

## THEMATIC REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORK OF THE EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUP ON PILLAR 4

### The document in a nutshell:

Both the results of the analysis of the Development Partnerships (DPs) and the preliminary outcomes of the analysis of Transnational Partnerships (TPs) suggest that “**Comprehensive Approaches to Equal Opportunities**” should be the overarching theme of the initial thematic work in Pillar 4. This thematic choice, which also reflects the priorities emphasised by the relevant workshops at the Barcelona conference, conveys the clear message that the two major policy strategies of reconciliation and tackling gender gaps require to be linked and potential synergies reinforced, if gender equality is to be achieved - a message which is fully in line with the relevant Guidelines under Pillar 4 of the European Employment Strategy. There is also a large body of evidence indicating that the ETG can draw on a substantial number of examples of good practice from DPs and TPs that cover the range of sub-topics forming the core elements of the two strategies.

**Reconciliation** (Theme G) DPs and TPs tend to explore:

- concepts of flexible work organisation, mostly jointly developed with employers;
- activities which improve both the quantity and quality of care for children and other dependants, while at the same time developing training and job opportunities for women (and men!) as professional carers;
- initiatives creating other family support services, including transport, home making and many time consuming “odd jobs”, through the promotion of women’s business creation and entrepreneurship and social economy enterprises.

All these endeavours will help women and men to reconcile their professional and private lives. Some of the DPs stress the need to improve female participation in decision-making in politics, the economy, culture and civil society and will organise training to encourage and support women in playing a more active role in their local or regional environment.

A striking feature in the context of Pillar 4 is the large number of DPs and TCAs which attempt to capitalise on the wide range of local, regional and even national players involved and strive to forge sustainable alliances for equal opportunities. Particularly in southern Member States and in France, these coalitions will be developed as **territorial or sectoral pacts** for work-life-balance. Also many **desegregation** projects have an involvement in pacts. Whilst pursuing gender equality objectives (improved gender balance in all economic sectors and at all levels of the job hierarchy, often linked to reconciliation and even support to business creation), they will make valuable contributions to territorial development. The idea is to use women’s potential to generate innovation and economic growth, particularly in SMEs, thus building “business cases” for equal opportunities. Designing and implementing specific training for “bridging functions” such as equality counsellors, gender and diversity experts and work-life balance mediators are other elements of this specific category of DPs.

**Desegregation** (Theme H) DPs and TPs may appear to be re-inventing the wheel, as they focus on the persistent problems of:

- tackling gender gaps in employment;
- widening women’s training and career choices (horizontal desegregation);
- improving women’s access to senior levels of the job hierarchy (vertical desegregation).

There is, however, a wealth of innovative approaches to guidance and training, often with an emphasis on the challenges of the information and knowledge society. Clearly, innovation also lies in the intended development and/or application of **Gender Mainstreaming** systems in institutions and enterprises, economic sectors and territories.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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This document aims to assist the lead Member States, the Steering Group and eventually the Liaison Group to prepare the work programme for the ETG focusing on Equal Opportunities and linking EQUAL Themes G (reconciliation of family and professional life) and H (tackling gender gaps and supporting desegregation). This paper focuses only on suggestions for thematic priorities. Proposals relating to the Mandate, Work Plan and Operation Modalities of ETGs will be made in a separate paper.

The thematic reference framework is also a preliminary contribution to the work of the ETG in respect of its tasks of:

- Identifying relevant transferable outcomes of Development Partnerships (DPs) and Transnational Partnerships (TPs);
- Presenting these outcomes in such a way that they can be used by National Thematic Networks, Managing Authorities and Support Structures;
- Relating the outcomes to European policy priorities and programmes;
- Providing feedback and guidance that will promote the development of DPs and TPs, especially in the second call for proposals.

The document synthesises:

- The conclusions from the analysis of aims and activities proposed by DPs, operating under the Pillar 4 themes G and H and from the two relevant workshops which took place in the framework of the Networking for Inclusion Conference in Barcelona on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> May 2002;
- The preliminary key findings and thematic priorities that emerge from the analysis of the Pillar 4 Transnational Cooperation Agreements (TCAs) and of those involving Equal Opportunities;
- The priorities of the lead Member States, the national "hot issues" and potential links with National Thematic Networks (NTNs) and Mainstreaming Plans;
- Synergies with relevant EU policies, programmes and networks.

Finally, this thematic reference framework outlines operational proposals for sub topics and "lead" questions that may help to define the practical objectives and intended outcomes of the ETG.

