentality in the past. This implies that this issue will remain of interest for the evaluation.

Transnationality

❑   How do the project holders find their transnational partners?

They found their partners partly through already existing networks, partly because potential partners came looking for them and partly through the NSS because it forwarded them a vast amount of partnership possibilities by virtue of its participation in the transnational working group as well as from its attendance of a conference in the UK during January.

❑   How is this process supported by institutions like EU database, EU Instruction, Managing Authority etc?

The NSS has especially supported the process. Although the Maltese projects succeeded in finding partners rather quickly, the information regarding the Maltese DPs was inputted into the EU database during December and appeared in January, facilitating further the transnational cooperation process.

❑   With how many foreign partners does the project co-operate?

Projects co-operate with 3 to 9 foreign partners.

❑   What are the intentions concerning the intensity of co-operation between transnational partners?

All partnerships seem to have regular meetings. Some share a common website. They also plan to develop methods together, and to work together on dissemination and mainstreaming.

Innovation

❑   Can we consider the projects as really new approaches?

Almost all approaches are new for Malta, but some have been elaborated already elsewhere. One of the projects uses an approach similar to that which has already been used in Malta, but for different target groups, although not in a partnership approach and without the innovative aspects of mentoring.

❑   What is the nature of the innovation (process, goal or context orientated)?

Innovations are both process and goal orientated, working with new partners, approaching the provision of activities from a new point of view, while addressing new target groups. The context is also new insofar as these kind of approaches are new for Malta and serve as experimental activities.

Empowerment

❑   In what way is the empowerment objective put into operation?

Only one DP (Equal Opportunities) specifically mentions the empowerment objective, especially in the context of transnational co-operation, although each application selected has a detailed section describing the process for empowerment of the target groups in the design of the activities and the mainstreaming of the results. The subject of empowerment needs further elaboration in the next stage of the evaluation when actual actions in this field might be studied.

Dissemination

❑   How are the dissemination activities regarding the results and experiences organised?

In most of the TC's there are activities in the field of dissemination. As the evaluators did not see the DPAs yet, it is impossible to state whether the same counts for these contracts. This is also an issue for the next evaluation.

Mainstreaming

❑   How does the Programme Implementation prepare for mainstreaming activities?
Programme implementation prepares for one National Thematic Network (see above).
In most of the TCAs there are also activities in the field of dissemination and mainstreaming. As the evaluators did not see the DPAs yet, it is impossible to state whether the same counts for these contracts. This is also an issue for the next evaluation.

General evaluation of the selection process and Action 1

In general, the application and selection process and the elaboration of DPs and TCAs for EQUAL Malta might be assessed very positively:

❑   There were applications for every one of the measures involved in the CIP
❑   Each of the applications met the selection criteria
❑   There were DPs selected for each of the measures
❑   The DPs will, once their projects are successfully implemented, exhaust the budget available
❑   The selected DP's were satisfied with the (assistance of the NSS on) application and selection procedures
❑   Action 1 will result in DP Agreements for all of the 5 DPs
❑   The 5 DPs will each be part of Transnational Partnerships, 3 of them becoming part of 2 TCAs each.

Moreover, in Malta these processes were very efficient:

- ❑ The selection process was concluded within one month
- ❑ The TC Partnerships were already agreed upon in April 2005.

Although Malta was the fastest Member State for finalising Action1 there have been some problems with the scheduling activities, mainly because of the start of the school semester in September. Of course, the Maltese authorities did not schedule Action 1. This means that EU programming for priorities which might include training courses should keep track with the scheduling of the school system which in many Member States still is a leading actor in organising training courses.

Of course, the non-selected DPs were less happy with the procedure. The non-selected DP which was interviewed complained about not understanding the information correctly.

The combination of only a few possible partnerships and a small budget available for each measure led to the fact that three of the measures only cover one DP meaning that calls would have to reissued, should these DPs fail to be successful.