## 2. CONCLUSIONS OF THE DP ANALYSIS AND THE BARCELONA WORKSHOP

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### 2.1. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY APPROACHES COMMON TO THEMES G AND H

The Barcelona Workshop noted that a striking feature in both Theme G and H DPs, revealed by the DP analysis, was the endeavour to maximise the potential in EQUAL for mainstreaming. A critical mass of DPs intends to capitalise on the wide range of local, regional and even national players involved and is trying to forge sustainable alliances for equal opportunities. Whilst pursuing gender equality objectives (such as solutions to reconciling professional and private life or an improved gender balance in all economic sectors and at all levels of the job hierarchy), they will make valuable contributions to territorial development. Particularly in southern Member States and in France, these coalitions will be developed as territorial or sectoral pacts.

Somewhat less prominent, but following the same reasoning, are DPs that work on gender mainstreaming. Approximately 20 % of Pillar 4 DPs mention gender mainstreaming as one of their activities, usually in education and training systems or business creation and SME support provisions. This includes, often through observatories, the collection of gender data, analysis and study of gender gaps and relevant best practice, as well as undertaking gender impact assessments. Based on the emerging results, these DPs plan to set and negotiate both numerical and qualitative equality targets and to produce, implement and monitor equality plans for geographical areas and/or economic sectors. Awareness raising and training of decision-

makers who are in a position to ensure sustainability of the new systems compliment the proposed activities).

## 2.2. DP PRIORITIES AFFIRMED AT THE BARCELONA WORKSHOPS

At the two Pillar 4 Workshops in Barcelona, five options for European level thematic activities were proposed based on an analysis of all DPs in Theme G and Theme H (see BOX 1). The criteria that had been applied meant that each of these options had:

- Clear links to the priorities of the European Employment Strategy (Guidelines and the Member States' National Action Plans for Employment);
- Contributions from a sufficient number of DPs (critical mass) with specific experience;
- The active participation of at least six Member States with a balanced geographical representation across the Union;
- An articulation with relevant clustering and mainstreaming activities initiated by Member States<sup>1</sup>.

### BOX 1: THEMATIC OPTIONS

Theme G	Theme H
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reconciling professional and family life</li> <li>▪ Comprehensive approaches to improved work-life balance for women and men</li> <li>▪ Creating flexible care provision and improving the quality of care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tackling gender gaps</li> <li>▪ Horizontal desegregation (in particular in the information and knowledge society)</li> <li>▪ Vertical desegregation</li> </ul>
<p>In addition, Gender Mainstreaming was proposed as a transversal theme.</p>	

The Theme G Workshop opted for “**Comprehensive approaches to improved work-life balance for women and men**” as the overall topic including the following sub-themes:

- flexible work organisation schemes benefiting both employees and employers;
- new solutions to flexible quality care for children and other dependants and innovative family support services;
- mechanisms such as work-life-balance (w-l-b) or gender equality observatories which allow for careful monitoring of working time, of the opening hours of schools and childcare centres, shops and public authorities and even of the timetables of public transport systems and also the existing provision of all family support services;
- the development of action plans to reduce the different time constraints and also taking account of employers' needs and requirements;
- the process of forging and managing partnerships bringing all the relevant players on board, as the most important success factor in these comprehensive approaches;
- territorial and sectoral pacts, as the ideal setting to germinate change;
- establishing links and possible synergies with Theme H “Reducing gender gaps and supporting desegregation”, as without effective reconciliation desegregation efforts may prove to be unsustainable.

**Horizontal desegregation and, particularly, improving women's access to the information and knowledge society** emerged as the thematic proposal from Workshop H with the following sub-themes:

- concepts to widen women's and men's vocational choices, motivating and training women for career paths in growth sectors such as ICT, environmental protection, science and engineering;
- integration of ICT knowledge and skills into the so-called “typical female” domains where women are currently over-represented.
- information, counselling and guidance at an early age, even in primary schools, and targeting girls and boys, particularly during the transition phase from school to vocational training or higher education and working life;

<sup>1</sup> At the time of the Barcelona Conference Member States had not completed their Mainstreaming Plans and/or selected the themes of their national networks.

- strategies to sensitise and/or train teachers, guidance and counselling staff and parents;
- training concepts and methodologies that take account of the specific life situations of the different groups of beneficiaries and of women's ways of learning;
- valuing women's skills, including those acquired outside formal training systems and the accreditation of prior learning (APL), as important signposts along the road to continuing education and life-long learning.

The workshop also noted that strategies to **help women access management and leadership positions** in both public and private sectors and **gender mainstreaming** must be other components of the work programme.

*The Pillar 4 ETG can build on a critical mass of DPs addressing the crucial aspects and sub-topics of both Theme G and Theme H. Comprehensive approaches, in particular territorial and sectoral pacts, are often prominent and have a large potential for dissemination and mainstreaming which should be exploited by the ETG. More details about the thematic activities and target groups of Pillar 4 DPs may be found in the Thematic Reports on Themes 4G and 4H that were included in the preparatory documents for the Barcelona Conference.*

### 3. PRELIMINARY KEY FINDINGS AND THEMATIC PRIORITIES THAT EMERGE FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE TCAs

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#### 3.1. FACTS AND FIGURES

To date, the analysis of transnational partnerships has covered 77 Transnational Cooperation Agreements (TCAs), including Theme G and Theme H TCAs, Pillar 4 cross-theme TCAs and cross-pillar TCAs. One TCA has a formal associate partner (Czech Republic) while another six mention the intention of working with associate partners in candidate countries.

Two thirds<sup>1</sup> of the TCAs analysed so far have high quality, well-structured work programmes with realistic plans for the production of methodologies and tools. Slightly more than one third of these also have promising strategies for dissemination and mainstreaming. However, almost 10 percent of the TCAs can be rated as being of a poor quality.

It is important to note that the cross-theme or cross-pillar TPs are generating added value. Examples of their activities include: developing comprehensive pathways to sustainable labour market integration for (multiple) disadvantaged (Themes A + B); ICT literacy and e-learning programmes (Theme F); Accreditation of Prior Learning systems (Theme E); tackling gender gaps through awareness raising and support to companies (Themes G or H). In these TPs, partners have a binding obligation to introduce or apply gender mainstreaming in all their national and transnational activities. Supporting local communities, enterprises, providers of cultural and leisure activities, social partners and political decision-makers to develop gender equality policies and practices is an integral aspect of their dissemination and mainstreaming strategies and their management and decision-making mechanisms have the capacity to combine their multi-faceted objectives and activities.

Evaluation is the weakest aspect throughout the TCAs. Rarely were there any criteria for evaluation mentioned and often, evaluation arrangements still had to be agreed at the first transnational meeting. Frequently, there was no financial allocation or it was included in an activity covering other tasks such as coordination and could not be identified. There are, however, a few TCAs that show a good understanding of evaluation requirements, others that already present interesting approaches or sets of indicators and some that intend to work jointly with another TCA on transnational evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> For a rough overview TCAs were clustered in categories: very high, good and low quality. For assessment content, type and management of transnational activities, expected outcomes, mix of DP partners and viability of budget were taken into account.

## 3.2. EMERGING TRANSNATIONAL INTERESTS AND PRIORITIES

Priorities and interests are emerging:

- In relation to relevant EQUAL themes and sub-themes;
- In a perspective of generating benefits for the participating institutions, their staff and the participants in the DPs involved;
- In the context of inducing change in the local, regional and national environments of DPs and triggering horizontal and/or vertical mainstreaming.

### 3.2.1 Thematic Priorities

Pillar 4 related themes in the TPs are more or less consistent with both the outcomes of the DP analysis and the results of the relevant workshops at the Barcelona conference. There is a large majority of TCAs focusing on “**Comprehensive approaches to work-life-balance for women and men**”. Approaches include concepts such as “Time Bureaus”, Equal Opportunities observatories in regions or cities and training of change agents (equality and diversity counsellors/experts, w-l-b mediators). Territorial pacts, as proposed by DPs in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, are seen as ideal settings for bringing about change and within many TPs, this model will be imported into partner countries. Unlike the DPs, more TCAs will focus on territorial rather than on sectoral alliances.

Another emerging difference is the inclusion of more equal opportunities related aspects in such territorial pacts. Several TPs plan to tackle horizontal and vertical segregation in addition to work-life-balance, and a minority even includes support to women’s business creation and entrepreneurship.

Tackling gender gaps in employment, widening women’s vocational choices and career opportunities and supporting female managers to break through the glass ceiling are the three major aspects identified by the analysis of Theme H DPs. They are mirrored by desegregation TPs which have identified a large variety of sub-themes, from awareness raising and training of teachers/trainers, counsellors and guidance and HRD staff, to convincing employers of the business advantages of desegregation-oriented recruitment and promotion practices. Again, territorial pacts, establishing goals and timetabled systems for improved gender balance in training, employment and company hierarchies, are the ultimate objectives of these TPs.

There is also a visible trend to concentrate transnational desegregation activities on growth areas such as ICT and ICT related jobs and career paths (information and knowledge management, multimedia, European pool of women ICT trainers) and also on science, engineering, environmental protection, transport and specific segments of the construction industry such as the preservation of architectural heritage.