Quantitative aspects

Regarding the quantitative aspects of the projects, the following observations could be made:

- ❑ The targets have gone up after deliberations between the NSS and the leading applicants of the DPs.
- ❑ The knowledge of some of the promoters of the targets is at this stage still limited. One may doubt whether they have internalised these targets.
- ❑ In most cases the NSS and the promoters agree that targets have been set rather low.

In most cases (the two measure 1A projects seem to be the exception)[1] the targets set point at a drop-out rate. The DPs are not very clear whether there will be activities directed at participants dropping out of the projects. After investing in them it would be wise to let e.g. the ETC take them by the hand and make them part of other trajectory activities, which is the case for all unemployed persons who register.

The relation between the targets and the candidates actually selected can only be evaluated after the start of the projects. This will be a subject of the next interim evaluation. In the framework of EQUAL it is also important to look at the characteristics of the participants from the perspective of the main objective of EQUAL which is to combat discrimination and inequality on the labour market. An important issue of evaluation in the next phase should be whether the possibilities or the needs of potential participants are forming the main selection criterion to partake in the projects. Of course this criterion is also relevant in relation to the recruiting activities of the projects: at which groups are they targeting?

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[1] Although the figures for RECYCLING hide the fact that drop outs will be replaced by others. This means that the end target will maybe be reached, but in reality that a bigger amount of persons will be involved in the project to reach the targets. This also implies a probably bigger drop out rate.

Crosscutting priorities

Concerning the cross-thematic issues (environment, gender) the following could be remarked:

❑ The ex-ante evaluators asked for more attention to be given to the **environmental factor**. The programme seems to have a positive impact on environment because of the Recycling project. This is a remarkable fact, because it is rather difficult to link most ESF funded programmes and projects with the environmental issues.

❑ **Gender impact** is in most cases positive for EQUAL, because the Equal Opportunities priority theme in itself incorporates actions directed at the strengthening of the position of women in the labour market. In Malta this issue is very important because of the extreme under-representation of women on the labour market. The gender impact for the Malta EQUAL programme is not restricted to the Equal Opportunities DP. The NSS has initiated deliberations on the amount of women in each of the projects to ensure representation of them among the participants.

❑ **The regional factor** is never very relevant on Malta because of its small size. In most DPs there is no specific attention to Gozo, albeit in the Equal Opportunities project there is a particular seminar in Gozo, while all projects are also open to Gozitans.

Additional consideration: the specific position of EQUAL

With initiatives like EQUAL (and in former days ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT) the Commission wants to support innovative measures to be developed by a wide range of actors, that seek to promote new approaches and identify examples of good practices in the labour market field. These innovative actions can subsequently improve the implementation of the mainstream operations supported by the ESF and national policy.

The potential effects of such projects can be significant, when they lead to improving mainstream policy. This means that innovation is successful and besides that it is adopted on a large scale. Innovative projects can, in this way, have a positive effect which highly exceeds the size / costs of the projects. On the other hand there also exists a relative high chance of failure.

In ordinary labour market programmes the question at issue is: Have the interventions and instruments produced the expected effects for the target groups? Although within the evaluation of such a programme individual projects can be interesting, the emphasis is on the impact of all projects together.[1]

This is not the case with the EQUAL programme. This programme is more concerned with the added value of innovations with regard to existing policy. For example the number of older workers finding employment it is not important for the evaluation of the innovative strength of the projects. It is more important to understand whether these are projects where the chance of finding a job for participants / target groups is better than in mainstream policy. To examine this, the emphasis is on the evaluation at project-level. At this level it has to be determined if the innovation concerned is successful, to what extent mainstreaming has occurred and how large the impact is.

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[1] For example one of the key questions in the ESF 3 is: Does the programme lead to an increased flow of unemployed to actual jobs.

However, this will not mean that projects which do not produce the expected results are useless for the evaluation and cannot have mainstreaming effects. The experiences of such projects can be used to find out which success and fail factors determine the degree of success of a project. Gained insight can be used by the management of the programme to advise projects in a new round (or even mainstreaming policy) on how they can increase these chances of success.