Clearly, very few TPs are exclusively concerned with vertical rather than horizontal desegregation. There are also significantly fewer TPs than DPs concentrating exclusively on gender mainstreaming. However, DPs with this focus appear to provide input that enables their transnational partners to introduce or apply gender mainstreaming systems within all member organisations of the national partnerships or within a territory.

### 3.2.2. Priorities related to Staff and Organisational Development and Building of Competencies for Beneficiaries

More than half of the TPs use transnationality to boost the gender and diversity management skills of DP staff and to stimulate change by integrating equal opportunities into the corporate identity of all DP members. Relevant strategies and tools (EO impact assessment; training of teachers/trainers, guidance staff or change agents; e-learning) are imported or jointly developed and tested, either via Internet platforms or during transnational seminars and study visits.

Significantly fewer TPs offer exchange programmes to DP beneficiaries. They range from simple exposure to another culture through work and/or training shadowing to longer work-experience

placements. TPs focusing on women's entrepreneurship have scheduled trade visits to support their participants in gaining a better understanding of the European marketing opportunities and in setting up business contacts and transnational networks.

### **3.2.3. Priorities related to Mainstreaming**

Most TPs claim to have mainstreaming intentions but a much smaller number of TCAs contains detailed strategies and concrete plans. Pointers to successful mainstreaming are the mix and set-up of DPs in a TP and the active participation of key-actors who are in a position to initiate and carry out sustainable change. Often the fact that local, regional and, very rarely, national governments are DP leaders, with a strong commitment to using the transnational dimension of EQUAL for achieving measurable progress in terms of gender equality, is another pointer to the mainstreaming potential of the TPs.

A small number of TPs will carry out thematic studies and research, the results of which are seen as an important pre-condition to the formulation of goals and timetables for a mainstreaming plan. The outcomes of these studies are also perceived as a crucial input to benchmarking systems that may stimulate policy makers in territories or Member States to compete with their counterparts who have better-developed track records in terms of gender equality. Desegregation and/or reconciliation observatories also fit in this context, especially if there are indications that TPs may make them a part of sustainable gender mainstreaming provision in a city or region.

### **3.3. MODELS OF COOPERATION**

In general, at least one of the partners in the TCA had some experience in European programmes, usually ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT and in particular NOW, and so, the arrangements for the coordination and management of the TPs are well-developed. Most TPs establish a transnational steering committee, often with a rotating presidency and two representatives per DP. A small number of TPs permits five representative members per DP so beneficiaries and key-partners such as employers, policy-makers and EO bodies can also attend.

The role of the coordinator or secretary is almost always confined to the ETCIM input and administrative tasks. Especially, in larger TPs with more than three DPS, thematic working groups will be set up to take charge of sub-themes or activities. Normally, these working groups are led by one partner and the topic is related either to that DP's national priorities or its experience.

EQUAL TPs reflect participative approaches, as decision-making is almost always based on consensus. Only a small minority will work with majority votes, most frequently requiring a simple, but some times an absolute, majority.

### **3.4. TRANSFER ACTIVITIES**

In at least one third of the TCAs, the transfer activities are not yet well developed. This may be because the TCA document was not sufficiently specific or encouraging to provoke a detailed response or else the TPs intend to cover these activities under Action 3. There is, however, a critical mass of TPs providing interesting information about how they plan to transfer good practice.

The most common activity for transfer is the creation of a joint website or Internet portal where all achievements are posted, often with intranet and extranet facilities for access by partners, key-actors and a larger audience. Many TPs intend to ensure that these platforms reach beyond the immediate partnership by raising awareness and continuing interest through media campaigns, personalised mailings and electronic newsletters.

A commitment of partners to test methodologies and tools and to adapt and implement those that prove to be successful seems to be a more efficient transfer strategy. A number of TCAs demonstrate the seriousness of their transfer intentions by earmarking (considerable) sums in their budgets for translation. In addition, around a dozen TPs state explicitly that their major aim

is to import certain models from their chosen partners such as gender mainstreaming models from Sweden, Time Bureaux from France and Italy and women specific training schemes in male domains of the labour market from France, Spain and Sweden.

Obviously training seminars, work shadowing and work experience placements of DP staff automatically produce an element of transfer. Yet, in many cases, it is not clear whether the newly acquired skills will only benefit the members of the DPs or whether they may eventually be transferred to other institutions, companies and authorities in the Member States involved. Only on a few occasions have TPs indicated that they will organise a series of targeted transfer seminars at national, regional or local level that can achieve a much greater impact than the usual TP closing conference.

A minority of TPs develops models to promote transfer amongst key-actors. These TPs organise specific exchange programmes for employers, HRD managers or politicians to ensure that they meet their counterparts in other countries. The idea behind such programmes is that innovation and models for change are more easily accepted and considered for implementation if they are promoted by peers.

### 3.5. INFLUENCING POLICY DEVELOPMENT

In terms of dissemination, the standard approach is a web site, one (or several) publications and a final conference. There is a small number of TPs that outline how their activities will reinforce DP dissemination activities, besides having a final dissemination event in each country. While, in general, TCAs specify the key actors who will be involved in the transfer of their outputs, there is much less information on the potential users of their products.

Most TPs make statements (in part A of the TCA) that they plan to influence policy at a **national or European level**. But there was often very little in their work programmes (in part B) to explain what they intend to do. Only a small minority aims explicitly to work with the media (or has media involvement in the DPs) or plans to run PR campaigns. There are a few TPs setting up networks or developing links with existing European and/or national networks to involve them in their work and in their dissemination activities. While some TCAs mention their interest in and willingness to join national thematic activities, none cite any existing links. References to national priorities, including ESF-co-financed activities, or NAPs and the EES were made in many TCAs, particularly in those that involve partners from Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Sweden.

There was much more evidence in the TCAs of a concentrated and sustained approach to influencing **local or regional economic or public decision makers** by actively associating them in the activities of the TCAs such as thematic seminars and study visits.

**The ETG should note that the thematic clusters and trends emerging from the DP analysis are reinforced by the preliminary outcomes of the TCA analysis. In particular, the TPs with a clear policy orientation on developing and strengthening territorial alliances committed to Equal Opportunities and linking several Pillar 4 aspects, are an important source of good practice and mainstreaming strategies. Exploring the transnational dimension that seems to stimulate national action should also be high on the ETG's agenda.**

## 4. LINKS WITH MEMBER STATE PRIORITIES AND RELEVANT NATIONAL THEMATIC NETWORKS AND MAINSTREAMING PLANS

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The two lead Member States, Italy and Spain have stated their policy priorities. Italy's main interest lies in Theme G (reconciliation of professional and family life; improved work-life-balance for women and men). Whilst placing a major emphasis on work-life-balance approaches (work organisation, family support services and collaboration between public and private sectors in new forms of work organisation), Spain also indicates an interest in desegregation in the context of its priority of developing training and (re) qualification systems.

Except for France, which has presented a detailed national mainstreaming plan on its chosen priority theme G (Rechercher des nouveaux moyens pour mieux articuler les différents temps de vie pour les femmes et pour les hommes), no other Member State has developed a similar document signposting its intent to achieve lasting policy and practice impact from EQUAL at national or European level. A total of 13 Member States have, however, indicated their policy priorities in relation to Equal Opportunities and provided information on their intended National Thematic Networks (NTNs)<sup>2</sup>. It appears that the following NTNs will be established:

- Theme G (reconciliation) (D, F, GR, IRL, IT, P, S<sup>3</sup>);
- Theme H (desegregation) (DK, FIN, Ukgb, Ukni);
- Gender Mainstreaming (DK, D<sup>4</sup>);
- Gender equality as a transversal theme in NTNs (F, IT, P).

At the moment, there is no information from Austria, Belgium (fr), Belgium (nl) and the Netherlands.

## 5. RELEVANT EU POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND NETWORKS

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### 5.1. THE EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

Given the thematic structure of the EQUAL Community Initiative, it is natural that the analyses of both the DPs and TCAs demonstrate a consistency with the relevant EES Guidelines<sup>5</sup>.

**Guideline 16** of the 2002 version of the EES-Guidelines<sup>6</sup> calls for a **Gender Mainstreaming** approach across all Pillars of the EES and Member States are required to provide for adequate data collection systems and procedures and encouraged to adopt strategies for:

- developing and reinforcing consultative systems with gender equality bodies;
- applying procedures for gender impact assessment under each guideline;
- developing indicators to measure progress in gender equality, in relation to each guideline.

Although Gender Mainstreaming must also be applied to all EQUAL themes, it appears that a comprehensive strategy for gender equality is predominantly being addressed by Pillar 4 DPs. As mentioned earlier, a substantial number of Theme G and H DPs will develop Gender Mainstreaming systems and some plan to import/export and benchmark good practice from more advanced countries to stimulate authorities, in particular at local and regional level, to follow suit.

Theme H DPs' aims and activities to **reduce gender gaps and support job desegregation** are largely in line with **Guideline 17**. This Guideline urges Member States and social partners to pay attention to the imbalance in the representation of women and men in certain economic sectors and occupations, as well as to the improvement of female career opportunities. A wide range of choices in education and training is regarded as being essential from the earliest stage. In the Council Decision, in February 2002, Member States also agreed to initiate positive steps to promote equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and to diminish differentials in income between women and men. All the requirements of Guideline 17 are well-reflected in the TPs, except for steps to diminish the gender pay gap that are indirectly covered by a minority of DPs and a few TPs through strategies to value female work and improve working conditions and pay.