The challenge for the coming evaluations will be to look into such issues. This, however, means that monitoring, evaluation and self-assessment should also be directed at thematic issues such as innovation and mainstreaming.

4   Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure that the objectives and targets of the measures of EQUAL are being achieved the programme needs monitoring and evaluation. The MA is responsible for developing a structure for monitoring and evaluation and for setting up a monitoring system.
The Monitoring Committee will be responsible to monitor the implementation of the CIP and to ensure that the objectives and targets of the measures are being achieved.

This chapter describes and evaluates the preparations for monitoring and evaluation which have been carried out during the preparation and Action 1 stage of EQUAL implementation.

4.1   Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

Monitoring arrangements

The CIP includes the following arrangements for monitoring the programme:[1]

- ❑ Specific data to monitor specified indicators will be obtained from official data maintained by the National Statistic Office, relevant government departments and relevant statutory bodies.
- ❑ The Monitoring Committee has been set up to carry out the relevant functions with respect to the EC Regulation.

The CIP also mentions the responsibilities of the MA and the NSS in the framework of monitoring.

The PC further elaborates on monitoring arrangements:

- ❑ The Information and Management System referred to as the Structural Funds Database (EQUAL), will be the main tool for monitoring. The obligation to input into the ECDB will be incorporated in the award letter to the DP following successful selection. The NSS will transfer the data to the ECDB by the RIFE application.
- ❑ A Consultative Working Group has been set up to monitor the progress of the ESF and EQUAL projects and to make recommendations to the NSS whenever necessary.
- ❑ A separate Monitoring Committee for the EQUAL CIP has been set up.

The PC contains a description of the SF Database (EQUAL).

- ❑ *Its objectives and organisation.* The SFD (EQUAL) is designed and implemented to provide the EC with up-to-date information on implementation, to facilitate the transfer of financial and indicator data and to enable the DPs to be informed rapidly on the progress of EQUAL. All stakeholders have direct access to the SFD (EQUAL) database.
- ❑ *Its functionalities.* The application allows users to consult (physical and financial) information on the EQUAL PC, to consult details of a priority, to produce periodical reports to the EC and the Monitoring Committee, to produce financial tables summarising

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[1] Under the responsibility of the MA; see paragraph 2.1.

the funds allocation, to send requests to responsible authorities for updates and to consolidate data.
- ❑ *Its security management.*
- ❑ *Its data transfer procedures.* This relates to financial tables and programming information.
- ❑ *Its maintenance procedures.*

Some of the information on the SFD (EQUAL) is not found in the CIP and the PC:

- ❑ In the future the DPs and the administrator can communicate through the software of the Structural Funds Database (EQUAL). This software is not yet installed on the PCs of the leading DP partners. Some of the promoters are not in the government network (although being public sector). They also have to be provided with the software.
- ❑ The SF Database (EQUAL) contains a field "Executive Summary". In this field the DPs must add relevant information on the projects which are not covered by the Monitoring System.
- ❑ Each project leader has to prepare a quarterly report, which will be included in the database.
- ❑ All relevant documents are scanned and added to the database.
- ❑ The Monitoring System is in the English language only.

Evaluation arrangements

The ex-ante evaluation has already been carried out before the present phase of programme implementation.

The CIP mentions the following arrangements for the ongoing evaluation of the programme:

- ❑ At the project level each DP will present a mechanism or self-assessment at the end of Action 1. This must include an explanation of how to present data and how to analyse results. Each DP must also submit details of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities to be used for transnational activities through monitoring of activities and outputs, assessing the impact of actions and assessing the way activities were executed.
- ❑ National evaluations to be carried out by external experts ensure feedback to programme implementation and contribute to validation experiences and results from the EQUAL DPs. The MA will provide the evaluators with data on Actions 1, 2 and 3.
- ❑ A EU wide final evaluation will take place in 2008 on the basis of the national final evaluation, which focuses on the thematic priorities and the key principles of EQUAL.