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<sup>2</sup> Information drawn from the responses to the Commission's recent questionnaire and an earlier Document "Mainstreaming: MS questionnaire, last up-dated July, following HOM (See overview table in annex 1).

<sup>3</sup> Gender equality in a work organisation aspect.

<sup>4</sup> NTN will cover several topics, including desegregation.

<sup>5</sup> Council Decision of 18 February 2002 on guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2002 (2002/177/EC)

<sup>6</sup> Due to the streamlining of the annual economic and employment policy coordination cycles agreed by the Commission the 2003 Employment Guidelines will be available in spring 2003.



Objectives and activities of Theme G DPs appear to be almost entirely consistent with **Guideline 18**. The Guideline emphasises the importance of needs-tailored, affordable, accessible and high-quality **care services for children and other dependants** and an **equal sharing of family responsibilities**. Member States and the Commission recognise the significance of policies on career breaks, parental leave, part-time work and **flexible working arrangements** that serve the interests of both employers and male and female employees. Guideline 18 requires that the implementation of various directives and social partner agreements in this area should be accelerated and monitored regularly and Member States are also urged to:

- consider setting a national target, in accordance with their national situation, for increasing the availability of care services for children and other dependants;
- give special attention to women and men, considering a return to the paid workforce after an absence, and examine the means of gradually eliminating obstacles to such a return.

**Guideline 11** on regional and local action for employment, although placed under Pillar 2 (Entrepreneurship) of the EES, is reflected in the cluster of Pillar 4 DPs that plans to develop **Territorial Pacts for Equal Opportunities**, in particular in those which form alliances with key actors to raise women's employment rates and bring about a more even occupational balance between women and men, while at the same time contributing to local development.

Through the choice of their thematic priorities and subsequent DP selection, and more recently by establishing policy priorities and national thematic networks, Member States are also responding to the 2002 Council recommendations related to equal opportunities performance. While the employment guidelines on equal opportunities are valid in their own right, the recommendations also suggest that they reinforce the impact of policy across the board. For instance, the objective of full employment cannot be furthered without raising women's labour market participation rates. The integration of both family friendly, flexible work organisation and the improvement of care provision, in Theme G DPs, reflects the important point made in the Council recommendations that there can be no increase in female employment without quantitatively and qualitatively satisfying care provision and improved opportunities to reconcile work and family life. Although the most pressing recommendations are highlighting the lack of care provision (A, D, GR, ES, IRL, IT, P and UK) and the gender pay gap (D, FIN, IRL, L, A, UK), a number of Member States are being urged to embark on more effective desegregation strategies. These include Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the UK. EQUAL DPs, established in these countries, and also throughout Europe, possess a huge potential to support both horizontal and vertical desegregation.

EQUAL will contribute to meeting the quantitative targets for achieving gender equality in economic life, set by the Lisbon and Stockholm European Councils in 2000 and 2001 and re-affirmed by the Barcelona Summit in 2002. The main target is to raise women's employment rate from the average figure of 54% in 2000 to more than 60% by 2010 (Lisbon target) and to 57% by 2006 (Stockholm target)<sup>7</sup>. EQUAL will also support a better reconciliation of working and family life and its multiple strategies may help Member States to set new benchmarks for improved childcare, as also agreed at the Lisbon Summit. EU level targets were established at the Barcelona Council and require the provision of childcare for at least 90% of children between 3 years and mandatory school age, and at least 33 percent of children of under 3 years of age, by 2010.

***The ETG should make these connections visible and ensure that the selection of its members and its dissemination strategies reach out to key players who are in a position to capitalise on EQUAL achievements at both the national and the European level.***

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<sup>7</sup> Overviews on recommendations and follow up in: Impact Evaluation of the EES, Background paper: Equal opportunities for women and men (EMCO/060602/EN\_REV1).

## 5.2. EUROPEAN PROGRAMMES AND NETWORKS

There is a potential for synergies with the 5<sup>th</sup> Community Framework Programme on Gender Equality (2001-2006)<sup>8</sup>. Three of the objectives of this programme are closely related to EQUAL activities under Theme G and Theme H, namely:

- Promoting gender equality in economic life;
- Improving the gender balance in political, economic and social decision-making;
- Promoting change of gender roles and stereotypes.

The programme intends to reinforce cooperation with national Gender Equality Authorities and the coordination of their activities at European level is seen as the main method of achieving progress. A large number of EQUAL DPs and TPs in Theme G and H involve and reinforce the work of equality bodies at all levels but most frequently in a local context. In addition, there may be interesting links to be established with the European Observatory on the Social Situation, Demography and Family<sup>9</sup>, as well as with the activities of the Commission Expert Group on Gender and Employment<sup>10</sup>.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL)<sup>11</sup> is the competent EU-level NGO, relating to the interests of the ETG. It is the largest co-ordinating body of national and European non-governmental women's organisations in the European Union. One of the EWL's main tasks is to keep women informed about the policy developments at EU level. A variety of topics addressed by EQUAL, within the context of Pillar 4, are also amongst the major concerns of the Lobby. These include the gender dimension in European employment and social policies, multiple discrimination, gender and fundamental rights, women asylum seekers and mobilising young women for equality in Europe.

***The ETG should consider the nature of the links that it wishes to establish with the 5<sup>th</sup> Community Framework Programme and the other bodies and organisation.***

## 6. PROPOSALS FOR SUB-TOPICS AND "LEAD" QUESTIONS

The results of the DP analysis and the preliminary outcomes of the TCA analysis suggest a clear thematic structure for the Pillar 4 ETG, as indicated in the following table.

<b>COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES</b>					
<b>Reconciliation</b>			<b>Desegregation</b>		
Care provision	Work-life-balance	Family support services	Gender gaps in employment	Horizontal desegregation	Vertical desegregation
	Work organisation				
Transversal: Contributions to local/regional development – Territorial Pacts Gender Mainstreaming					

This structure also reflects the outcomes of the two Pillar 4 workshops at the Barcelona Conference that emphasised the need to exploit the potential of links and synergies between Themes G and H, if lasting policy impact is to be achieved. Also, the fact that territorial alliances involving key actors are even more prominent in the activities of TPs than in those of DPs seems

<sup>8</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/equ\\_opp/strategy\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/strategy_en.html)

<sup>9</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/eoss/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/eoss/index_en.html)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.umist.ac.uk/management/ewerc/egge/egge.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.womenlobby.org/>

to indicate that the EQUAL partnership approach is not only understood and valued, but expected to yield added value through its transnational dimension. At the first meeting of the Pillar 4 core group, it was agreed to use and further develop this preliminary structure to build up the work programme of the ETG.

***In this context, the ETG should aim to develop a European model of comprehensive approaches to Equal Opportunities and ensure that both the transfer and dissemination of good practices (the "pedagogic objective) and the policy impact (the "strategic objective") can be achieved.***

## 6.1. PROPOSALS FOR SUB-TOPICS

The different aims and activities of DPs and TPs can be used to map the sub-topics for the two major thematic areas that have been identified in a clearer fashion.

### RECONCILIATION

Improving the care provision			
Training women and men as professional carers (in childcare and dependant care)	Supporting the creation of businesses and social economy enterprises in the care sector	Tailoring existing childcare provisions to the needs of parents	Adjusting existing dependant care provisions to the needs of clients
Targeting particularly job seekers who do not meet the educational requirements of regular training	Strategies to fight precarious employment and undeclared labour	Involving flexible hours, cultural diversity	Home based care vs. Institutional care; involving cultural diversity

Work-life-balance approaches for women and men							
Developing flexible work-organisation benefiting both employees and employers		Establishing new roles for change agents		Forging coalitions for improved work-life-balance			
Part-time, flexi-time, working time accounts etc.	Developing women (parent) specific telework solutions	Training w-l-b mediators, equality and diversity counsellors	Strengthening the role of existing equality bodies	W-l-b pacts in economic sectors, or clusters of companies	W-l-b Territorial Pacts ; Time Bureaus	W-l-b observatories	Introducing new flexible solutions to w-l-b in collective bargaining

Developing family support services		
Training women for family support services including cleaning; laundry; gardening; babysitting; "odd jobs" etc	Supporting the creation of businesses, social economy enterprises and community services providing family support services	Securing market access and financial viability of family support services
Supporting informal learning and promoting the accreditation of prior learning (APL)	Strategies to fight precarious employment and undeclared labour	Subsidised employment; service cheques for families

### DESEGREGATION

## Tackling gender gaps in employment

Valuing and up-grading typical female work		Securing women's access to the information society and other growth sectors		Using alternative forms of employment to cross the job threshold	
Supporting informal learning, the accreditation of prior learning (APL)	Analysing and improving working conditions, occupational health and pay	Women specific approaches to digital literacy and basic ICT training	Integrated pathways to new ICT based occupations, tourism, hotel and catering services	Supporting business creation; setting up women's business incubators	Creating jobs in insertion and social economy companies, whilst accommodating needs for flexibility