Self-assessment

The PC mentions that the DPs have to provide for self-assessment. They will have to come up with a mechanism for self-assessment at the end of Action 1, including an explanation of how the data and information on the partnership will be presented and how the results will be analysed. The NSS has the task to support the DPs in organising this self-assessment.

4.2   Description of monitoring and evaluation arrangements

Chronology

- On the 1st of October 2004 there was a presentation of EQUAL by the NSS to the EQUAL Monitoring Committee. At this meeting the Monitoring Committee adapted the PC.
- During the second half 2004 the PPCD worked on the Monitoring System, which was then finalised in the beginning of 2005.
- The SFD (EQUAL) was filled with the data on the DPs selected in December 2004, for those who had already signed their Letter of Offer.
- In the beginning of 2005 a steering group for the evaluation has been established as a sub-committee of the ESF Consultative Working Group. In March 2005 the launch of the tender procedure for the ongoing evaluation took place. In May 2005 the ongoing evaluator was selected.
- The Manual of procedures will be produced during the 3rd quarter of 2005.

The SFD (EQUAL)

The architecture of the SFD (EQUAL) is based on a central database, hosted at PPCD and mirrored at MITTS, and a client application to access the information stored. The database is based on the Structural Funds system in Malta, while all data for the ECDB will be introduced through RIFE. The database also fulfils all requirements of the Maltese government.

The EU regulations oblige promoters to really fulfil their obligations.

According to the Programme Complement the SFD (EQUAL) allows the export of data through:

- Financial tables in HTML format
- Project information in the flat file format

The **financial** tables through the SFD (EQUAL) include (according to the PC):

- The indicative Financial Table for the Plan/CIP by priority and year;
- the Financial Table for the Programme by priority and year;
- the Financial Table for the EQUAL Programme Complement by priority and year;
- the Financial Table attached to payment request by priority and year.

The **flat files** generated by the IMMS include (according to the PC):

Programming:

- "PG" files related to programming information;
- "DP" files related to certified expenditures (request of payment);
- "FC" files related to forecasts of payment applications;
- "AR" files related to the Annual or Final implementation reports.

The PG screen also contains an "executive summary" section where project promoters enter all relevant information about the process of the project and its result/s.

Payment:

- ❑ "BG" files related to budget commitments made by the Commission;
- ❑ "RE" files related to payments made by the Commission.

Indicators for the projects

Before looking at the evaluation and the needs for self-assessment, it is important to look at the planned indicators as per projects selected, whereas the evaluators must use these indicators as a starting point for their assessment of project implementation and ensure that the *Annual Implementation Report 2004* contains the latest figures on the indicators.

Priority	Output	Result	Impact
1A	Persons in training: 20M/15 F Volume of training: 23,550 participant hours	Certified beneficiaries: 18 M/13F Success/satisfaction rate: 65%	Numbers of Jobs created/retained: 16 Male 12 Female Labour Market Placement/Integration Rate Beneficiaries: 90% of Certified after Assistance
2C	Participants: 20 M/25 F Volume of training: 16,200 participant hours	Certified Beneficiaries: 7M/9F Success/satisfaction Rate of certified beneficiaries: 70%	Number of businesses set up by participants: 4 M/4F Labour Market Placement/Integration Rate Beneficiaries: 50%
4G	Participants (in seminars): 50 M/350 F 10,800 participant hours	Certified Beneficiaries: 12 M/88F Success/satisfaction Rate of certified beneficiaries: 66%	Numbers of Jobs created/retained: 15M/35F Labour Market Placement/Integration Rate Beneficiaries: 50% of Certified after Assistance
5I	Participants: 20 M/10 F Volume of training: 30,000 participant hours	Certified Beneficiaries: 13 M/7F Success/satisfaction Rate 66%	Numbers of Jobs created/retained: 7M/5F Labour Market Placement/Integration Rate Beneficiaries: 60% of Certified after Assistance

Source: Government of Malta, *ESF CIP EQUAL Malta 2004-2006. Draft Annual Implementation Report 2004.*

The indicators in the Monitoring System

The SFD (EQUAL) contains only aggregated data on the participants. These seem not to be specified in terms of the outcome, outputs and effects of participants. This means that, except for some non-quantifiable information from the "executive summary" field, there is no actual information on the indicators in the SFD (EQUAL).[1] This means that this information has to be gathered by self-assessment.