## Horizontal desegregation

Providing a wide range of occupational choices from early on		Training itineraries to foster women's/ men's access to economic sectors and occupations where they are under-represented		Sensitising key-players		Developing the capacity of authorities, training providers and enterprises to manage gender and diversity		
New approaches to vocational information, counselling and guidance for girls and boys	Supporting girls and young women during transition and initial training in sectors where they are underrepresented	Training packages for access to the information and knowledge society	Integrated pathways for women in male domains: engineering, construction, environmental protection etc.	Training men to access female domains such as the care sector	Awareness-raising campaigns and training for teachers, trainers, guidance and placement officers;	Sensitising parents and peers	Integrating gender equality (& diversity) into quality management systems	Training mediators, equality & diversity counsellors; strengthening the role of existing equality bodies

## Vertical desegregation

Supporting women's access to middle and senior management positions		Integrating equal opportunities in HRD policies of public and private employers	
Career development and skills training responding to company needs (ICT, knowledge management, TCM, European affairs etc)	Coaching, mentoring, networking	Gender and diversity training for employers, senior management and HDR staff	Integrating gender equality (and diversity) into quality management systems
			Setting up or improving action plans for gender equality or gender mainstreaming
			Strengthening the role of existing equality bodies

It is evident that partnership as a horizontal theme has a large role to play when it comes to exploiting the potential of good practice. Without involving the relevant key actors most of these strategies proposed by DPs and TPs could not generate sustainable results. For instance, the opening up of career paths for women (and men) with no/low formal skills in the care sector, requires the interest of training institutions in the accreditation of informal learning and the political will of the relevant authorities and decision-makers to embrace change. Another example is improving the flexibility of opening hours and accommodating parents from ethnic minority and immigrant communities, which is not feasible without the commitment of authorities, trade unions and employers. They need to reconcile the needs of the care staff to those of parents and children and to invest in the recruitment of personnel with a multi-cultural background and in the continuing education of care staff.

Besides the transversal themes of partnership and gender mainstreaming, several sub-topics appear under more than one heading. These are training mediators equality and diversity counsellors and experts, strengthening the role of equality bodies and integrating gender equality (and diversity) into quality management systems.

***These strategies and concepts should eventually be addressed as cross-cutting items by the ETG.***

It is expected that, in both Theme G and H DPs and TPs, there will be a range of good practices developed that can be used to support European thematic animation on the initial proposed overarching theme and sub-topics. The same applies to transversal themes and cross-cutting elements. Given the involvement of almost all Member States in the various approaches identified, it appears that there is also a large enough coverage to enable a consideration of the application of these approaches in the different national contexts and cultures.

***The work of the ETG should promote transnational transfer and the national adoption of policies and practices that may have been developed in another Member State. Also, as the links between the ETG's concerns and EU policies and programmes are evident, the ETG should be in a position to generate synergies and to inform European policies related to training, employment and anti-discrimination, thus enhancing Gender Mainstreaming in its dual approach (e.g. integrating a gender dimension - from planning, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation – and specific actions favouring women (or men) in economic sectors and occupations and other societal spheres, where they are under-represented).***

## **6.2. LEAD QUESTIONS**

In planning the work of the ETG, the extended core group will have to discuss a number of key questions related to its thematic priorities.

In relation to **thematic content** the extended core group should:

- Agree on the objectives in terms of both the policy and the practice-oriented approaches;
- Agree on a viable number of sub topics to take account of the specific context and culture of the Member States involved that can be addressed in the agreed timeframe with the resources that are currently available;
- Identify the core elements of transversal and overlapping issues and propose a method for their integration into the work of the ETG;
- Create a system that ensures a permanent link between the two themes, so that cross-fertilisation effects and synergies can be maximised.
- Find ways to make optimal use of the outputs of cross-pillar TPs.

In relation to ensuring that **discussions on content are well informed**, the group should:

- Engage the relevant stakeholders, and in particular the existing EU wide networks which represent NGOs and social partners;
- Design a strategy to enhance the “pull factor” and find solutions to involving ministries or government departments, other than those responsible for the ESF administration, and also employers and social partner organisations;
- Consider how to promote the active involvement of National Thematic Networks or selected DPs and TPs;
- Establish a mechanism to identify, on an on-going basis, how EQUAL fits with, and is able to inform, emerging EU policy and to ensure that the work of the ETG addresses the main policy gaps and opportunities.

Obviously, there are other issues that the group needs to explore during this “set-up” phase but, as indicated in Section 1, proposals relating to the Mandate, Work Plan and Operation Modalities of ETGs will be made in a separate paper