Evaluation and self assessment

It is not necessary to elaborate comprehensively on the evaluation at this point. What is more relevant is that the evaluation has to gather data in addition to the SFD (EQUAL).

The following data is missing from the monitoring system:

❑ Research questions on the quality of management and implementation, on communication and the application and selection phase are not available from outside of the monitoring system.
❑ Moreover, the monitoring system contains, (except for the "executive summary" field) no qualitative information on thematic issues such as innovation, networking/dissemination/mainstreaming, transnational cooperation, gender mainstreaming, partnership and empowerment.

This kind of information can be gathered by the evaluators, by interviewing officials at the PPCD and the NSS, the promoters, partners in the projects, social partners, experts, etc. The evaluators will also attend relevant meetings of the Evaluation Steering Group for the evaluation itself and sometimes also of the Monitoring Committee.

This leaves out however, specific information on the output, results and impact of the projects. Moreover, from the perspective of evaluation and dissemination and mainstreaming of good practices, it is not only important to know what are the output, results and impact, but also to know which are the backgrounds to (lack of) success in these fields. From the TCAs it is seen that some of the DPs will also like to inform each other on their success rates. The information on the plans for self-assessment of the DPs will become available to the evaluators when the Manual of Procedures is issued.

4.3   Evaluation of monitoring and evaluation arrangements

The following research questions concern the monitoring system. There are no research questions on evaluation, and therefore are related to monitoring. As in chapter 3, the answers from the evaluators are added to the questions.

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[1] The SFD (EQUAL) also provides for scanned documents relevant for the implementation of the programme.

Management and implementation systems at CIP level:

❑   How has the monitoring system been set up?

The answer has been given above. The monitoring provides the information needed for the ECDB and the information needed for the Maltese government. The Monitoring System contains no data on the participants, and, in that way, about the indicators for the programme.

❑   What guidance have the national management authorities provided for DPs in their self-assessment?

Until now, as far as we know, the DPs have received no guidance on the matter of self-assessment.

Management and implementation systems at DP-level:

❑   Which guarantees does the monitoring systems provide regarding the quality and timeliness of information?

Whereas most information in the monitoring system is financial, the quality will be good, because auditors will check on it. Each quarter the DP's will have to provide a report, which means that the monitoring system will be up-to-date. The only part of the information which will be difficult to check on quality is the information in the "executive summary" field, because most underlying data (drop out, reasons for drop out, delays, successes, etc.) will be missing from the monitoring system. It is important to mention that the NSS will also be conducting monitoring via on-the-spot checks which will be held on site at the Projects.

Before making further comments, a few words must be said on the differences between programme evaluation and monitoring. These activities are interrelated, but their objectives are quite different.

❑   Monitoring refers to regular analysis of the progress being made within the programme, using a follow up of all programme related activities. By and large, monitoring implies gathering a great deal of information and adopting clear criteria in the selection and organisation of this relevant information. Information produced by the monitoring process should be used as input in the evaluation process.

❑   Evaluation assesses the implementation of a programme, not only in terms of its impact, but also from the viewpoint of those planning, management and monitoring processes adopted. It should be clearly stated that, since monitoring does not, on occasion, produce information in an easily accessible way, evaluators are mistakenly asked to supply this. However, the role of the evaluator is neither to produce the information supplied or produced by the monitoring process mechanism, nor to organize this in a proper manner when it is found scattered over numerous files and documents. As the Commission itself states: "the expectations placed on evaluation should not exceed, what it can really

contribute. Evaluation should not be given roles it is not designed to play, such as auditing and monitoring" [1].

From this perspective not only all financial data, and data concerning the progress of the DP's should be part of the monitoring system, but also data concerning the indicators on output, results and impacts of the DPs. This data is not available and has to be gathered by the evaluation and the DPs themselves.

Before the evaluators can come to some conclusions about the consequences for evaluation and self-assessment, it is important to take a look at the nature of the indicators.

The indicators

The evaluators have the following comments on the indicators:

- ❑ A first comment is that the definitions available of some of the indicators are found in the Guidance Notes to the Application Form as well as within the Project Proposal Action Plan templates.
- ❑ A second remark is that for all the measures the indicators have the same characteristics. This seems logical, and in truth this is also the case. In fact, one of the measures, the Equal Opportunities DP, differs from the rest. The output target for the Equal Opportunities project is 400 people attending the seminars. The training courses will be provided free of charge to the participants by attending those organised by the various partners such as, ETC, MCAST, MEYE, NCPE, GWU, etc. In fact the output of this project are the certification rates and the indication of the success/satisfaction by the certified beneficiaries of the training attended, while the impact refers to the number of jobs created and the integration rate into the labour market.
- ❑ It seems logical that all indicators for all projects should have the same characteristics.

A last remark is on the relation between the indicators and the success of the DP's. Unlike mainstream ESF, the success rate of the participants is not the most important measure of success for the projects. The strongest case for this postulation is of course that there are several EQUAL projects without participants (albeit not in Malta). But also for projects with participants the success is more strongly defined by the success in developing innovations and disseminating/mainstreaming these innovations than by the individual success of the participants. A DP with a low success rate of participants should in fact be considered as much more successful than a project with a higher success rate, when the first DP mainstreams good practices (maybe even after correcting the methods and means used in the project) and the second does not. This also explains the important task of the evaluator to assess the innovative strength and all activities directed at networking, empowerment, dissemination and mainstreaming.

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[1] MEANS Collection, Volume 1. Evaluating Socio Economic programmes. Evaluation design and management. European Commission.

Conclusions for the self-assessment

The above discerns three types of data needed for the assessment of the programme:

1. Quantitative data on the progress of the programme, on the financial allotments and aggregated figures on participants could be gathered from the Monitoring System.
2. Quantitative data on the indicators and the backgrounds of them. In the framework of the self-assessment the DPs should provide information in their quarterly reports on:

    a. The amount of participants (M/F)
    b. The amount of participants belonging to the different target groups they define (e.g. youth, disabled, ex-offenders, etc.)
    c. The amount of participants dropping out in the quarter reported on (by sex and by target group)
    d. Reasons for drop out
    e. Replacing participants (M/F and target group characteristics)
    f. Certified participants (M/F and by target group)
    g. Satisfaction of certified beneficiaries (to be measured by a short evaluation)
    h. Participants finding a job (M/F and by target group)
    i. Participants holding on to a job for 6 months (M/F and by target group)
    j. Other forms of success related to the projects (e.g. finding a house/starting up a firm).

    When projects offer two stages of training to the participants, both stages should be documented this way. For the Equal Opportunities project the number of participants per seminar should also be documented (by sex) and by the number of participants attending the seminars, which then enrolled for further training provided by the Project.

3. Qualitative descriptions of important events. This relates to methods, means and organizational structures (including the contribution of the partners) developed on one hand, and on the other hand to the thematic issues (innovation, networking, empowerment, dissemination, mainstreaming, transnational partnerships).

Recommendations

For the sake of evaluation, but also to provide the NSS with the opportunity to react instantly in the case of severe problems within the DPs it is necessary to include the information under 3 and 4 in the quarterly report. The annex contains the most important information that is needed for self-assessment and to inform the NSS and the MA. This information can also be used for the next stage of the evaluation.

5 Update of the socio-economic diagnosis and the assessment of the strategy

Annex C, Section 4 of the CIP contains the assessment of the socio-economic diagnosis from the ex ante evaluators. It also contains a paragraph on the equality of treatment of women and men and a summary of weaknesses and trends. This forms the basis for a new description of the socio-economic situation in paragraph 5.1.

Annex C, section 5 of the CIP builds forth on this with an assessment of the rationale and consistence of the strategy chosen. In this report we look again at this assessment from the perspective of our knowledge of the present socio-economic situation.

5.1 Description of the socio-economic situation

In the *Inception Report the evaluators* identified the most recent trends in the socio-economic situation:

The most important features of the Maltese labour market are still (end of 2004):

❑ An unemployment rate slightly under the EU average of the former 15 Member States and well under the present EU average.
❑ A very low women activity rate, which is slowly increasing.
❑ A rather low level of people with a higher education level, although university attendance is rising.

Within the *News Releases* of the NSO, there are tables available with the latest figures:

❑ The GDP growth in real terms is negative for the first quarter of 2005 (-0.1%).
❑ The amount of registered unemployed has dropped to some 7.5% from April 2003 to April 2005. The most significant decrease concerns the young unemployed. In May 2005 the amount of registered unemployed seems to have decreased even further.
❑ However, registered unemployment (ETC figures) decreases more among men than among women.
❑ There is the largest decrease among clerks, craft and related trade workers and among machine operators.
❑ Part-time employment is growing, especially among women. This, together with the less declining unemployment figure for women points at inactive women finding part-time jobs.
❑ Also LFS figures for December 2004 show a growing unemployment among women. Again, this should point at inactive women turning to the labour market, but, however, not finding a job for the larger part.
❑ Self-employment is low amongst women.

There were no figures available except the information that the employment figures have dropped by another 300 since last month which means that figures are about a 1,000 lower than the same month last year.

Trends

Looking at the most important aspects and trends mentioned by the ex-ante evaluators (CIP, Annex C), one might make the following observations:

Trend 2002	Observation 2005
Increase of GDP	Growth figures decreased. Decrease of 0.1% in the first quarter of 2005
Low, but slowly rising, employment rate	Same
Employment shifts to services sector	This trend continues
Part-time employment growing	Same
Hidden employment decreases	No indications
Unemployment is low	After an increase unemployment is decreasing again
Low amount of skilled labour force	Still true, although level is rising
Threat of ageing population	Still true, threat of young professionals moving to other EU countries
Drop in household size/increase in housing prices	Same
Rising number of undocumented immigrants	Stricter asylum policy seems to decrease amount of newcomers
Income disparity between men/women	No new figures
Poverty similar to EU average	Same
Living conditions are worse than EU average with specific groups	Same
Lowest rate in EU for women employment	Same; slowly increasing
Women employment growing more than male employment	Same
Women work part-time	Part-time work among women further increasing
A lot of women working in the informal economy	Same

Weak points

This leaves the same weak points as in 2002, although unemployment in itself is decreasing:

- ❑ A low employment rate
- ❑ A still much lower women employment rate
- ❑ A low rate of male and female self-employment
- ❑ The informal economy absorbs a significant share of the labour market
- ❑ Low education level of the labour force.

Also the second level weak points stay the same.

5.2 Evaluation: appropriateness of the strategy

The ex-ante evaluation in the CIP contains a comprehensive analysis of the appropriateness of the strategies. The analyses in the CIP, PC and the analysis of the present situation show that the above is still true.

In that sense, the answers to the research questions on the appropriateness of the strategy are as follows:

❑ To what extent does the EQUAL CIP identify clear priorities?

This question has already been answered by the ex ante evaluators. The ongoing evaluators agree to the analysis. Also the socio-economic situation did not change in the meantime so there is no reason to change priorities.

❑ Do the EQUAL priorities take forward the key domestic priorities agreed in the strategies outlined in the NAPs for Employment and Social Inclusion? To what extent do they address real policy (delivery) needs and emerging labour market issues?

The analysis shows that that the strategies fit in the NAP's for Employment and Social Exclusion. Most of the NAP for Employment is covered by mainstream ESF measures, except for specific actions directed at self-employment by the unemployed. The target groups of the NAP for Social Inclusion are synonymous with other target groups of the EQUAL Programme: women, youth in institutional care, people with disabilities and substance abusers.

The Maltese intervention logic for EQUAL targets four of the nine thematic fields of EQUAL. Because of the relatively small budget concentration of activities must seem logical. The CIP and the PC explain the choices made (for Priority Themes 1A, 2C, 4G and 5I) the following way:
- *There are no national and ESF labour market interventions directed in the fields of unemployed starting up a business, gender equality and asylum seekers (concerning employment).*
- *There are several target groups for employability not reached by the actual active labour market policies.*
- *In the fields of adaptability, life long learning and the social economy other projects are running under national of ESF policies.*
- *The group of ethnic minorities with the greatest distance to the labour market is that of the asylum seekers.*
- *Before providing assistance to women at the workplace floor, it is important to get them to a workplace.*
- *Racism is no real problem on Malta, as Malta is a homogeneous society.*

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion supports the choices made.

❑ To what extent does the CIP take account of the variety of regional and national social and economic contexts?

In Malta there is no real differences in the regional and national social and economic contexts. The small size of the EQUAL CIP does not lend itself to developing specific actions for Gozo or for the south-eastern region.

❑ To what extent do the DP work programmes included in the Development Partnership Agreements (first milestone) take account of the priorities set out in the CIP?

At the moment the DP work programmes are not yet available. More in general the descriptions of the DP's seem to point out that these will fit to the priorities set out in the CIP. A part explanation of this is that for three of the measures one DP covers one measure, the objective of the DP being the objective of the measure.

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Annex

Data to be provided by the DPs to the NSS in the quarterly reports for:
- **self assessment**
- **managerial information**
- **evaluation purposes.**

Quantitative indicators

Indicator	Subdivisions	DP's*
Amount of participants (seminars)	M/F	EO
Amount of participants (training, other activities)	M/F, target groups of the projects	All
Amount of drop-out	M/F, target groups of the projects	All
Reasons for drop out	Finding a job, Not motivated, Failing (exams), Illness, Personal Problems, Unknown. Else	All
Replacements	M/F, target groups of the projects	All
Certified Participants	M/F, target groups of the projects	All
Satisfaction	M/F, target groups of the projects Training/activity, teachers, follow-up	All
Same indicators follow-up courses	M/F, target groups of the projects	AS
Work placements	M/F, target groups of the projects	HS, RC, AS (EO)
Grants for starting businesses	M/F, target groups of the projects	EN
Participants finding a job	M/F, target groups of the projects	All
Participants finding a sustainable job**	M/F, target groups of the projects	HS, RC, EN, EO, AS
Participants starting a business	M/F, target groups of the projects	EN
Participants getting a house	M/F, target groups of the projects	HS

*HS=Headstart; RC = Recycling; EN = Entrepreneurship; EO = Equal Opportunities; AS= Asylum Seekers

**Defined as holding on to a job for 6 months

Qualitative data (for all DP's)

	Examples
Developments inside the DP's	Partners leaving, partners changing roles
Methods developed	Trainings, work placements, seminars
Means developed	TV programmes, IT-programmes/websites, newsletters, buildings
Organizational developments	Structures developed, sub-tendered activities
Innovation	Types of innovations, successes, failings, innovative solutions, good practices
Networking	Partners outside the DP, interest groups, governmental contacts
Empowerment	Opportunity of partners to partake in learning process and decision making, value added, good practice
Transnationality	Meetings, methods/means developed, publicity, evaluation, effectivity, sufficiency of budgets
Dissemination	Activities, results
Mainstreaming	Activities, results, impacts
Gender mainstreaming	Gender perspective of activities, development of gender friendly models